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*Peter Herrmann: European Social Policy - A Different
Perspective*

Peter Herrmann

European Social Policy – A Different Perspective¹

Chi non va mai via non ritorna mai a casa²

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¹ Notes from a lecture, given on the Conference *Equal Chances in a Broader Europe. Conference on the Challenges of Integration in the European Union. 26-27 February 2007, Bucharest*

² Who never/going leaves, will never return home (unknown source)

Peter Herrmann

Introducing Remark

It is quite common that, when talking about European social policy and its history, we usually point out that there is not much that had been undertaken in this area, that actually the European Institutions – leaving aside some exceptions – lack legal competence and that, whatever we find, is limited to an eclectic mix of individual measures, being fundamentally short of a strategic vision and template. To a large extent such assessment is correct, although one should not forget that it starts from a rather narrow understanding from social policy, not sufficiently considering that fact that for instance economic policies are in actual fact as well social policies, though starting from a different angle. As well it should not be forgotten that over the recent years actually a more systematic approach to social policies in the narrower, traditional sense evolved (*see for instance a broad sketch in Herrmann, Peter: European Social Model – Existence, Non-Existence or Biased Direction; Aghabullogue/Brussels/Cork, 2007 [William-Thompson Working Papers, 1]*). What is of interest in the following however is another question. I want to point out that we have at least since the second half of the 1970s a specific “system of social characteristics” that is meaningful from three perspectives, namely

- * the perspective of exchange of experiences that are relevant for influencing policy making on the local, regional, national and EUropean level
- * the outlook on developing lobbying tools and mechanisms that are relevant for policy making and
- * the prospect of actual policy programmes.

The Political-Economic Context

Looking in very broad terms at the situation in the beginning of the 1970s, it can be characterised by four moments.

- * At the time in question we can see a general shift of values and an opening for different political options. Briefly, one can say that as follow up of the upheavals and protests of the late 60s, the political spaces were getting slightly more contingent; with this a “critical awareness” with respect to social issues can be found.
- * In this context and the somewhat consequential détente policies, we see at the time an increased competition between the systems, which brought with it a – though vague – tendency of coherence.
- * In addition to the competition between the systems further pressure was arising from the oil crisis which showed the need for a changing “system policy” – the *Limits of Growth* (s. *Meadows, Donella H. et altera: 1972*), as put forward by the *Club of Rome* had been a challenge as well in terms of societal politics.
- * It had been against this background that we see the enlargement of the then European Communities in 1973 from the original six member states to then nine member states. Especially noticeable is that the new member states had been seen as economic and even more so as social threat – especially as the “poor country” Ireland had been perceived as menace with respect to EUropean cohesion.

More than ever before it was getting obvious that the envisaged growth path on its own would not solve the problems. Though the concrete pathway had been highly contested, it had been clear that some kind of social policy and some kind of distributive and re-distributive measures had to be taken if Europe should go any further. Moreover, it had been said that “Europe would only be, if it would be a Europe for the people”.

From here, the European Institutions set policies in motion that went not only beyond the European competencies. Moreover, these policies reached out to areas beyond the usual concern of social policy, namely areas of community development and social work.³ – Only a brief sketch can be given here, intermingling different aspects involved.

³ The involvement of the state or the kind of involvement of the state in these areas differs, however, from country to country.

Early Programme Initiatives

Being clear that Europe would be in danger to fail due to the lack of social responsibility and at the same time accepting the given legal framework of the lack of competencies in the social field within the Treaties, the only way of establishing social policy was the so-called competence-competency clause of article 235 of the then Treaty which allowed European activity as well without an explicit basis in the Treaty – provided that (a) the Council would consider respective measures as useful and appropriate and (b) the Council decides so unanimously. After general political declarations in the early 1970s, several programme initiatives had been launched, effecting different areas as childcare, health, older people and others. Many of these initiatives had been actually nothing else than a generous interpretation of funds-policies. The European Social Funds and the European Structural Funds provided a sufficient foundation and framework for respective initiatives, especially as they had been

- * limited in strategic ambition,
- * lacking scope of activities and
- * not aiming on long-term engagement.

Somewhat outstanding was the engagement of policies to combat poverty in the framework of the so-called “poverty programs”:

- * POVERTY 1 – 1975-1981 [*75/458/EEC: Council Decision of 22 July 1975 concerning a Programme of Pilot Schemes and Studies to Combat Poverty: (OJ 1975 L 199)*]
- * POVERTY 2 – 1985-1988 [*80/1270/EEC: Council Decision of 22 December 1980 concerning a Supplementary Programme to Combat Poverty: Specific Community Action to Combat Poverty (OJ 1985 L 2)*]
- * POVERTY 3 – 1989-1994 [*85/8/EEC: Council Decision of 19 December 1984 on specific Community Action to Combat Poverty: Medium-Term Community Action Programme Concerning the Economic and Social Integration of the Economically and Socially Less Privileged Groups in Society (OJ 1989 L 224)*]
- * PROGRESS (Poverty 4) – [*Commission’s proposal for period 1994-1999 (proposal for a Council Decision Establishing a Medium-Term Action Programme to Combat Exclusion and Promote Solidarity: A New Programme to Support and Stimulate Innovation – see as well below, page 6)*].

It had been explicitly an area where European institutions committed themselves to activities in a very sensitive area and aiming at quite ambitious activities.⁴ It had been especially in connection with this programme that some general “markers” of any programme policies or even future social policy by the European institutions had been defined. In particular the following catchwords are relevant:

- * multidimensionality, meaning that any social problem cannot be understood if approached in a mechanical way, seeing it as monocausal;
- * partnership, i.e. the explicit joining forces of private and public actors and of trade unions, NGOs, enterprises and any actors (potentially) active in the field concerned;
- * participation, i.e. the inclusion of those individuals and groups living in poverty and experiencing exclusion as active co-producers of the inclusion mechanisms;
- * empowerment, i.e. the fostering of self-help forces as self-esteem, capabilities of generating own resources etc. amongst those living in poverty;
- * innovation, i.e. the search for new ways of tackling the challenges and problems;
- * transnational exchange, i.e. the search for innovative measures by exchange between partners from different countries, discussing the different ways of how problems manifest themselves and the approaches to answer the challenges;
- * visibility, i.e. looking for ways to make the work known as widely as possible to allow others – though not being directly involved – to learn from the work.

Although some other criteria had been important as well, these five can be probably seen as the most crucial. Any application for funding of activities, failing to elaborate on these or even: failing to use these terms was as good as waste-paper.

Especially remarkable is the shift from “combating poverty” to “working for social inclusion” – after an intermittent orientation on fighting exclusion. The significance of it is that the change of the orientation was linked to a process of watering-down the underlying problems: Rather than excepting the fact that we find massive problems of poverty as well in the EU, the reinterpretation meant to hide these behind general questions of social relationships and even psychological questions (*see for*

⁴ See as well the next section, the Excursus on the “Irish Coup”

instance Room, Graham, 1993: Anti-Poverty Action-Research in Europe; Bristol: School of Advanced Urban Studies).

In general it is remarkable that European policies entered with these initiatives a field of social policy and a policy approach that had been (and still is) to a large extent not existing on the national level:⁵ Social policy is usually following a reductionist approach, strictly oriented towards institutionalist patterns. However, European programme policies opened a way forward by including “soft areas” as well to social political intervention, linking them, however, with the traditional institutionalist social policies. One can say as well that it meant at least in the beginning to some extent an integration of social and economic policies.

Excursus: The “Irish Coup”

It is interesting that these developments had been to a large extent linked with a clever move of the then Irish government, namely *Proinsias De Rossa*, who was since 1982 member of the Irish Parliament. In his role as Minister for Social Welfare, he managed to initiate Ireland's first national anti-poverty strategy. Of special interest is here the fact that he did so by playing on three levels:

- * the coincidence of national policy design,
 - * the possibility to enforce an obligatory declaration on combating poverty as well in the so-called developed world by the World Summit for Social Development, 1995 in Copenhagen and
 - * the possibility to actually oblige the national Irish government to follow European policies,
- had been used in a mutually reinforcing way. On each level the complementing levels had been used as pushing forces, requiring action and not allowing any elusion on the other level. In other words, clever politics had been used to force each level to undertake policies that would have been unlikely without the pressure coming from the other levels.

This is an example for policymaking in a multi-level setting. The important issue is not simply that policies are developed simultaneously on different levels – this is for instance the case in federal systems. Nor is the decisive point that different levels are employed by different stages of the policy process – for instance it could be that deliberations are held on the regional level, decisions are taken on the central level and the implementation happens locally. Here the multi-level setting is more complex and all processes from the initiation over planning and decision making to implementation are taking place on all levels and simultaneously, tightly intermingling. This means – though with qualifications – that power cannot be found on one level only. This means at the same time that clever practice of policy management can – potentially at least – be successful as well, although if it comes from the formally less powerful level.

From Social Policy to Civil Dialogue

Another characteristic of the time was that – not least on the basis of programme policies and the inclusion of non-institutional and non-legalist approaches – a shift in terms of actors can be found. Namely the non-statutory actors played increasingly a role with respect of European social policy making. Three moments are important here.

1) Non-governmental organisations simply proved to be important “actors” in terms of having decisive knowledge of the fields in questions, i.e. the direct social policy implementation and the actual meaning for people concerned – be it providers or “clients”.

2) It had been as well these organisations that proved to be decisive in terms of a mediating level between institutions and citizens. One could even say that they are acting as “citizen-makers”. Such a role has two dimensions. The one is concerned with allowing isolated individuals to act as social beings, contributing to a larger political entity, building a citizenry. The other is concerned with building a specific citizenry – a process largely taking shape from above. This means that these organisations are translating the general issues (here EU-policies) into the life-world of the inhabitants, making them thus to members of the citizenry by embedding them into the wider policy process.

3) Further – and to some extent linked – these organisations are acting as pressure groups, articulating peoples needs, wishes and fears. Despite the actually democratic role, this has of course as

⁵ Though there are few exceptions.

well the function of an early warning system, a social and political seismograph, giving warning signals before the actual outbreak of socio-political earthquakes.

In reflection of these points one may even say that the NGOs and organisations of the civil society had been a key player in legitimising the outreaching work of the European Commission. Providing arguments and tools, it had been these organisations that justified that the European institutions elaborated strategies and established policies in fields for which – seen from a strict legal perspective – competencies did actually not exist.

A positive reading sees this as influencing the policy process from outside and actually opening the traditional polities: not only the traditional institutions should have a say, but as well other actors. A more sceptical reading however suggests that the traditional institutions actually misused the inclusion of “new actors” to bypass the national level policy makers to enhance their own playing field. – Probably both is to some extent true.

To briefly describe what happened, the following remarks will do suffice. As part of the effort of overcoming a general Euroscepticism, the Commission under its President *Jacques Delors* aimed on straightening the road to establishing the single European market. In 1993, the Commission published a White Paper under the title *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century* (COM[93]700, December 1993 – <http://europa.eu.int/en/record/white/c93700/contents.html>; 12.4.2004-7.41 a.m.). Hand in hand with this, deliberations had been held to develop a more systematic social policy. The one reason was the obvious necessity of flanking the economic process. The other reason was the lack of legitimacy of policies which did not pay at least symbolic attention to the – be it perceived of actual – fact that integration will only be successful if it can make clear that economic policy is not an end in itself but a means to improve the living conditions of people. The *Green Paper* on social policy was widely discussed and after evaluating the more than 530 submissions (see *Commission of the European Communities: European Social Policy – A Way Forward for the Union. White Paper. Part B; COM[94]333; July 1994; cf.: Herrmann, Peter: European Integration and Social Politics – Closed Shop of the Economic Power or Open End of the Progressive Way [Europäische Integration und Sozialpolitik – closed shop der Wirtschaftsmacht oder open end des Weges zum Fortschritt?]; in: Pfaffenberger, Hans [Ed.]: A socio-political competence for the EU [Um eine sozialpolitische Kompetenz der EU]; Rheinfelden/Berlin: Schäuble, 1998: pp 47 – 104*), a White Paper had been published in 1994 (see *Commission of the European Communities: White Paper. European Social Policy – A Way Forward for the Union; COM[94]333; July 1994*). In terms of the actual social policy outcome – the proposed measures, processes, regulations etc. – the result had been rather meagre. Remarkable was, however, that in the context of this debate and as outcome the then Commissioner for employment and social affairs from Ireland, *Padraig Flynn*, established a civil dialogue, which was meant to complement the social dialogue between employers and employees. – Was this the – dangerous – codification of an alienation between working-class and other social movements? The artificial division of policies in employment policy and social policy for the poor?

It is interesting that already since 1990 an organisation had been established that was thought to be a catalyst of social policy in the sense of tightening the link especially between disadvantaged citizens and European politics. The Commission, aiming on a more coordinated approach in policies combating poverty, called NGOs active in the field of social policy and especially in working with disadvantaged people, to organise themselves and present themselves as one “partner” in the dialogue with the European policymakers, in particular the Commission. In a process that had not been without discussion and critique on the side of NGOs finally EAPN, the European Anti-Poverty Network was set up in 1990. Though not tightly, EAPN was linked to the strategy to combat poverty.

One should know, that the further development of policies had been hampered when plans emerged to set up the fourth program under the acronym PROGRESS. The presentation of the plans gave space for concerns especially from the German government and the UK, joint and supported, for different reasons, by The Netherlands and Denmark. Finally, it had been the government of the UK that brought the case to the *European Court of Justice*. The Court decided in the case *C-106/96* that, indeed, the complaint was justified and implementing the proposed program would be against the provisions of the European Treaties. In other words, PROGRESS had to be recalled. The promulgation of the judgment coincided with the Second Social Policy Forum, organised by the *European Commission* in Brussels’ Heysel in 1998 – a major conference, being thought of as a major tool for the civil dialogue. It is in this context as well that the *Platform of Social NGOs* had been finally founded or publicly launched. It is not entirely clear in which way interests and initiating actions from the Commission and from engaged citizens had been intermingled. It can be clearly seen that this was a time at which NGOs “discovered

Europe” as being important for themselves – at the time a more or less new move. And it is clear as well that the *European Commission* was keen to overcome for the sake of feasibility the shattering and existence of various independent actors – similar to the social dialogue it had been left to the civil society to organise itself, though the *European Commission* made resources quite generously available. – Paradoxically the civil society organisations, in the long run, concentrated themselves probably to a much higher degree than they would have accepted, if the *Commission* had selected in the same concentrated and centralised way.

This conference in 1998 was, of course, overshadowed by the judgment, marked by the RED CARD ACTION with which the invited organisations wanted to express their fear, which can be summarized under the heading that with the announcement – and now the stoppage – of PROGRESS, policies against poverty failed to continue. This conference was overshadowed as well – though widely unnoticed, at least only little reflected – by the fact that several NGOs protested in front of the building, stating that a “civil dialogue behind closed doors”, with only a limited and selected number of NGOs would be more than questionable; actually it would be an illusionary politics, aiming on justifying that in actual fact the gap between citizens and European institutions would be enshrined in future politics and policies.

– Only few took another stance (*see for instance my own contribution on <http://www.sozialarbeit.de/europa/newslett/news/nee03.htm>*): failing the program with the argument that there had been actually no competencies in the wider field of social policy, could actually well mean that real progress would be necessary and possible after this judgement. The judgement meant at least that the *Council* had to develop now a clear position with respect to European social policies. In other words, the national governments had to clearly and publicly state their readiness to share responsibility for social issues as matter of European policy-making.

The Shift of Amsterdam and the Failure of Lisbon – Disappointed Expectations

Indeed, what followed was on the one hand the discontinuation of combating poverty within the framework of the specific program policy. Moreover, the entire orientation on program and project policy was somewhat slowed down, as from now on all activities in such a framework were more explicitly once-off measures. Actually already from the beginning, supported projects could hardly get promoted in a second round. Only under the condition of an entirely new application, containing as well an suggested “new approach”, a project could be promoted another time.⁶ Now, this discontinuity was getting more emphasised and more systematised. At the same time, however, European policy makers had been under pressure. If they did not want to loose their face, they had to look for a way to explicitly include some kind of social policy in the legacy of the future system. Obviously, the *Commission* as the only real supranational body was highly in favour of such orientation as it would allow gaining authenticity for the European polity, taking some legitimacy away from the national level. So, a double step was preserved in the future semi-constitutional framework of the *Maastricht Treaty*. On the one hand we find the principle of subsidiarity, reading in *article 3b*:

The Commission shall act within the limits of the power conferred upon it by this Treaty and the objectives assigned to it therein.

On the other hand, the very same Treaty and the following *Treaty of Amsterdam* contained for the first time an explicit recognition of social competence for the now European Union, going beyond the previous limited competence (equal opportunity policies, flanking role in the framework of the funds policies). The three areas of relevance had been the following:

- * the protocol on Social Policy
- * the antidiscrimination article (Amsterdam)
- * the employment chapter (Amsterdam)

It was a double shift insofar as we can see on the one hand progress in the sense of recognising the responsibility for the area of social policy. However, on the other hand any measures had to be from now on tightly defined in the framework of establishing and maintaining the single market. Catchwords as “fostering the employment strategy”, the “productive role of social policy”, the “costs of not having social policy” and similar had been determining the incidence in the area of social policy. It is not least in this context, that from the middle of the 1990s social services came as well under threat – being defined in the perspective of competition law rather than being seen as primarily a matter of the

⁶ Of course, this meant that applicants tried to redefine their previous work, sold old wine in new skins.

responsibility of the community and state towards their weaker members. Thus, the progress from Amsterdam and later Maastricht and Lisbon was at least a double-edged sword. Though the remit of the Treaties had been amplified and responsibility for social affairs had been officially acknowledged, the meaning of this “social” was at the same time limited, cut down to the needs and requirements of the development of the single market. In a side remark it is relevant as well that with Lisbon competitiveness moved to the front, harshening the growth orientation as it had been still dominant under *Jacques Delors* (see above page 6).

– Trimmed was as well to a large extent the meaning of the civil dialogue. To keep things short, we can refer to two points: More in the perspective of theory of social policy, it has to be stressed that the *European Commission* has a most important role in terms of agenda setting. Only issues that are quasi ex ante authorised by the *Commission* who determines the agenda will be dealt with in political negotiations. In a more practical perspective we can point on the current and new PROGRESS-program, running from 2007 to 2013. Now the acronym stands for *The EU Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity* and policies are now explicitly defined as “working alongside” the European Social Funds (see *European Commission: PROGRESS. The EU programme for Employment and Social Solidarity 2007-2013* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007).

The promise of the Lisbon strategy, not only

to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth

(http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm - 31/03/07 - 10.02 a.m.)

but as well to do so

with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion

(*ibid.*)

was not much more than a Trojan Horse, by many social NGOs even to date not fully recognised as such. There is still the illusion that a rebalancing between social and economic orientations will be sufficient and the need for a radical redefinition of European policies is widely not accepted.

Socialisation of Services versus Servicialisation of the Social

The recent development is in addition to and in connection with the strong employment orientation and the promotion of the productive role of social policy employed by discussing the role of services of general interest and within this framework the role of social services. Although we are actually concerned with a very complex subject matter with rather dodgy questions, the following gist is in its pointed way fungible.

1) Services of general interest are defined in the *Annex to the Commission's White Paper*:

The term «services of general interest» cannot be found in the Treaty itself. It is derived in Community practice from the term «services of general economic interest», which is used in the Treaty. It is broader than the term «services of general economic interest» and covers both market and non-market services which the public authorities class as being of general interest and subject to specific public service obligations.

(*Commission of the European Communities: White Paper on Services of General Interest; Brussels, 12 May 2004, COM(2004)374 final: 22*)

Although it is acknowledged that this kind of services has an important role to play within a European social model and public bodies have a high responsibility for their availability, these services should in the eyes of the *Commission* not (necessarily) be provided by the state. Instead, private organisations are more likely to be nearer to the user.

2) The general interest itself is actually redefined. Leaving the question aside if there is such general interest at all, and suggesting that there would be, this is now not defined as a matter of social cohesion, inclusion, solidarity etc. It is not seen as matter of negotiation and “battlesome conciliation” of different and diverging interest. Instead, it is seen as instance of which at least the framework is fixed” and unquestioned, defined in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

3) Social services – as well if they are Person-Oriented Social Services of General Interest (POSSGIs) – are seen as part of the service system and it is presumed that only their provision on the “free market”, according to the rules of competition, can guarantee highest quality and the freedom of

the ... - users and consumers. This means then, that people are not seen as co-producers of the services nor are they seen as individuals and members of groups that need certain provisions on a market that is characterised by a structural inequality. Most of the people in need of social services of the kind in question do not have the information they need; they do not have the money to choose amongst different providers; they lack the time of making a qualified choice Furthermore, providers of services of this kind are forced to “managerialise” the services and to split them into different parts. It is not the need of the “service user” nor the logic of the service that decides; rather it is the logic of the administrative system and the availability of resources that delivers the criteria, thus undermining any holistic orientation in providing person-oriented services of general interest. Finally, as far as an interest of society at large in the provision of these services is admitted, it is reduced on the effective delivery. The fact that such services are an expression of solidarity, the fact that these services “produce” cohesion and inclusion, that they help to overcome conflicts or avoid future conflicts etc. is not taken into account.

As severe as the actual financial side may be, what is at least equally important is the fact that in this way different criteria are introduced into the entire system of service provision. The entire planning and design process follows criteria that are defined outside of the system of a co-production of person-oriented services of general interest. Moreover, even if for instance “users” are supposedly considered this is based on their status as customers, rather than their role as co-producers or their position as people in need. – All this reminds at *Anatole France’s* statement that “*the law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.*” (from *France, Anatole: The Red Lily, 1894, quoted from <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/afrance.htm> - 31/03/07 - 11:07 a.m.*). In other words, the application of an equal, market-related formal right results in huge inequality in quality and availability of services.

Without pursuing this discussion, a more sound understanding of services in question can start from the following definition:

These are any activity that is undertaken
 * *to enhance individuals’ well-being and*
 * *that is based on human and social rights,*
 * *that contributes to the cohesion of the community and wider social relationships*
 * *and at the same time enables or empowers the individuals concerned.*
 (Herrmann, Peter, 2006: *Quality and Accessibility of Social Services for Social Inclusion. General Report; Ed.: Eurodiaconia; Brussels: Eurodiaconia, 2006: 20* [<http://www.eurodiaconia.org/OldSite/quasi/index.htm>])

Outlook – Two Steps Back, and One Step Forward

It has to be clear that there is much more to social policy – in general and in particular in the context of European integration – than the plain competence of (European) institutions in fields that are traditionally defined as subject matter. On the one hand it is important to recognise that – here and nationally – decisions and developments in other areas have huge effects on this area. On the other hand it is especially important that in the European Union context we find a distinct process of policy making and policy design that consciously and directly includes “soft mechanisms”. As such, the *Open Method of Coordination* has to be mentioned (see Herrmann, Peter: *Open Method of Coordination in the European Union: A Trojan Horse – But who is the rider? In: Social Work & Society, Volume 4, Number 2 [2006-12-16] <http://www.socwork.net/2006/2/agora/documents/herrmann/herrmann.pdf> and Herrmann, Peter: *European Social Model – Existence, Non-Existence or Biased Direction; Aghabullogue/Brussels/Cork, 2007: William Thompson Working Papers, 1*). Another important aspect is the fact that European policies*

- * due to limited competencies
- * due to competing with national policies and
- * due to the necessity of dealing with complex, multinational and socially fluid matters

have to search for means of getting hold of the field by going beyond the traditional institutionalist and legalist mechanisms of policymaking. In other words, irrespective of the many necessary qualifications, there is a more open setting: more governance rather than strict government, notions of social work and community development rather than strict institutionalist security provisions, process-oriented policy development rather than structuralist social-policy definition and others are relevant developments.

One can say as well that national policies in the member states are by and large acting in the framework of a given social model whereas Europe is still on the way to search for its very identity of such a model. What we know today as *European Social Model (ESM)*, is more a blueprint rather than a framework, built on sound ground.

In this sense, there is as well some parallel if we look at the EU level and the developments in the still-called new member states as Romania and as well the candidate countries as Turkey. It had been in many cases the new countries that constitute a new challenge for the established system. This new challenge did not only mean a challenge in adaptation. Rather, facing the new perspectives, requirements from other countries, dealing with different patterns ... – all this meant as well a challenge in another meaning: showing that none of the *ancien regimes de l'Europe*, the established patterns of *Jacobinism*, *Bismarckianism* and social-democratic orientation on the *folkhemmet* and *medborgarhemmet* (folk-home and citizens-home⁷) is by no means universalist. – As specific the situation is, we should not forget that we face a situation, which is historically not new. Every enlargement up to now showed the two sides: the imperialising side of the EU, requiring the acceptance of the *acquis communautaire*, the existing legislation. On the other hand, however, there was and is always the second side: For reasons of legitimacy but as well for reasons of the need of carefully mutually adapting polity-cultures, mechanisms of politics and policy patterns, there is a certain openness that allows not least NGOs to instrumentalise this process for catalysing national change in favour of a socially more just society.⁸

In this sense, it had been a pleasure and honour for me to attend this meeting. Though being an “old European”, I still feel as being a “young European” in the sense of still trying to fight for fostering the potential of a European renewal, well knowing that in many cases one step forward is linked to two steps made backwards – unfortunately often enough as well in the circle of the civil society organisations.

⁷ Actually the term *medborgarhemmet* hardly finds an equivalent in English language; the underlying concept of citizen is more the idea of an inhabitant.

⁸ This does not mean that we should overlook the principally imperialist character of EU-integration. However, it qualifies it and opens the view on ways for policy making from the bottom.

Editorial Note

i The William-Thompson-Working-Paper-Series is edited by the European Social Organisational and Science Consultancy for University of Cork, Department of Applied Social Studies and meant to offer a space for publications of occasional documents. One aim amongst others is to offer a space for publication of work by colleagues of the Department of Applied Social Studies at University of Cork.

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