



EC/EU social policy in historical perspective

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Ohlin report, 1956

- A strong and uniform European social dimension is not convenient, because:
 1. social and labour policies are the product of the specific economic, political and cultural situation existing in each country, which must not be artificially changed
 2. international differences in social policies and wage levels are indispensable to ensure the functioning of the comparative advantage mechanism
- Economic integration will generate resources to enable broad advances in social standards and to promote a progressive “upward harmonization” of national social systems and living conditions.

Social norms in the EEC treaty (1957)

- Free circulation of labour (artt. 48-51)
- Equal conditions and salaries between men and women workers (art. 119)
- European Social Fund (artt. 123-127)
- European common policy of vocational training (art. 128, never concretely applied)

The 1970s: a new generation of social policies

- 1970, 1974-1978: European tripartite conferences
 - (mostly aimed at fighting unemployment)
- 1972, 1977, 1983: reforms and strengthening of the European Social Fund
- 1974: first Social Action Programme of the EEC
 - New directives (equal opportunities, health & safety at work)
 - New specialized agencies: Cedefop (VT) and Eurofound

The “Delors era”

- 1985: establishment of the European Social Dialogue
- 1986: Single European Act
 - Economic and social cohesion as a target of the Community
 - Qualified majority for new legislation on H&S at work
- 1988, 1993: Reform and strengthening of the “structural funds”
 - (including the ESF)
- 1989: Community Charter of the Workers’ Social Rights
- 1990-95: new Social Action Programmes
 - European Works Councils
- 1992: Maastricht Treaty (the “social protocol”)
 - Quicker decision-making on some aspects of social policy
 - Further strengthening of the European Social Dialogue

Novelties and projects of the 1990s

- 1993: White paper «Growth, competitiveness and employment»
 - Education and training, social dialogue, labour mobility
- 1997: Treaty of Amsterdam
 - European Employment Strategy (OMC)
- 2000: Lisbon Strategy
 - Knowledge economy (through research, education and training)
 - Full employment by 2010
- The crisis of 2008 and the end of the illusions



EU budget rules and social rights

Number of recommendations addressed by the European Commission to individual Member States between 2011 and 2018, asking to:

- **slow wage growth: 50**
- **introduce more flexibility in employment contracts : 38**
- **reform the pension system : 105**
- **reduce expenditure on public healthcare systems and/or open them up to privatisation: 63**

A stronger social Europe?

- Covid-19 crisis
 - (momentary) relaxation of budgetary rules
 - Next generation EU
- 2017: European Pillar of Social Rights
 - Affirms a number of rights that should be recognised to all European workers
 - New directives on minimum wage (2022), platform workers (2024), due diligence (2024)



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