

Social Policy in the European Union: the EU existential crises

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Social Policy in the EU in 2014/15

1. *Table of content*
2. *Problems, Progress and Threats for the EU*
3. *The Existential Crises of the EU*
4. *Two scenarios and the role for Trade Unions*
5. *Three questions to address*

Social Policy in the EU, 2015, Table of Content

Introduction

David Natali, Bart Vanhercke and Riley Johnson

The EU and the social legacy of the crisis: piecemeal adjustment or room for a paradigm shift?

Vivien Schmidt

Changing the policies, politics, and processes of the Eurozone in crisis: will this time be different?

Jonathan Zeitlin and Bart Vanhercke

Economic governance in Europe 2020: socialising the European semester against the odds?

Richard Hyman

Austeritarianism in Europe: what options for resistance?

Martin Myant

The European Commission's investment plan: a critical appraisal and some alternatives

Chiara Agostini and David Natali

The EU's ambivalent involvement in education and training policies

Furio Stamati and Rita Baeten

Varieties of healthcare reform: understanding EU leverage

Dalila Ghailani and Aída Ponce del Castillo

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): converging interests and diverging opinions

David Natali

Future prospects - The EU's political dilemma and the role of trade unions in solving it

Cécile Barbier

Chronology 2014 - Key events in European policy

Social Policy in the EU in 2014/15

Political-institutional questions

Institutional and political tensions in the EU

Demoratic challenge
Member States

Role of trade unions at
both national and EU level

Policy issues on the agenda

Commission's Investment Fund

EU Coordination on
education and training
and healthcare policies

TTIP

2. Problems

Socio-economic Problem

Weak recovery
High unemployment
High poverty risks
North-South Divide

Foreign Policy Problem

Ukraine
EU/Russia

Migration Problem

107,000 migrants crossing
EU borders in August 2015

2. Some Progresses

- Leading Candidates at the EU elections
- New start for the Commission
- Emphasis on Investments (Juncker Invest. Fund)
- More Expansionary Monetary Policy,
- Socialisation of the EU semester (Zeitlin and Vanhercke)
- A new start for EU Social Dialogue

But

- At least some of them risk to be 'dead letters' (Myant; Stamati and Baeten; Agostini and Natali)
- Overall paradigm is still neo-liberal (Ghailani and Ponce)

2.Threats

Increased dissatisfaction,

EU election (increased consensus for anti-EU movements)

Declined credibility of EU institutions

Grexit

Greek drama, Referendum July 2015, new memorandum

Brexit

UK threat to leave the EU (free movement)

3. The EU Existential Crises

1st crisis the wrong policy agenda

- The Euro zone is badly designed (no solution for asymmetric shocks; increased divergence; and few investments)
- The EU needs clear definition of social objectives (trust and reciprocity)

- Need for more fiscal capacity and automatic stabilizers
- Coordination of minimum wages
- Advanced coordination of social and employment policies
- Reinvigoration of EU social dialogue

3. The EU Existential Crises

2nd crisis EU political dilemma

- Democratic deficit (EU needs a more democratic design)
- Union method and technocracy are not the solution
- Repoliticization is very risky at this stage

- Need for more political competition and direct electorate's influence on

leadership, agenda

But risks of

- More conflicts
- Strong anti-EU forces

3. The EU Existential Crises

3rd crisis Europe's democratic challenge

- Nation State is damaged (politics without policy)
- Increased abstention, mistrust

- Need for more political weight
- Direct electorate's influence on leadership, agenda

- More conflicts
- Strong anti-EU forces

4. Two scenarios...

Step by step adaptation

More active

Commission, more
entrepreneurial EP

More pro-growth
agenda

But still in a German
Union consistent with
the Ordo-liberal
paradigm

Political Earthquake

Mounting opposition to
the status quo

Next round of elections
(Greece, Portugal,
Spain, Ireland)

Tensions in the Council
and challenge to the
German 'path'

4. What role for Trade Unions?

TU's are part of the problem but may be part of the solution

TU's are a component of democratic legitimacy

- Input legitimacy
- Throughput legitimacy
- Output legitimacy

Possible strategies for TU's

- Attract more members
- New social and political coalitions
- Strengthening their organisation
- Reinforcing social dialogue

Three Key Questions

- 1. Can we expect step-by-step progresses to address the democratic challenge? Can we expect a political earthquake?*
- 2. What are the alliances that may lead to a more balanced integration and a stronger EU social dimension?*
- 1. Are TUs part of the solution?*

Social policy in the European Union, State of play 2015

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Edited by
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