

SOCIAL INTEGRATION, REVERSAL POLICIES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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Abstract: Inside this article are presented the new characteristics of the European social model by the point of view of the social economy principles. The field of the social economy gives positives benefits in relation with the purpose of the social inclusion by organizing a complex process of activating and communicating of the beneficiaries among themselves but mostly with the entire community. Specifically there is to be noticed that the field of the social economy represents “the gate” for employment and this is why this is a part of a wider process for inclusion and social support. There is also given a description of four distinct examples of social economy that are considered to be relevant for different types of social policies.

Keywords: social model, benefits, social policies, social inclusion, poverty.

New social realities require new responses. Change is rapid – and policies need to keep pace, responding innovatively and flexibly to the challenges of globalisation, technological advances and demographic developments.

The European social model should serve this goal, proclaiming that opportunities, access and solidarity may be translated into concrete actions. The declaration of a complete mutual European interventions’ platform is required, a thing that would demonstrate the commitment to yield results for the citizens. It indicates that the European values remain the focal point of EU policies and constitute an integral part of the EU answer to globalization, irrespectively of the individual social protection systems and mechanisms.

Ten years ago, EU leaders pledged to 'make decisive steps toward poverty eradication' by 2010. Today however, a significant number of European citizens still

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live in poverty and have limited access to basic services such as healthcare. Poverty and exclusion not only affect the well being of individuals and their ability to be part of society; they also impair economic development.

Certain social groups are more threatened by poverty, for example families with children – particularly large and single parent families - the elderly, people with disabilities and immigrants. In all groups, women are more vulnerable than men. The way poverty affects people is complex and interdependent with social exclusion. Besides the well-known problems such as insufficient housing conditions or the lack of housing, citizens living in poverty may face¹:

- Poor health and reduced access to healthcare
- Reduced access to education, training and leisure activities
- Financial exclusion and over-indebtedness
- Limited access to modern technology, such as the Internet

With the motto “Stop poverty now”, the European Commission and the Spanish chair of the EU declared the start of the European year 2010 to fight poverty and social exclusion. This campaign aims to place the battle against poverty that directly affects one in six Europeans, to the foreground of the European Union during 2010. The EU provides a framework through which Member States develop their own priorities and strategies. This framework takes into account the multi-dimensional nature of poverty while focusing particular on the following²:

- Eliminating child poverty and poverty within families
- Facilitating access to the labour markets, education and training
- Overcoming discrimination and tackling the gender aspects and age aspects of poverty
- Combating financial exclusion and over-indebtedness
- Combating poor housing and housing exclusion
- Promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups

Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities added: “One in six people in Europe face a daily struggle to make ends meet, but poverty can also affect the rest of us – and our societies as a whole. While most of the tools for tackling poverty are at national level, three-quarters of

¹ <http://www.2010againstpovetry.eu/about/tackling.html?langid=el>.

² <http://www.2010againstpovetry.eu/about/tackling.html?langid=el>.

Europeans also expect the EU to help. The European Year puts this issue at the top of the AGENDA so that Europe as a whole can join forces to fight poverty and social exclusion”¹.

Goals and guidelines of the European Commission

The 2010 European Year aims to raise greater awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty in Europe, both among key players such as governments and social partners and among the public at large. It also aims to mobilise these different partners in the fight against poverty; promote social integration and inclusion; and encourage clear commitments on drawing up EU and national policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

Most importantly within the framework that is formed on the occasion of the year against poverty the strategic axis of the Union is highlighted. More specifically and based on the Strategic document- framework of the European Union we distinguish the following goals and guidelines²:

a) Recognition of rights

Recognising the fundamental right of people in a situation of poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and be fully part of the society. The European Year will increase public awareness of the situation of people experiencing poverty, particularly that of groups or persons in vulnerable situations, and will help to promote their effective access to social, economic and cultural rights as well as to sufficient resources and quality services. The European Year will also help to combat stereotypes and stigmatisation.

Within the framework of the above goal the European year must:

1. Raise public awareness of the fundamental rights and needs of people in poverty,
2. Overturn current stereotypes concerning people in poverty and in exclusion, through campaigns, media coverage and project funding within the framework of established cultural programs,

¹ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/36&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EL&guiLanguage=en>.

² European year against poverty and social exclusion(2010) - Strategic document-framework - Priorities and guidelines for the activities of the European year 2010, European Commission, <http://2010againstpoverity.ec.europa.eu>

3. Aid people living in conditions of poverty in becoming more self-sufficient, by providing access to a decent income and to services of general interest.

b) Shared responsibility and participation

Increasing public character of policies and actions concerning social inclusion, emphasising both collective and individual responsibility in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, as well as the importance of promoting and supporting voluntary activities. The European Year will promote the involvement of public and private actors, inter alia through pro-active partnerships. It will foster awareness and commitment and create opportunities for contributions by all citizens, in particular people with direct or indirect experience of poverty;

Within the framework of the above goal the European year must:

1. Facilitate the public debate between public bodies and the private sector in order to surpass the obstacles to the participation of individuals: through meetings, such as for example the yearly meeting for Europeans living in poverty
2. Promote the exchange of good practices between member states at national, regional and local level, and between institutions of management and the interested parties concerning the sense of shared responsibility.
3. Promote the participation of entrepreneurs and social partners in activities aiming at the active reinsertion of unemployed in the labour market.

c) Cohesion

Promoting a more cohesive society by raising public awareness of the benefits for all if in a society poverty is eradicated, fair distribution is enabled and no one is marginalised. The European Year will foster a society that sustains and develops quality of life, including quality of skills and employment, social well-being, including the well-being of children, and equal opportunities for all. It will, moreover, ensure sustainable development and solidarity between and within generations and policy coherence with EU action worldwide.

Within the framework of the above goal, the European year must:

1. Organize special events and campaigns offering the opportunity to organizations and sectors which are not necessarily active in the fight against poverty to get into dialogue with experts on social exclusion,
2. Enhance a greater promotion and consistency of communitarian and national programs and mechanisms promoting social cohesion, sustainable growth and solidarity between generations.

d) Commitment and concrete action

Reiterating the strong political commitment of the EU and the Member States to have a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion and promoting this commitment and actions at all levels of governance. Building upon the achievements and potential of the OMC on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, the European Year will strengthen the political commitment, by focusing political attention on and mobilising all interested parties, for the prevention of and fight against poverty and social exclusion and give further impetus to the Member States' and the European Union's actions in this field.

Within the framework of the above goal the European year must:

1. Strengthen the EU and national authorities' commitment to social justice and to greater cohesion. Particularly the events of the international day against poverty on the 17th of October 2010 must include concrete initiatives, such as a statement for the reaffirming of the commitment for poverty eradication
2. Ensure the strong commitment to the developmental goals of the millennium set by the UN and to the resolution declaring the second UN decade for the elimination of poverty (2008-2017).

The framework shaped by the above axes is in line with the Active Inclusion policies. Active inclusion, in turn, is composed of three pillars that promote activation, and marks the link between rights and activation of the potential user and includes a group of incentives so that any person in need can acquire the right to access services and provisions. The Active Inclusion Process -as described in Statement 44 of the Commission in 2006 and incorporated in Recommendation 5737 of 2008- develops in parallel with three pillars (COM (2006) 44) within the framework of the renewed Social Agenda 2005-2010:

Adequate Income Support

The first pillar highlights the necessity of ensuring adequate resources in order to secure a decent standard of living through financial aids provided from the social protection systems of the member states. It reinstates to the forefront Recommendation 441 of 1992 placing the necessity of ensuring adequate resources for the social protection systems at national level and the necessity of fulfilling the right to adequate income, at the forefront of the wider debate. Simultaneously the link between this right and the active availability for employment and training is mentioned. The necessity of combining the first pillar with policies that promote economic and social inclusion of people excluded from the labour market is equally underlined, at least for those able to work.

Inclusive Labour Markets

The second pillar that refers to the labour market includes the promotion of measures that remove barriers to access the labour market. Simultaneously, mutual principles between the member states and the national social protection systems that concern the labour market are supported. Specifically, measures that aim at addressing the characteristics able to produce and reproduce phenomena of constraint and exclusion for the whole population, or for special groups, are promoted. Emphasis is given to investment in human resources and organization of specialised support services for workers and, more widely, for those who are able to work.

Access to quality services

Always stressing that the main responsibility rests with the state and national social protection regulations, the third pillar focuses on the support that may be provided by the subordinate social protection services. Emphasis is given to welfare and education, to social care and health services such as housing. At the core of the third pillar there may be found the necessity of ensuring the effective function of an integrated spectrum of services as safety net, in order to enable the substantial support of those threatened by social exclusion and particularly by exclusion from employment. The personalization of services belongs, among others, to the mutual values of states, as well as the organization of measurement and evaluation systems of the intervention effectiveness.

The general conclusion arising from the pillars of the Strategies for Active Inclusion is the presentation of the multidimensional nature of the process of social exclusion and of the causal factors that may lead individuals or groups to the margins. Employment as a tool for addressing the phenomenon is not abandoned it is however recognized that significant interventions are simultaneously required in order to achieve the Union goal for the social inclusion of those found in the spectrum of exclusion as well as to ensure and aid social cohesion according to the Lisbon goals. The three pillars supplementary set a policy framework where interventions are included along with employment. These interventions incorporate the spectrum of public policy interventions such as the quality of employment (wages- insurance) and the protection that the social protection systems of the member states offer to those at risk of social exclusion. The issues of securing the minimum guaranteed income combined with the accessibility to social services complete the framework of the essential fight against exclusion, highlighting the weakness of one-dimensional policies addressing exclusion through occupation.

Specifically, concerning the second pillar for inclusive labour markets the following are noted.

Inclusive labour markets

Adopt arrangements covering persons whose condition renders them fit for work to ensure they receive effective help to enter or re-enter and stay in employment that corresponds to their work capacity.

(i) Promote the following common principles in the context of active inclusion strategies:

- address the needs of people excluded from the labour market in order to facilitate their progressive reintegration into society and into the labour market and to enhance their employability,*
- take the necessary measures to promote inclusive labour markets in order to ensure access to employment is an opportunity open for all,*
- promote quality jobs, including pay and benefits, working conditions, health and safety, access to lifelong learning and career prospects, in particular with a view to preventing in-work poverty,*
- tackle labour market segmentation by promoting job retention and advancement.*

(ii) Implement these principles through the following practical guidelines:

- expand and improve investment in human capital through inclusive education and training policies, including effective lifelong strategies; adapt education and training systems in response to new competence requirements, and the need for digital skills,*
- active and preventive labour market measures, including tailored, personalised, responsive services and support involving early identification of needs, job-search assistance, guidance and training, and motivation to seek a job actively,*
- continually review the incentives and disincentives resulting from tax and benefit systems, including the management and conditionality of benefits and a significant reduction in high marginal effective tax rates, in particular for those with low incomes, while ensuring adequate levels of social protection,*
- provide support for the social economy and sheltered employment as a vital source of entry jobs for disadvantaged people, promote financial inclusion and microloans, financial incentives for employers to recruit, the development of new sources of jobs in services, particularly at local level, and raise awareness of labour market inclusiveness,*
- promote adaptability and provide in-work support and a supportive environment, including attention to health and well-being, non-discrimination and the application of labour law in conjunction with social dialogue.*

The above observation focuses on the necessity of combined action in order to efficiently address the process of social exclusion through job markets' regulation. Specifically, our assert is that the field of social economy represents "the gate" to occupation and therefore is part of a wider process of social inclusion and protection. The weakness of the subordinate structures to absorb employment demand renders necessary the development of social economy as an alternative channel towards employment for individuals or groups that face access difficulties. Additionally the field of social economy yields prolific benefits in reference to the goal of social inclusion by organizing a complex process of activation and communication of the beneficiaries between themselves but mainly with the wider community.

The framework of individual policies - Social protection EU countries

The state maintains its central role in the course of the European integration and the convergence of the function and organization patterns of social policy. Even though the pressure exerted from all supranational institutions and associations may affect national policies, the individual characteristics of the social policy systems maintain their distinctive nature (Sakellaropoulos, T., Bergham J., 2004).

Simultaneously the local level constitutes a central theme for its more active participation in the practice of social policy. The detailed debate concerns its role and the inclusion of self-administration bodies into unified social protection schemes or into spatially limited mechanisms. The active involvement of the self-administration bodies to exercise social policy constituted and still constitutes an object of intense reflection inasmuch as it poses questions in reference to the role of the central state. Certainly the significance of the state in the social protection mechanisms is not distinct from the contribution of the government. The nature of the system concerns central decisions for the levels of protection it offers and the goals posed on the state level.

The intervention of the state in order to offer solutions and answers to each overbearing social problem did not always have the same ideological foundation. On the contrary it drew the arguments of its goals and the methods for the hierarchy of its priorities from various theoretical approaches, which were expressed in the practices and mainly in the objectives of the social policy systems. The interventions of the welfare state were based on the convention of the «Keynesian Consent » with the decisive intervention of the state to the economy and more widely to the social schemes.

In the political field, the conditions shaping the «Keynesian Consent» - that is the agreement between the counterweight economic interests of the competitive social forces - that develop within the framework of the same social schema, lost their

power and were in essence rejected as a «undesirable» political choice. The rationality of the state intervention choice in the economic sphere constituted an object of criticism with the efficacy that this choice may have as a criterion. Simultaneously, with the emergence of the neoliberal model as a rational and orthodox policy, where the constraint of state intervention and the market constitute the principal regulation factor of counterbalancing interests and that with its «elaboration» from state constraints ensured social harmony, there were developed the premises so that the environment created during the post-war social state, ceased to exist and a significant portion of the conditions that maintained it was reduced.

The various social policy systems that revealed in the social field the degree of accordance between the counter-balancing social interests and the competitive social forces reached their «golden» period in the 1970s and primarily with the «oil crisis» in 1973. Until then the social policy systems irrespectively of the individual differences and variations that appeared on the “route”¹, were based on the common economic

¹ a) Liberal regimes, such as the USA, Canada, Australia, are characterized by social assistance depending on income and by a limited scale of social insurance. Low level of provisions and predominance of work ethos and the stigmatization of the recipients of benefits. The market is ascendant and does not face any problems from the small-scale de-commercialization of social relations that the function of the welfare state entails. Concerning social stratification, there exists a relative equality between poor recipients and a differentiation between the poor and other individuals entitled to benefits and monetary assistance through the operation of the market.

b) Conservative regimes, such as Germany, France, Austria, Italy. They are characterized by a mixture of status and corporatism, but also of a particular role of the Church, which promotes the values of the traditional familial organization and assists the state in meeting social needs. A good social security exists, however social benefits and services are unevenly distributed, through different regulation and concessions, to the social groups. Mitigating the worst consequences of the market operation, but not inequalities.

c) Socialist-democratic social-democratic regimes, basically those of the Scandinavian states. They are characterized by generous social provisions to all citizens, so that the de-commercialization extends to the middle classes, whilst the working class enjoys a high standard of living. The family and the female sex are significantly supported, resulting in an increase of individual independence, in a decrease of the dependence from family, in the socialization of family expenditures and therefore in the greater participation of women in the job market. The cost of the whole social protection system, through increased taxation, is certainly very expensive, however the purpose of social cohesion is achieved like unlike anywhere else in the world.

d) the regimes currently in place in the eastern Europe countries where many analysts (Deacon et al., 1997; Gotting, 1998; Nelson, 2001; Wagener, 2002) agree, while political and economic institutions of the former regime were fundamentally challenged during the first half of the nineties, and while the social situation deteriorated remarkably, existing

basis defined by the Fondest model of production and economic development, characterized by consumption on a large-scale. Besides the consolidation of the «production line» in industry, that equals the increase of labour productivity, the Fondest model of production evolves simultaneously with the participation and the responsibility of the state in economic growth, a role that is in accordance with what has already been established by Keynes in the interwar period concerning the participation of the state in the economic process (Keynes, 1973). With the participation of the state in designing and applying the goal of economic growth, the wellbeing of the working class is equally achieved through a system of social provisions.

The above model that combined economic growth with the ensuring of a relatively high level of social cohesion prevailed in Western Europe post-war, posing as a condition for its validity the elevated rates of growth that were achieved until the mid 1970s. The changes that occurred from the middle of that decade and onwards, both in economic terms which had ensured the success of the Fondest model of economic growth and concerning the ideological and political framework, in which the «Keynesian Consent» was ensured, resulted in the collapse of the Fondest model. Specifically, the decrease of growth rates, but also a range of political and social developments, such as the gradual weakening of the political project of combating inequalities, led to the loss of the justification basis of the model of economic and social growth that was created during the post-war period.

A landmark for the social policy systems crisis was the 1970s and specifically the economic crisis, resulting to an abrupt increase of the oil prices in 1973. From that period and for at least two decades the social policy systems attempted to meet the increasing social needs with a methodology that could not ultimately lead, given the economic, political and ideological conditions, to a new era of prosperity for social policy. As a result, and specifically for the social policy systems of the European Continent, a new picture is created in which both the gradual constraint of their provisions, as well as, by gradually and increasingly incorporating a rational of cost mitigation and cost reduction, the unwillingness to proceed to radical structural changes is evident (Pierson, 1996).

Simultaneously the previously successful Keynesian economic recipes for the increase of demand, wages, occupation and growth, with the concurrent inflation and unemployment control, were unable to help, given the new conditions of stagflation

social policy mechanisms of the former communist regimes were largely maintained and consolidated in the early years of transition, since the post-communist governments did not bring about major shifts in social policy in order to dismantle and reconfigure these welfare mechanisms. Consequently, political and economic instability of the early years of transition obliged political actors to lean on existing these mechanisms at large, and adopt short-term policies to cope with the emerging problems of welfare.

and de-industrialization. The acute economic crisis creates new forms of inequality between the social strata, but also between the workers themselves, whilst aggravating the social exclusion from the labour market and from the services provided by the welfare state, for social groups such as women and young people. The new conditions of global recession cause financial crisis and certainly the crisis of the social state such as it was structured in the post-war period.

The welfare state is affected in a multitude of ways and the classical post-war state is in severe crisis, which it cannot possibly overcome without radical change (see Taylor-Gooby 1991, Mishra 1990). The economic and technological restructuring, the great-especially long-term unemployment, the ageing of the population, immigration, the changes in the household model and the status of women, dramatically increase the dependence of a large part of the population on the services provided by the welfare state and create new social protection necessities and new social exclusion conditions. Combined with the attempted reduction of social costs from the neoliberal governments and policies and the primacy of economy in society, the pressure exerted on the social state is immense.

After an initial period of extreme neoliberal policy prevalence both in states of developed capitalism as in regional ones, and given that they did not succeed in at least limiting the increase of inequalities between individuals, groups and states, deterioration of the indicators of poverty and social exclusion (without achieving any kind of economic growth), we find ourselves in a period wherein the intervention of the state for economic development and social cohesion seems to be essential. Possibly not in the way state intervention was practised in the past - that is the direct involvement of the state in the economy and the production processes - but in a sense designing and making a kind of policy that opens the way and leads to the development of new means of production and of the knowledge society, whilst ensuring the achievement of social cohesion, through the modernization of the social protection systems. The ideas of Nobel-prize winner economist Joseph Stiglitz that re-introduced the role of the state, emphasised the role of institutions whilst recognising the inabilities of the market, are indicative and actually contributed to the change of climate in respect to the initial extreme versions of neoliberals (Stiglitz, 2002).

Notably the main escape measure from the crisis consists of overthrowing the hitherto de facto input system that supported the social policy systems. The decrease of the level of social protection and the transfer of social responsibility principally to the individual and to the participation conditions of individuals to the employment market were primarily chosen. Simultaneously this shift was accompanied by an increase of the budget for the human resources of the economy, aiming at the strengthening of knowledge and skills with an emphasis to the functional link of training with the job market, so as to fulfil each demand need of the job market in «functional» work force. At the core of this choice lies the choice of decreasing the

role of the state's participation in the social policy systems, evidently considering the state as a weak and inadequate promotion factor of social equality.

The constraint of the state is accompanied by parallel proposals for its substitution. Thus the role of the family re-emerged as a field of fulfilling social needs, needs that were previously ensured exclusively by the provisions of the state. At the ideological core of this choice one may note the promotion of solidarity between generations; however this particular conception is defined by a relatively optimistic and maximalist approach of the possibilities of the contemporary familial forms and more widely of the familial relations in supporting the social form systems.

For the reconsideration of the relation between public and individual that comprises each time the individual «nature» of the social policy systems various schemas have been proposed. The ideological foundation of which is infused with a neo-liberal undertone since these systems are ultimately accompanied by the substantial deterioration of the traditional social policy systems. Specifically a promotion of individual responsibility is observed for fulfilling the needs that until recently the state primarily addressed, whilst simultaneously the strengthening of the role of the family in fulfilling needs is promoted.

The idea of an individual that is obliged to take measures for addressing future needs is now promoted, with the strengthening of the private insurance systems being a prime example. Simultaneously the strengthening of the role of volunteer organization is noted («the third pillar» of social policy), as well as the more active part of companies and organizations in the social policy systems, political choices that are defined at the core by a promotion of individual responsibility and a weakening of the role of the state in social policy systems. It is of note that under this light the proposal, applied in Great Britain, to organize the provision mechanisms in such a way as to have service purchases (quasi- market) was formulated, aiming at the strengthening of the efficacy and the participation of the private, even the profit-making, sector combined with costs' reduction of (Mishra, 1990), where at the possibility of users to choose was highlighted as an exceptional advantage.

It is evident that the solutions chosen to escape from the crisis have a direct reference to the political, social and economic determinants of the existing systems. The intensity of pressure towards social state that peaked during the 1990s equalled an overall deregulation of the social policy systems which, combined with the wider economical, political and social developments, resulted in the development of a framework where social policy issues were reshaped. Ensuring benefits from the social state and the burden from the growing costs, determined by its operation, were linked to an increase of unemployment, primarily in Europe which traditionally functioned under the social state. Finally, and as evidenced by the current study, the issue of maintaining social benefits constitutes a primarily political issue which indeed remains central. Therefore the proposals suggested and the solutions

proposed in order to escape from the crisis cannot but constitute an object of political confrontation, and thus constitute a matter of criticism under the light of the greater political, social and economic programme in which these proposals and solutions are included (Rhodes - Ferrera, 2000).

Along with the drastic change of the society, the new reality needs to leave aside the solutions of the past. The challenges posed by the knowledge society to the social state, but also to the society itself must be noted. It is a fact that class differences, at least in their old form, are altered to the point that certain social scientists note that social class no longer plays a substantial role (Clark J, 2002). However as Esping-Andersen argues, «the irony is that although social class is less observable, its importance is much more decisive» (Esping-Andersen, 2002). In the knowledge society and economy the conditions for ensuring a proper standard of living depend on the accumulation of «cognitive capital» and on the cognitive and learning abilities of each citizen. Indeed as indicated by Shavit and Blossfeld (1992) «social heritage» is as powerful today as it was in the past, particularly in the sectors of cognitive development and educational achievement.

According to Esping-Andersen (2002) and other social scientists a new social state must be built based on the admission that social costs do not constitute consumer costs (or at least solely consumer costs) of the state budget, but an investment. In the case of education, the fact that educational expenditures constitute an investment that yields «bonuses» becomes more widely accepted since it renders citizens more productive. The same logic must apply to other cases as well, such as gender equality policy, since it does not only constitute an emancipating political goal of the feminist movement, but it also contributes significantly both to economic growth and social cohesion. The greater the number of mothers working the more economy and prosperity increases (and indeed in knowledge intensive sectors, since women constitute an educated work force) and at the same time familial and child poverty is prevented.

Indeed the women employment and especially of those that have children constitutes a target of strategic importance both for developmental and social reasons. And that is because the activation of more family members in occupation is the most certain safety measure against instability, whilst the creation of autonomous insurance rights for women will deter future problems. In this context the issues of single-parent families – women raising their children alone – emerge as particularly intense fully justifying the political priority they are given. More so, one of the policies that must be promoted concerns the reconciliation of familial and professional life with measures such as child care and, generally speaking, family support.

In the current environment, social policy appears to diversify both in goal-setting and in means. New social needs demand adaptations so as to enable the social policy

systems to give valid responses to social problems. Already from the middle of the previous decade primary attention has been given to the participation of the services' user in fulfilling his needs. At the core of this perspective there may detect the following issues. First, the relation that the potential services' user develops with the society wherein one is included, and second, the net of obligations and rights arising from the relation between the services' user and society. The approach in question is based on the perception of social policy as a means of promoting social interest in combination with the improvement of the individual situation of the services' user. The redistribution of the overall income is no longer a priority, whilst the goal of social cohesion summarizes the vague minimum level of social security. The individual and not necessarily the group is the target of the systems and the individual must be encouraged in order to remain or be re-included into society.

At the core of the first category one may find the orientation of the individual's action towards the improvement of his own position. Based on the approach in question, individual strategy may lead to the improvement of society as a whole. As it is argued, it is essential for the social policy systems to exploit the rationale of the spontaneous movement of an individual's action to his personal and familial benefit and as a consequence, in order to function in the interests of the whole and not of the individuals - service users, social policy systems should adopt reward and limitation mechanisms towards the sum of its users. However the above approach incorporates the concept of individual responsibility for it links it with the choices and the receipts of the individuals themselves. This social category consists of a population characterized by a dependency relationship with the provisions of the social policy systems. This population mainly survives under the limit or at the limit of poverty, generally profiting exclusively from the benefits of the social policy systems. The unwillingness to actively participate - an act that would release the individual from social benefits - that would render the individual independent in order to assume personal responsibility, constitutes the starting point of the above opinions.

The lack of knowledge concerning the objective social conditions that lead or at least predispose the individual towards the spectrum of social exclusion is the obvious inability of the above approaches of social needs. The wider social and economical context is not created as a result of individual choices. For example endemic elements of the economic and social environment, such as unemployment and low-paid jobs, are not defined by individual action. Indeed the negatively charged evaluation of the socially excluded population and the moral stigmatisation of the individual as responsible for the situation it finds itself in, is placed among in the wider criticism of the social policy systems.

The individual choice of activation with the purpose of establishing the status of the citizen and the rights that proceed from it are the focal point of the current debate concerning the content of social policy. The combination of access to benefits and to

the system services with the activation of the users aims at the differentiation of the nature of the current systems in comparison with those of the first post-war period. The state as a guarantee of social security fails under the pressure of the new policy and primarily of the economical matter of state, but also under its relative failure of functioning as redistribution, equality and prosperity mechanism for the whole society (Jordan, 1998).

For this approach, social policy systems should shape these conditions that may protect the individual from the possibility of exclusion and isolation from the whole. For the viability and efficacy of the system, users should simultaneously be urged towards their complete and effective inclusion to the whole. Therefore the responsibility of the social policy systems should not solely aim towards the physical preservation of the users, but also to the active re-inclusion of the socially excluded.

The redistribution of wealth is unlikely to constitute a primary political project. In the place of the redistribution of wealth the redistribution of opportunities to individuals is proposed, who in turn will be able to define in the best possible way their personal strategy so as to become integrated in the social framework. The provisions of the social policy systems have a twofold goal setting so as to, on the one hand, limit the provisions to address the needs of those facing social exclusion or already excluded and on the other hand, motivate the potential users towards the direction of using these provisions as the starting point for the reintegration of the individual in competitive terms to the social and occupational environment. The above approach represents the basis of the so called «positive» welfare state and constitutes part of the political philosophy that was theoretically developed by, among others, the sociologist A. Giddiness and was adopted by the labour party in Britain (Giddens, 1998) mainly by Tony Blair's administrations.

Through this approach an attempt was made to frame an alternative of smooth adjustment for the social policy systems to the contemporary political context, which is defined mainly by the dominance of the market forces and rules, as well as by cultural parameters, such as the demographic one, the endemic presence of high unemployment rates, the production conditions, the power of the state, etc. At the core of this approach lies the role of individual's responsibility. However, this approach cannot adequately explain the scope of the possibilities of individual activation in an environment where the correlation of forces is certainly at the expense of individual's action.

It becomes evident that the shift of power from the ecumenical and universal forms of coverage of the post-war social policy systems highlights the inevitable admission to a new era, where the social policy systems in order to survive and maintain their political legitimacy become increasingly selective of the potential service users. Although there emerges currently no new factor that ensures the global prosperity of

society, it must be noted that the state continues to maintain a significant portion of its power and may participate in this security by fulfilling its political role in the field of social protection.

As a conclusion it may be said that the issues concerning the form and the social role, the objectives and the measures that are adopted by the social policy systems, are not exhausted in the above analysis. Even more so since the internal differentiations of the individual approaches shape a sufficiently vague environment, so that the emerging positions are not necessarily attributed to a specific approach. Furthermore, there exist issues that occur in all approaches and therefore aggravate the ambiguity of the boundaries between them. Such issues, as ecology, or sustainable growth are linked to social policy systems and demand answers.

Simultaneously, issues emerge that are defined by who the potential beneficiaries of social protection services are. These issues are directly related to individuals' conditions of participation in society and the rights arising from such participation. At the core of the issue concerning the social state, one may find the debate around civil rights, since, as it has been noted, a central element of the ideological confrontation is the involuntary participation of the individual in the society and the individual responsibility towards society.

The reinforcement of the supranational institutions - that primarily reveals the continuous transformations in the wider European environment - has led to the revival of a debate in concerning the role of the local forces, the scope and the content of their action. The current debate concerning the role of the local forces inevitably includes the comprehension of the term «local» and its interaction with the wider environment, primarily with the member-state. The crucial element of the analysis concerns the role and the power of the modern state, the fields of social policy that it undertakes, as well as the anticipated role for the local authorities. A dimension of the contemporary role of local authorities is the participation of the self-administration bodies in the social policy systems and the level of their intervention in them.

More widely in the European area particularly during the past years a mutual understanding has developed in reference to the role and the importance of social policy as an investment and productive factor. The passage cited from the important Statement of the Commission for the Social Policy Agenda, is characteristic: "...a guiding principle of the new Social Policy Agenda is to strengthen the role of social policy as a productive factor. The greater part of expenditures for health and education represents an investment in human resources, with positive economic results. As a result, a positive correlation between the scale of such expenditures and the productivity level of each country is possible. Social transfers that cover pensions and social insurance do not only contribute to a balanced and redistributed

income throughout the lifetime course and between social groups, but also support a better quality in employment, with added financial gains”.

The levels of social protection ensured by the “welfare state” are a definitive factor for the development of social economy. Specifically, in reference to the utilization of the social capital the necessity of coordinated and organized practices arises in order that both socially excluded individuals and those under the threat of exclusion, may be brought into contact and acquire tangible awareness of the tools for inclusion to community life and not to be caught in the trap of poverty and exclusion.

In this context, the social economy can contribute effectively to social cohesion and is one of the main players fighting against social exclusion (Cace, S.; Nicolaescu, V.; Scoican, A.N., 2010, pp.192-193).

Social Economy and groups of EU Member states

Hereby is given a description – quite abstractive – of four distinctive examples of social economy; these examples have an important relevance for the distinctive examples of social policy. The classification, even if it is susceptible to criticism and contestations in some cases, can be accepted especially regarding the connection between various systems of social protection and the policies of active integration through social economy (Hudson and Williams, 1999).

Four basic social models can be identified:

- The Anglo-Saxon model
- The Scandinavian model
- The Continental European model
- The Southern European model

In this framework there may be identified at least three levels of diversity of the institutions of social economy:

A. At legal level: The legislative framework of social organizations / enterprises in the European Union is different from country to country. In some countries of the European Union (where traditionally exists the Common Law) there is freedom of movements with regard to the creation and operation/functioning of institutions of social economy. On the contrary, in other countries, the enterprises of the social sector have a concrete legislative framework for their operation and are deprived of the possibility of change (such as, company of limited responsibility, a non-profit-making civil society company etc.)

B. At policy level: In some countries with a tradition of collective (like France), institutions of social economy have been created aiming at their connection with the government mechanism, while other countries with a tradition of liberalism (like Great Britain) are more focused on their link with the local self-government.

C. At ideology level: at this level, there is discrimination between activities of concrete or collective interest. The activities of concrete interest are referred to the services providing for the members of institutions/associations of social economy, while the activities of collective interest aim at the services providing to the wider community.

The basic characteristics of all four models of social economy in Europe are:

✓ *The Anglo-Saxon model (Liberal and tar-initial systems)*

The Anglo-Saxon approach of social economy is based on the notion of not profit organizations. This model distinguishes the social economy from the private sector, due to the fact that it is based on the voluntary support while many of its benefits address to vulnerable regions or groups of people and sometimes, the growth of the community, both on financial and human resources grounds, are involved.

✓ *The Scandinavian model (Nordic / Social democrat System)*

The Scandinavian model of Sweden and Denmark focuses on covering the collective needs in the sector of social services and promotes the social solidarity and equality of gender. In this framework, the cooperatives/partnerships (being central actors of social economy) operate as collective representatives of the population and put social pressure on the decision processes while they create services networks with public bodies in favour of achieving these objectives.

✓ *The Continental European model (Conservative-Continental model / Collective regime)*

The continental Model of Social Economy focuses on the social support *via* the public systems. In Germany, Austria, France and Belgium, the cooperatives function as founders of services, recognizing the social needs and requirements, creating the suitable covering framework, under the relevant control of the State. This fact has led to the growth of cooperatives and their transformation into federations (in Germany, they have also been were connected to political parties, churches, the Red Cross and other organisations, while in France and Belgium have been connected to religious convictions). In Belgium, this system of big co-operative federations has been related to associations/unions of family support and services providing to the households.

✓ *The Southern European model*

The social model of the Mediterranean countries is not very much developed. It is based on the activities taken by associations and cooperatives - operating in the interests of their members - and it mostly aims at reducing unemployment.

Other additional forms of enterprises of the social economy that correspond to each one of the European social models are:

Anglo-Saxon Approach

Great Britain

In Great Britain no concrete co-operative legislation exists; consequently, it is difficult to determinate the sector of co-operatives and to integrate it to the social economy field. In the framework of cooperatives, many different forms of organizations can be found:

- Self help organizations that have common needs (such as medical / nursing) and are funded by their own members, the Local Self-government or other associations for solidarity. Another example is the Inter-social security Fund, Benenden Healthcare Society; it is a complementary social security that may be used by the members in the case they cannot have other funding (for instance, long waiting list, financial problems, etc)
- Community interest companies that provide social support to special groups of people. These companies have the character of Limited Liability Companies, without any profit motivation or voluntary character. They mostly focus on fighting against poverty and social exclusion.
- Charities. Most organizations, at community level, are registered as charitable organisations and provide services to their members and the local society. The legal forms that the charitable organisations usually have are: Company of limited responsibility by guarantee, unincorporated association, and Unincorporated Trust.

In case the charitable organization makes the choice not to have one of the abovementioned legal forms, it can be registered as Industrial and Provident Society or as an educational or religious institution.

Ireland

The long-lasting unemployment in Ireland, had led the country, in 1990s, to a strategy for development, in favour of the encouragement of local character under the support of cooperation's for development. In this framework, enterprises of social economy have been created as local groups that aimed at finding the most effective solutions against social exclusion. There are five categories of Irish Social institutions:

- Enterprises of Social Integration
- Social enterprises in the sector of accommodation
- Social enterprises that provide personal and local services

- Credit cooperatives
- Local Developmental Organizations

It has to be stressed that their legal form varies, depending on the sector of their activity.

Scandinavian Model

Denmark

Even if in the Danish national economy there may be found many cooperatives, Denmark is one of the very few countries that do not have a co-operative legislation. The status of co-operatives is part of the Commerce Law. The local self-government plays an important role. The 275 Local authorities are focused on decentralizing the administration, are responsible for the primary and secondary education, the advisory and special education as well as the provision of pre-school education and at the same time, they have the responsibility for the public libraries, the intellectual and athletic centres. One of their competences is also the services providing for fighting against social exclusion (immigrants and refugees), their integration into the job market, and the services providing for the elder men (domestic care, day centres, etc.). Also, they are in charge of drinkable water supply, working residences, development planning etc.

Sweden

Sweden, compared to Denmark, indeed has a co-operative legislation. Social economy in Sweden is activated in the sectors of culture, sports and education/training for adults. Since the decade of 1980s, service sector has been added.

The forms of enterprises of social economy in Sweden are:

- Limited responsibility companies
- Economic unions
- Non-profit unions
- Institutions

The sectors of electricity, gas and water supply, accommodation and other enterprising activities as well as health and social work are particularly developed in Sweden, the co-operative enterprises representing the 16, 04%, 11,15%, 6,34% of the total number of enterprises respectively.

At the local level, the Municipalities play an important role. They develop services of social care (children, old men, disabled people etc.), they are responsible for the operation of kindergartens and centres of entertainment for children. Also they are in charge of the primary and secondary education, the advisory and special education and the development planning.

During the last few years, the local self-government is interested in the development of enterprises under the form of organization-institution. Apart from the development of companies, the Municipalities provide social services via private companies. Also, the Municipalities assign part of the implementation of programs/projects, mainly of entertaining character (such as stadiums), to NGOs.

The Collective regime - Continental model

Belgium

In Belgium, a great number of NGOs are born every year, even if the majority of them are considered as par speculative or prostate organizations. Each enterprise, with commercial character, can be considered as “social purpose company”, by adopting determined social objectives and seeking little profit.

The term “enterprise of social economy” has become synonym of social initiatives/ organizations that aim at promoting the professional integration of marginalized- from work- individuals. During the two last decades, a significant number of innovations have entered this field, gaining the recognition and support of the public sector. Social enterprises also exist in the “local services”, such as the social accommodation, the restructuring of places and the activities of care for children and households.

In the housing sector, associations/unions exist and operate as social broker's offices (renovation of not residential properties, public financing). There are also local cooperatives in the accommodation sector that receive public financial support. At the same time, the collaboration among municipalities, other public institutions and voluntary organisations for the administration of hospitals and centres of social intervention has been institutionalized. Finally, the centres of education/training for the employment belong to the regions, but still the local authorities play the major role in the job hunting at local level.

France

Local Contacts (enterprises of social integration) Regis de Quartier.

They provide services of urban management and sign contracts with local regional institutions. This Contact promotes the integration in the labour market of unprivileged individuals by hiring them in local activities and services.

Cooperatives (enterprises with social purposes and collective services provision).

The French co-operative organisations - along with the affiliated co-operative commercial enterprises and the co-operative organisations of commercial products distribution or craftsmanship - occupy directly or indirectly 700.000 workers. There are two categories of cooperatives:

1. Non profit cooperatives: such as consumers, accommodation, rural, craftsmanship, working productive cooperatives
2. Credit cooperatives, such as popular banks, saving banks, organizations of co-operative credit etc.

Moreover, social initiatives of integration in the labour market have been developed for vulnerable groups of people, on economic and social terms, as well as initiatives of providing personal services (to children, old people) with particular activation of volunteers (parents, teachers).

The Southern European model

Italy

In Italy, many enterprises of social economy were born in the decade of 1980s and afterwards, in 1991 the new institutional framework for the social cooperatives was created. Two categories of social cooperatives exist:

- A. Cooperatives that activate in health services, education, social care etc., for vulnerable social groups of people (Social Cooperatives of type A)
- B. Cooperatives that target the social incorporation of vulnerable groups of people (30% of the workers belong to disadvantaged groups, as people in jail, drug users (Social Cooperatives of type B).

The social cooperatives are considered as being part of the social enterprises. Generally speaking, the social enterprises in Italy can have any legal form as long as they deal with a social sector and the 30%, at least, of their workers are disabled people. Apart from the social cooperatives and the social enterprises in Italy, some voluntary non-profit organisations, institutions and public charity institutions exist (istituzioni pubbliche di assistenza e beneficenza - Ipub) that are going under way to turn into enterprises of social utility.

It has to be mentioned that the Italian legislation focuses mostly on supporting the cooperatives (tax reductions, exemption of national insurance etc). Other forms of social enterprises, like the Community enterprises, do not have the same recognition. This way, there is particularly one concrete form of social enterprise.

Spain

Not only does Spain show a well-developed national legislation on social economy, but it has also created important legislation at local level. One of the types of social economy enterprises are the Social initiative co-operatives; they focus on individuals that face problems of exclusion from the labour market. These particular enterprises undertake the organisation of employment for the special enterprising centres (traditional enterprises) and reflect a modern enterprising spirit. The enterprises of the social sector, showing the best results, are those that have been recommended by businessmen of the private sector who see the social economy as a tool for the promotion of social objectives through the business know how of the private sector.

In an effort to combine all policies against social exclusion by promoting the development of social economy, one needs to bear in mind the following: the mechanisms of social protection formulate an environment of larger or smaller social insurance. This environment is essential so that the participants in any initiative of social economy could be protected through a network of social policies that ensure the necessary social capital. Obviously the suitable institutional environment should be simultaneously conceptualized so that initiatives of social economy would flourish.

The organisational structures of a State as well as the institutional dependence (path dependency) along with the particular characteristics of the social forms shape the *data* where the initiatives of social economy are expressed and developed as parts, associated or independent from the mechanisms of social insurance, the State or the official institutions.

Finally, it can reinforce the idea that, since the appearance of the first forms of social economy is that this innovative form of economy contributes significantly to a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, the creation and provision of social services, to sustainable development and democratization and to increasing public involvement (Cace, S.; Arpinte, D.; Scoican, A.N., 2010, p. 30)

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