Professor John Wilton

#### Lecture 4

The principles and concepts of E.U. social policy -harmonisation, mutual recognition, cohesion and convergence

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#### Lecture 4

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#### Lecture 4

- what are the defining characteristics and underlying principles categorising E.U. social policy?

#### **CONTEXT**

- historical and theoretical frame

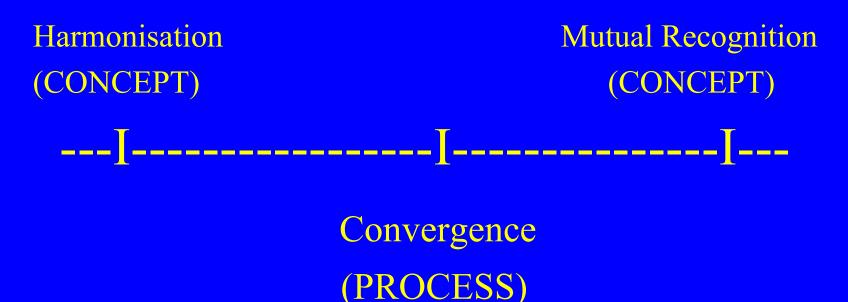
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- underlying principles

- 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?

1. Harmonisation and convergence

2. Diversity and mutual recognition



- 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.

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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 social policy

- But acceptance of certain common principles and standards of social policy

- 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'

Lecture 4

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

- '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

- '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

- 'Open Method of Co-ordination' (OMC)
- formerly launched as an E.U. process at Lisbon E.U. Council of March 2000
- purpose was to spread legislative (and therefore, policy-making) 'best practices' across E.U. Member States primarily in areas where E.U. had no formal regulatory competence

- 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

Lecture 4
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

Lecture 4
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

### Lecture 4 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)

Lecture 4
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

Lecture 4
SUMMARY:

- 'Europeanisation' of social policy?
- A multi-level, varied approach model of E.U. social policy integration
  - different social policy areas and at different social policy levels, different integrated approaches and degrees of integration employed

