
CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION AGAINST SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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In this article I would like to underline the role of cross-border co-operation in the field of social policy within the European Union in the fight against social exclusion.

The concept of social exclusion is very difficult to define. It is a relatively new concept and it is very strongly connected with the national and regional social reality. The mobility and the relative definition are great challenges within the EU, which wants to become an economic and social cohesive structure. If we broadly define this concept as not being an active part of the economic, social and political life of the community, we can see the important place that the regional policy has (or should have) in general and cross-border co-operation in particular in the battle against social exclusion.

The article is structured in two parts. The first part tries to take a critical approach to the concept of social exclusion. Unfortunately, too often ideological language is used by academics or researchers even if it is understandable that this concept is very vulnerable to the ideological temptation. The second part stresses the role of cross-border co-operation in the building up of an EU with socially included citizens. I would like to start from the Lisbon goals as a main direction of EU development and extension.

LISBON GOALS

It is well-known that according to the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, from March 2000 the EU has formulated as a strategic goal for the first decade of the third millennium “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of a sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”. It is a very daring goal with strong effects in many fields, social policy being one of the most important of them, taking into account the strong tradition of European

welfare states. Within this general goal, social policy, employment policy and economic policy are seen as strongly tied in an interdependent relationship. A modern social policy, adapted to the economic, social and demographic challenges, is accredited as a source of economic growth. And all these efforts have as a final goal the socially included European citizen, who is (or should be) an active part of the EU horizontal and vertical extension.

We can say that the implications in the social policy field of the Lisbon goals are:

- a) life-long learning
- b) full employment and better jobs
- c) poverty release
- d) social inclusion.

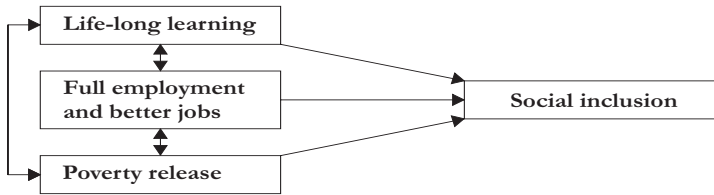
The EU cannot become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” without stressing the role of life-long learning. We are living in a global world with drastic and sudden technological changes. The European economy needs skilled employment with a high level of education in order to meet the global economy competition challenge. At the EU employee’s level, life-long learning is very important because it is very difficult to cope with sudden technological changes during an ever-longer active life. The older age of retreat and the EU goal according to which the level of the older workers in employment (persons with the age between 55 and 64) in 2010 should be at least 50% are two very important arguments for stressing the role of life-long learning in the current and future EU. The high levels of education and skills are also important conditions for obtaining a well paid and better job. It is scientifically proven that there is a positive strong correlation between the lack of skills and the risk of poverty.

Full employment (100%) in the democratic world is an utopia. We remember very well the employment policy in the communist regime when a jobless (not unemployed) person was regarded as a criminal. Now, even if we want to eliminate unemployment, regarded as a bad thing, in the real world we can see that this is impossible. Even in countries like Luxembourg and Sweden there was a small level of unemployment in the golden era before the oil crisis of the 1970s. We also have to take into account the argument that a rigid employment policy can be an important obstacle in coping with economic global competition. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that the increase in the employment

rate will decrease the burden of the welfare state, positively correlate with poverty release and will finally help accomplish social inclusion.

So far we can see the interdependence between life-long learning, full employment and better jobs and poverty release, as well as between all these and social inclusion. But to go further it is necessary to deeply analyse the concept of social inclusion (or exclusion) in the light of EU social policy.

Scheme no. 1.



SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

First of all, let’s start drawing a general definition of social inclusion. The socially included citizen is a dynamic member of society, who takes part in the economic, political, social and cultural activity of the community where s/he lives. So far we have seen the strong upward connection between social inclusion and other dimensions of social policy, including poverty release. In order the better to understand this concept I propose that answers should be found to the following two questions:

- 1) Why “social inclusion” now?
- 2) Why “social inclusion” in the EU (and not in the USA)?

1) In 1974 the book *Les exclus. Un français sur dix* was published, in which, for the first time, excluded citizens were discussed. Its author, René Lenoir, stressed the fact that in France, the third wealthiest country in the world at that time, one French citizen out of five was physically, mentally and socially inadaptive and one out of ten was socially ill-adaptable¹. Lenoir emphasised the fact that there is no cause to effect relation between extreme poverty and social ill-adaptability, but there is a correlation between these two phenomena. It means that even if a person is not poor, s/he can be socially ill-adaptable. The presence of “the

¹ Lenoir, R. (1974). *Les exclus. Un français sur dix*. Édition du Seuil. p. 33.

other France” shows that “the deadly danger is not anymore represented by the Russian rackets, but the social disintegration, the consequences of a society without human purpose”. Of course, Lenoir’s approach is strongly ideological, but it shows that even in a wealthy society the social exclusion risk is very high.

Let’s go back to the first question: why social inclusion now? To this question we can give at least three answers: post-industrial society, changes in representative democracy and post-materialist values.

Post-industrial society means that dirty workers coming out of heavy industries is now just a memory, at least in developed countries. In 1997 the share of the total working age population in the EU was 3.0% in agriculture, 17.8% in industry, 39.7% in the services and 39.5% non-employed (unemployed jobseekers and citizens outside the labour market). In USA the situation of employment by sector was better: 2.0% in agriculture, 17.7% in industry, 54.3% in the services and 26.0% were non-employed. Two things become obvious. First, the share of people working in the services represents from a distance the biggest rate from the working age population. Second, we have to see the great distance between the EU and the USA regarding the rate of population which is working in the services and not employed. The Lisbon targets for 2010 are 70% for total employment rate, more than 60% for female employment rate and 50% for older workers employment. The 2001 figures were 64.1%, 55.0%, 38.8%² respectively. There are some groups with special difficulties on the labour market in getting jobs: disabled persons, women, older persons, long-term unemployed persons, young people, and ethnic minorities. The difference between women and men regarding the employment rate in some countries reaches around 20%. So the problem of equality between men and women is not just a humanistic one. It is about the big risk for women to be poor in active life, as well as after retreat, taking into account the trend of the individualisation of the pension scheme. Providing better jobs requiring a high level of education is one of the main challenges of the EU in the present post-industrial society.

In *Citizens and the State* Han-Dieter Klingeman and Dieter Fucks (eds.) are talking about the change of representative democracy in the western capitalistic

² Adequate and sustainable pensions, Joint report by the Commission and the Council, European Commission, 2003, p. 42.

countries³. Societal modernisation determined individual modernisation which at its turn determined a change of values and the increase of personal qualification. By societal modernisation Inkeles understands the change to a well-informed citizen, independent as to the sources of information, ready for new experiences and ideas. Inkeles talks about a change from mainly materialistic values to post-materialistic values, which are focused on psychological safety, a stronger accent on the membership feeling, self-expression and the quality of life. At the political level the effect is the decrease of citizens' confidence in central government and old political actors (parties) instead of an increase in confidence in local government and new political actors (local organisations or new social movements). This change can be very important for the construction of the EU, for the problems of regionalization, local communities, and the deficit of democracy within the EU.

In conclusion we can say that the new concept of social inclusion was an outcome of the economic, social and cultural changes.

2) There is an opinion that this new concept has been such a success because it sounds better to say that in the EU there is a high level of socially excluded citizens instead of the "poor citizens" expression. Maybe this is a valid argument, but it is not a sine qua non condition of the active presence of this concept. I think that the main argument for using it is the fact that it is impossible to build a socially cohesive EU community with citizens who are not an active part of the EU horizontal and vertical extension. This is why outside the EU and before the Treaty of Maastricht in the European Community the concept of social inclusion was not used or at least not as much as today. This concept was used for the first time in Maastricht in the Treaty of the European Union. "Social inclusion" comes to fill the economic, social and cultural gaps within the EU.

I was discussing earlier the change that happened in the relationship between the political actors and the citizens. A more positive attitude to the local community, respectively to local political actors on the one hand and the diminution of the positive attachment to central government on the other hand can be a social argument that legitimates regionalism as an ideology and a practical implementation. In a Europe of centralised national states it is very difficult for the power from Brussels to lead this new social and economic body. According

³ Klingeman, H-D. & Fuchs, D. (1995). *Citizens and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

to the new social and political values on the one hand and to the principle of subsidiarity on the other, the regionalism comes to meet what was called the deficit of democracy in the EU. Of course this is not the only way to deal with this challenge. Nevertheless, the last EU parliamentary elections showed that there is a big gap between population interest in national elections and EU elections. Even Romano Prodi recognised that the 2004 candidates of regions for the European Parliament had a national (and we can add that sometimes it was nationalistic) rhetoric. A participative political culture implies a cognitive, affective, and evaluative active orientation. A socially included person can be an active person who overcomes the deficit of democracy. Of course an active position is not enough; there is also the need for institutions and legitimate policies.

In the second half of the 19th century in Romanian history there was a big dispute between the liberals and the conservative regarding the new ideas that came from the French Revolution. The liberals were in favour of important changes, new laws and new institutions while the conservative were against all of these “forms without content”. By “content” they understood values, attitudes, and elements of social, economic, cultural, and political reality which had to correspond to the new forms. This theory of forms without content can be an argument for eurosceptics. Emmanuel Todd wrote a book called *L’invention de l’Europe* (The invention of Europe) in the foreword of which he writes that “the Treaty of Maastricht is a piece of work done by amateurs and persons ignorant of history and the life of the societies”⁴. So there are attitudes and arguments pro and against the EU in general and the regions in particular.

But what is a region? According to the European Parliament, “a development region means a territory that forms, from the geographical point of view, a net unity or a similar assembly of territories in which there is a continuity, in which the population has some common elements and wants to keep the specificity so resulted, and to develop it in order to stimulate the cultural, social and economic progress”⁵. Nuts II is maybe the most important regional division of the European space. Is it really a form with content? Maybe it is not, but there are a lot of arguments that it can become so.

⁴ Todd, E. (2002). *Inventarea Europei*. Edited by Amarcord. Timișoara. p. 9.

⁵ Preda, M. & Chassard, Y. (2001). *Politici de dezvoltare regională*. Edited by European Institut from Romania. p. 11.

REGIONAL POLICY AND CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION AGAINST SOCIAL EXCLUSION

It is a common thing that in the EU there are big economic disparities. This happens not just between EU Member States but also within member states. There are big differences between the South and the North of Italy and Portugal, between the East and West of Germany and between Ile de France and the French overseas territories. These disparities have increased, starting with the EU extension from 1 May 2004 and will further increase in 2007 with the joining of Romania and Bulgaria.

Table no. 1. *GDP per capita in Central European candidate countries and in the EU15 in 1998 with regard to EU average.*

	Central European candidate countries				European Union			
	The 10 highest		The 10 lowest		The 10 highest		The 10 lowest	
1	Praha (CZ)	114	Yuzhen Tsentralen (BG)	22	Inner London (UK)	243	Ipeiros (EL)	42
2	Bratislavský (SK)	99	Nord-Est (RO)	22	Hamburg (D)	186	Réunion (F)	50
3	Közép Magyarország (HU)	72	Severoiztochen (BG)	22	Luxembourg (L)	176	Extermadura (E)	50
4	Slovenija (SI)	69	Severen Tsentralen (BG)	22	Bruxelles-Capitale (B)	169	Guadeloupe (F)	52
5	Jihozápad (CZ)	57	Yugozapaden (BG)	22	Wien (A)	163	Acores (P)	52
6	Ostravsko (CZ)	57	Severozapaden (BG)	23	Oberbayren (D)	161	Dytiki Ellada (EL)	53
7	Nyugat-Dunántúl (HU)	54	Yugoiztochen (BG)	24	Darmstadt (D)	154	Peloponnisos (EL)	53
8	Jihovýchod (CZ)	53	Sud (RO)	25	Ile de France (F)	152	Guyane (F)	53
9	Severozápad (CZ)	53	Nord-Vest (RO)	26	Bremen (D)	144	Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki (EL)	55
10	Mazowieckie	53	Lubelskie (PL)	26	Utrecht	142	Ionia Nisia (EL)	56

Source: Eurostat (2001)

The regional policies through the redistribution of Structural Funds have an important function in the accomplishment of a cohesive economic and social EU. The economic gaps between the European regions can be an important source of

tensions and also obstacles for the creation of a strong and competitive entity in global society. The history of European structural policies shows us that the poor class—rich class report at the national state level has been replaced by the poor country (region)—rich country (region) report at the EU level. Moreover, what was called the trans-class alliance between the capital and the workforce of a certain geographical region creates an economic and social gap between the European regions which represents an additional argument for supporting regions in difficulty.

Cross-border co-operation has a very important place within regional policy, for a number of reasons, the first of them being the demographic one. Because of the geographical position and size of the new Member State countries, roughly 62% of the population of the new Member States plus Bulgaria and Romania live in border regions compared with 15% within the EU15. This means that cross-border co-operation can cover an important part of new Member States populations with possible tremendous effects.

Another argument for the importance of cross-border co-operation emerges from the goals of the Strand A within the Community Initiative INTERREG III. Regarding social policy and social inclusion, Strand A has the following types of operation:

- 1) creation of an integrated labour market and promotion of social inclusion;
- 2) co-operation on research, technological development, culture, education, health, and civil protection;
- 3) co-operation in legal and administrative fields;
- 4) co-operation between citizens and institutions;

Of course, strictly regarding social inclusion the first type of operation is the only one having as a direct goal promotion of social inclusion, but if we look carefully at the other points we can see that the first item is impossible without the others. The first item stresses what is the core of EU social policy: equal rights within the EU of workers and their families regardless of the Member State where they are or the Member State where they work. The free movement of the labour force supposes equality of rights and mutual recognition of diplomas. It produces what is called a spillover effect. Free movement of labour has important effects in other fields, for instance in education, engineering, culture and administration. Creating a common labour market in the border regions has beyond creating an integrated labour and promoting social inclusion important effects on the other entire field.

Among other things, the accession strategy implies increasing the institutional and administrative capability of these countries so that they can apply the acquis and bring their firms in line with Community standards. The joint work of firms from the EU and new accession countries implies not just a transfer of know-how in the engineering field but also in the quality of work and ecological standards.

Maybe it is not so obvious that general co-operation and cultural co-operation in particular are very important for psychological gaps between countries. In many moments of our history we have been in antagonistic positions. If we look too much at our history instead of working together to create a new way of living together it is not easy to deal with the courageous aim that is the EU. Of course, in our common history many good things have happened but in the social memory there still exists a negative social representation. Working, learning and living together are the best ways to overcome these challenges. And what can affect this best if not cross-border co-operation?

Almost in every Strand A programme we can find as a priority the qualification and development the labour market. Encouragements are made to promote co-operation between all labour market actors (social partners, administration, training centres), cross-border transparency for the labour market and exchange information and co-operation in the training programmes. Also, these programmes try to deal with the problems related to social dumping, brain drain, cultural and communicational obstacles.

These very well-oriented programmes that have to fix the dysfunctions of the regions (not just EU regions) will create nets which if they are stable and well-maintained will be able to have more important structural effects in the future than the strictly oriented programmes.

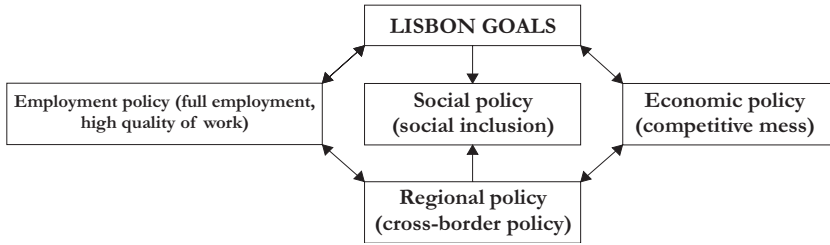
CONCLUSIONS

Social inclusion is a complex and a mobile concept which strongly emerged in the last decade in Europe because of the need of the EU to be built by economic, social and political active citizens. The gaps within the EU can be filled through active policies against social exclusion. In this direction, cross-border co-operation can have an important role in building up programmes in the social, economic, and cultural fields. The Lisbon goals which currently are the most important answers to the question of what we want to build up through the EU can be achieved

together with other means through regional policy and cross-border co-operation. The complex interdependence between Lisbon goals, social inclusion and regional, economic and employment policy can be represented as in Scheme no. 2.

Considering all the above, we can say that cross-border co-operation will have a great role in the struggle against social exclusion in the new member states.

Scheme no. 2.



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