

Contemporary Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

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**The basis of, and principles
underpinning, E.U. social
policy: harmonisation, mutual
recognition and convergence?**



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1. Harmonisation and convergence
2. Diversity and mutual recognition



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Harmonisation
(CONCEPT)

Mutual Recognition
(CONCEPT)



Convergence
(PROCESS)



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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



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Harmonisation of social policy not defined as, or suggested to mean, complete unification of social systems and public 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 avoiding 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



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- ***BUT*** Jacques Delors, as Head of
the E.U. Commission,

- *advocated*

COHERENCE/COHESION

= *Acceptance of diversity and*

'MUTUAL RECOGNITION'



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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 differences



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‘Open Method of Co-ordination’ (OMC)

- formally launched at Lisbon EU Council,
March 2000

- purpose to spread legislative (and
therefore, policy-making) ‘best practices’
across the EU Member States – primarily in
the areas where the EU had no formal
regulatory competence



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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



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SUMMARY:

3. Differences in social policy in each member state due 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

BUT - can identify some underpinning principles of E.U. social policy



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SUMMARY:

- i.e. 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)



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SUMMARY:

‘Europeanisation’ of social policy?

- based upon framework of principles of social protection, social welfare, social justice, equality of opportunity
- A balance between harmonisation, convergence, diversity and mutual recognition



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SUMMARY:

‘Europeanisation’ of social policy?

- A multi-level, varied approach model of E.U. social policy integration, respecting diversity through mutual recognition
- in different social policy areas and at different social policy levels, different integrated approaches and degrees of integration employed

