Harmonisation, mutual recognition, and the ‘Europeanisation’ of social policy?
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- what are the defining characteristics and over-arching principles categorising E.U. social policy?

**CONTEXT**

- historical and theoretical frame

+ 

- over-arching principles
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- there is a parallel process of E.U. social integration accompanying developments in political and economic integration (spillover)
- What is the ‘politics’ of E.U. social integration?
- E.U. ‘single social areas’?
- A ‘europeanisation’ of social policy?
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1. Harmonisation and convergence

2. Diversity and mutual recognition
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- Article 117, Treaty of Rome (1957), introduced principle of harmonisation of social systems, implying ultimate convergence from function of ‘common market’
  - but very little actual progress
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- was believed shared tradition of social protection systems, plus variations of continental (West European) model of welfare in 6 founder member states, would assist harmonisation

- BUT, differing types of social protection, differing focus on principles, differing policy making processes, did not assist
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PLUS, each new wave of member states brought own different social policy and welfare models – making harmonisation more difficult

ALSO, some states (i.e. Greece, Portugal, Spain) had more limited social policy and welfare systems – traditions of community, family and religious support
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- Harmonisation made more urgent, but also more complex, by preparations for EMU – and aim and need to maintain principle of freedom of movement in enlarged E.U.
BUT, by Maastricht Treaty (1993) Social Charter stated account should be taken of “diverse forms of national practices, in particular in the field of contractual relations”

- stressed the need to maintain the competitiveness of the Community’s economy
Harmonisation of social policy not defined as, or suggested to mean, complete unification of social systems and social policy

- But acceptance of certain common principles and standards of social policy
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- harmonisation seen as means of avoiding ‘welfare tourism’

- and prevent national social policy becoming bargaining counter between member states

- and avoid distortion of economic ‘competition’
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Single European Act (1985) – convergence in fiscal and employment law
- improvement in infrastructures and standards of education and training
- for competitive Single European Market harmonisation of social policy necessary
- **BUT** Jacques Delors, as Head of the E.U. Commission, accepted various specific cultures, traditions and social policy models of member states meant harmonisation across all social policy areas impossible.

- advocated **COHERENCE/COHESION**, 
- Acceptance of diversity and ‘**MUTUAL RECOGNITION**’
COHESION = Member states ‘encouraged’ to co-operate and co-ordinate their efforts in order to bring about greater economic and social cohesion between the regions.
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‘Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers’, 1989

- harmonisation in context of freedom of movement – object of harmonising conditions of residence in all member states
- harmonise duration of paid leave from work
- harmonise safety conditions at workplace
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‘Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers’, 1989
- allowed member states to continue with national differences in social protection systems
- Social Charter (Maastricht Treaty 1993) – no mention of harmonisation
- respect for national specificity
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- Role of E.U. Commission limited to encouraging co-operation between member states and facilitating co-ordination of their actions in social policy fields

- ‘de facto’ convergence occurring as a result of common trends across member states leading to common problems

- convergence promoted by establishing common objectives
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- 2004 enlargement brought different issues and problems
- legacy of bureaucratic state collectivist systems
  - different institutional legacies
- nature and character of revolutions
- 1990s economic transformations
  - made harmonisation less likely
SUMMARY:

1. Each enlargement made harmonisation less likely

2. ‘Deepening’ versus ‘widening’ – contradiction between economic and monetary union necessitating social policy convergence and expansion of E.U. complicating convergence
SUMMARY:

3. Differences in social policy in each member state attributed to stage of social and economic development of each country – plus specific forms of national social policy resulting from social, economic, political and cultural traditions
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SUMMARY:
- NEVERTHELESS - can identify some over-arching principles of E.U. social policy
- based on ‘core values’ of social progress (i.e. high levels of employment, social protection, raising living standards and quality of life, promoting social cohesion and social justice)
SUMMARY: ‘Europeanisation’ of social policy?
- framework, of principles of social protection, social welfare, social justice, equality of opportunity
- A balance between convergence, diversity, mutual recognition
SUMMARY:

‘Europeanisation’ of social policy?

- A multi-level, varied approach model of E.U. social policy integration

- In different social policy areas and at different social policy levels, different integrated approaches and degrees of integration employed