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Social Policies and Poverty: *The Challenges of Multilevel Governance in the EU*

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Main points

- **1) Social policies in the EU: State of the Art**
- **2) Poverty and social exclusion: the building of European strategy**
- **3) The challenges of the poverty multilevel governance**





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Social Policies in the EU

- The EU has relatively few robust social competences (Anderson 2015)
- The origins and evolution on the EU social policy are rooted in the notion of market correction
 - European Social Fund (1958)
- The MS remain masters of their own welfare states, at least on paper
 - Importance of the social policies in national politics
 - The most sensitive social policy areas remain subject of unanimity in the Council of Ministers





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Social Policies in the EU

- A new political window
 - The Treaty of Amsterdam and the Lisbon Strategy (2000) introduced the “Open method of coordination” (OMC) to overcome the obstacles of supranational policy agreement
- The OMC has been introduced for employment policies, public pensions, social inclusion and health care
 - Soft coordination occurs via target-setting, benchmarking and mutual surveillance
 - The European Semester (2011) : coordinating mechanism to provide structural policy recommendations to MS





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Social Policies in the EU

- Despite the obstacles, the EU has extended its reach into many areas of social policy, especially concerning the expansion of the internal market
 - Key roles of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice
 - Soft law, cognitive europeanisation
- The EU is now in position to influence member states' pensions, health and social inclusion policies
- It was certainly not on the minds of the men who negotiated the Treaty of Rome in 1957



Poverty and social exclusion: the building of a European strategy

- Between 1975 and 1994, the EEC conducted a number of pilot projects designed to combat poverty and exclusion
 - Financed by the ESF they were regularly contested by the MS
- The situation changed with the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam which enshrined the eradication of social exclusion as an objective of Community social policy
- The Lisbon strategy (2000) created a monitoring and coordinating mechanism consisting of objective setting, poverty measurement based on a set of indicators and guideline for MS programs against poverty



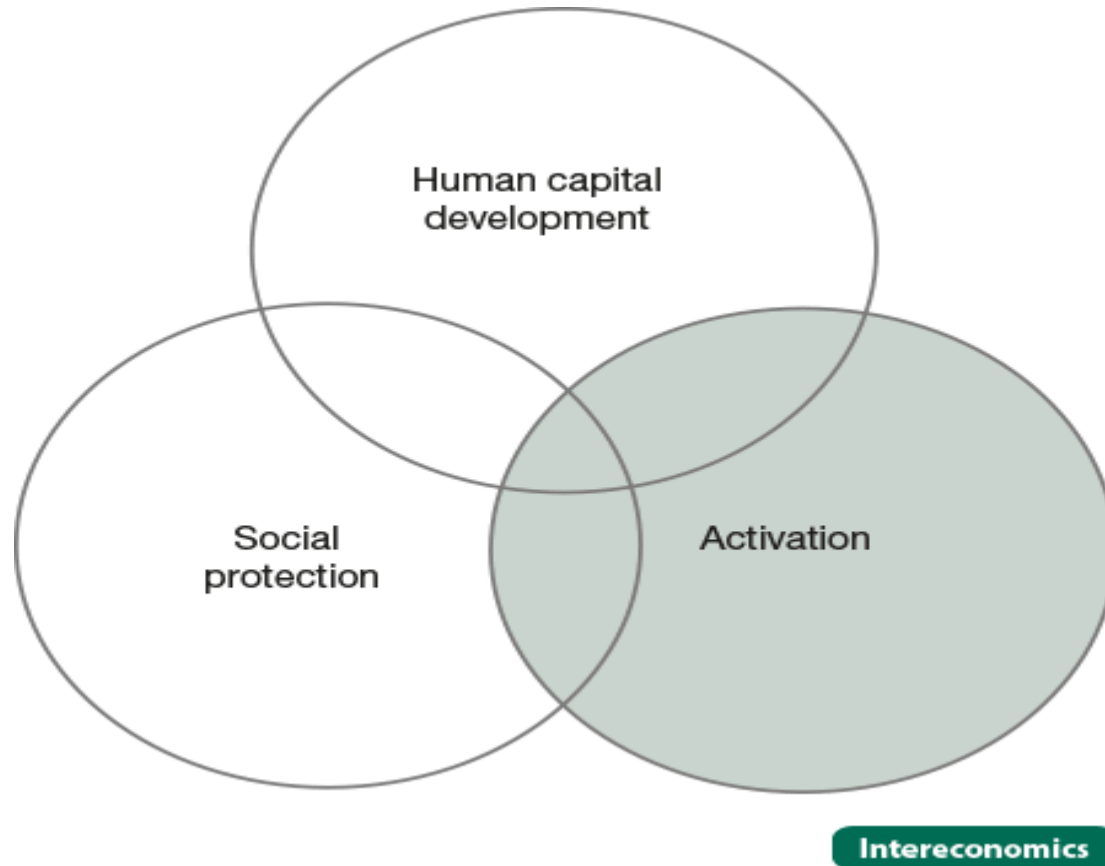
Poverty and social exclusion: the building of a European strategy

- One of the major innovation for the Europe 2020 strategy, adopted in 2010, was a new common target in the fight against poverty and social exclusion
 - To reduce 25% number of Europeans living below the national poverty line and to lift more than 20 millions people out of poverty
- In 2013, The Commission, in its communication “*Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion*” urged the MS to prioritise social investment people, especially children, in order to break the cycle of disadvantage and poverty.
 - Creation of the European platform against t poverty (2013-20): delivering actions across the whole poly spectrum, better use of EU funds, experimentation of social policy innovations, partnership with civil society, enhanced policy coordination



The social investment perspective

(Thomas Leoni, Intereconomics, 2016)



Poverty and social exclusion: the building of a European strategy

- In april 2017, the EC launched, the European Pillar of Social Rights, a non binding framework of 20 principles to effective rights in the areas of social protection and inclusion
 - The Pillar does not give the European Union more power or competences, but aims to be a tool to promote social rights with joint collaboration and responsibility together with MS, civil society and social actors and social partners.
 - In 2021, different initiatives and recommendations to establish a child guarantee , a minimum income and strategies to combat homelessness
- For the EU, we need a well-designed complementarity between social investment and protection
 - Developing human capital, innovation and productivity via education, training, family-policies and activation



The challenges of Multilevel Governance

- Challenge of policy change (implementation)
 - From the EU to regional and local scales
 - Obstacles and opportunities of MLG
- Centrality of social policies in the domestic political process
- Social policies make up the lion's share of public budgets
 - In 2012, in average, , the 27 MS spent 28% of GDP on social protection and health
- The organization of social policy is an area of high political salience, elections are won and on these issues, they provide much of the legitimation for modern democratic governments



The challenges of Multilevel Governance

- Diversity of institutional and political arrangements between the MS
 - Role of local and regional authorities
 - Role of the civil society: associations, unions, NGOs
- Differentiated Europeanization of national poverty policies and strategies
 - Predominance of national policy styles
 - Convergence and divergence
 - More competences for the EU?

