

Social policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the long and winding road

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Once upon a time, there was the
European social dialogue

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Disclaimer and related issues

- This paper reflects solely the views of its author, and not those of the European Commission
- It is part of wider research into changes in European social policy over the period 1985-2020
- Related sensitive issues

A historical approach

- Understanding what is the European social dialogue by examining the conditions of its "invention"
- Analysing how it has evolved over the last two decades with reference to these conditions and to the successive stages in the European integration process

The Delors Commissions (1985-1995)

- A "contractual relations area" at EU level
- A "joint" invention by the Commission and the EU social partners
- A political "deal" on the "social dimension" of the single market
- An emphasis on tripartite cross-industry social dialogue, and on negotiation
- "Double subsidiarity" and mutual trust

The Santer and Prodi Commissions (1995-2004)

- Social Agenda: Amsterdam Treaty, concertation (TSS), Lisbon Strategy
- New paradigms for EU social policies and debates on the legislative instrument
- Diversification: sectoral dialogue, "autonomous" work programmes and agreements
- The "golden age": history and myth

The Barroso Commissions (2005-2014)

- First tensions, and then exasperation
- New challenges: an enlarged EU and a crisis which reveals some weaknesses of the EMU architecture
- Tensions on economic governance, austerity, structural reforms, the Troika
- Tensions about legislation (REFIT and sectoral social partners agreements)
- Distrust and exasperation

The Juncker Commission (2014-2019)

- Expectations and disappointments
- The "last chance" Commission: emphasis on some social rebalancing and EPSR
- A "new start" for social dialogue
- Extending consultation
- A new step in the Art. 155 controversies and the reinterpretation of the Treaty provisions

Conclusion

- "Once upon a time...": beyond the rhetoric on the European social dialogue as part of the EU DNA.
- Resilience issues: *without its negotiation component, is it still the European social dialogue as it was invented?*
- Trust and distrust; populism and technopopulism ?

All comments and criticism are welcome :

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Bilan social de l'Union européenne 1999 – 2019 : une route longue et sinueuse

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