Mind the Gap

European Research for Combating Inequalities
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Setting the Scene

In the last three decades inequalities in Europe have increased. The combined effects of globalization, technological changes and tax reforms – in particular reductions in the marginal tax rates for high earners – have led to a deterioration in the distribution of income and wealth among Europeans. In general, over the past 25 years the 10% highest income recipients in Europe have seen their incomes grow more rapidly than the rest of the population. The trend has not been the same in all Member States. The rise in inequality has been more pronounced in countries which have undergone transitions (Central and Eastern Europe) and in those hit hardest by the economic crisis (Ireland, Greece, Spain and Estonia). Income inequality measured by the Gini coefficient varied by approximately 10 points across Europe in 2012, with the lowest levels of inequality seen in Scandinavian countries and Slovenia and the highest in Spain and Latvia. On average, in 2012 Europeans in the highest (fifth) income quintile earned nearly 40% of total income, and people in the lowest (first) quintile earned less than 10%.

The situation has been compounded by the recent economic difficulties. During the crisis the real average disposable household income stagnated or fell in most EU countries. However, it was the lower income households that suffered the biggest income losses. As a result, in 2013 16.6% of the EU-28 population was assessed to be at-risk-of-poverty after social transfers. In five Member States, namely Greece (23.1%), Romania (22.4%), Bulgaria (21.0%), Lithuania (20.6%) and Spain (20.4%), one fifth or more of the population was viewed as being at-risk-of-poverty. At the same time, the effects on the most vulnerable have been more severe. Women, unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and migrants are all groups that face considerable challenges and experience greater levels of inequality.

Tackling inequalities is a political imperative for the European Commission and President Juncker has placed it high in his political agenda. This was underlined by his commitment to create a Europe with a ‘Triple A Social Rating’ and to strengthen the European Social Model through a pillar of social rights. Addressing inequalities is not only a matter of solidarity but also of economic expediency. Scientific evidence shows that higher
levels of inequality are not conducive to economic growth and can have negative implications for macroeconomic stability. Inequality creates «negative externalities» for growth since it can potentially lead to higher social conflict, increased rent-seeking behaviour leading to misallocation of resources, lower social mobility leading to underinvestment in human capital and fewer educational opportunities for low income groups. Growth in more unequal countries is also less effective in lowering poverty.

DG Research and Innovation supports the Commission’s drive towards addressing inequalities and promoting social inclusion and fairness. The EU’s Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities and the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme on Research and Innovation finance several research projects on economic inequality; solidarity; poverty and social exclusion; vulnerabilities of different groups of workers (youth, women, disabled, migrants); quality of work and skills; innovations in social protection; tax and benefits policies for combating poverty and promoting inclusion and overall policy learning concerning what works, where and why.

This publication presents the most relevant projects in the Social Sciences and Humanities who have taken up the task of addressing the wider issues of inequality, exclusion and social welfare. The projects are a source of ground breaking conceptual work, extensive quantitative comparisons and surveys, profound and in-depth qualitative forays into social challenges and importantly concrete, evidence-based policy recommendations.
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Publications relevant to inequality policy

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FP6 and FP7 projects
Advanced Methodology for European Laeken Indicators

Description

The Laeken indicators are the main indicators to measure social cohesion in Europe, and in particular the impact of economic and social policies of the EU. The Laeken indicators are estimated from complex surveys across Europe, the surveys for the Statistics on Income and Living (SILC). The project AMELI developed and evaluated new statistical methods to enhance the quality of the Laeken indicators. The work conducted included research on data quality including its measurement, treatment of outliers and nonresponse, small area estimation and the measurement of development over time.
Outcomes

The research topics were:
• Impact of missing values and their treatment
• Impact of outliers and development of robust estimators for the Laeken indicators
• Model based estimation of indicators for small regions
• Visualisation of data and indicators.

AMELI evaluated the methods in an extensive Monte Carlo simulation study. The outcomes of the AMELI project aimed to support policy and decision makers in Europe in their use of the Laeken indicators.
Description

Reducing poverty is one of the main challenges for ensuring social cohesion in modern Europe. In this context, Minimum Income Protection (MIP) is one of the main pillars of European welfare states. However, MIP recipients often suffer from multiple social problems. Thus, effective support for their social and labour market inclusion also requires individualised social service support. In COPE we investigated how five European countries (PL, SE, UK, IT, DE) deal with the organisational challenge of providing interlinked social and employment services. The core of COPE’s analysis was to map poverty and social exclusion in Europe, to examine the complex governance structure of European, national and local policies of minimum income schemes, and to assess their impact on beneficiaries.
Outcomes

The results show that the five countries balance multiple goals and different logics, but lean towards one of two types of MIP: they either organise their MIP schemes at the national level, with a strong focus on employability and activation, but with little scope for social work (UK and Germany). Or – in Sweden, Poland and Italy - the role of MIP is to uphold the local social order by supporting those who are in need. Links to Active Labour Market Policies and Public Employment Services are weak and unsystematic.

For local patterns of service integration, the project revealed a very mixed landscape, with cooperation structures ranging from very close links between MIP, unemployment protection and social service like in Dortmund (DE) to parallel systems of MIP and employment services, as for example in Glasgow (UK).

Research at the street-level showed that successful individual support is of course also strongly influenced by financial and staff resources, both of which are often lacking in all systems.
EDUMIGROM investigated the impact of educational policies on Roma and second-generation migrant youth in the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Regardless of whether they are citizens of old or new member states of the European Union, people affiliated to these groups tend to experience new and intensive forms of involuntary separation, second-class citizenship, or exclusion. This constitution of ‘othering’ manifests itself in the lack of recognition and respect from the earliest years. Hence, the ways in which educational practices address ethnic differences appear to be crucial in developing social inclusion based on equal citizenship and recognition. Through applying a cross-national comparative perspective, the project explored the mechanisms in socio-economic, political, cultural and gender relations that make ethnicity a substantive component of inequalities in social status and power.
Outcomes

EDUMIGROM developed in-depth knowledge on main social interactions in urban communities in Europe with a high degree of ethnic diversity, while having a simultaneous focus on Roma and second-generation migrant youth with visible signs of ethnic difference. Overall, the research painted a rather gloomy picture about the lives, opportunities and future perspectives of ethnic minority adolescents in Europe. It revealed some typical dynamics of inter-ethnic encounters in schools of communities densely inhabited by ethnic groups and thus contributed to an expanding research area of ‘minoritisation’ in Europe. Although ethnicity was viewed as a key category to define social position and identity, the research produced knowledge also on how other social distinctions (in particular gender, religion and social class) intersect with ethnic backgrounds. Findings revealed that the prevailing systems of schooling work towards producing and maintaining these children’s disadvantages in access to quality education. Young people from second-generation migrant and Roma backgrounds seem to share a common fate of being marked with labels carrying dubious connotations as a result of coming from “other” settings than most people – the majorities – around them.
Mind the Gap: European Research for Combating Inequalities

Economic Change, Quality of Life and Social Cohesion

Description

The project mobilized expertise to explore the implications of the increasingly knowledge-intensive pattern of economic growth for the strength of social cohesion in the European Union and its member states. Both the relational and attitudinal dimensions of social cohesion were in focus: the extent of social connectedness on the one hand and the sense of common membership of society on the other. The network contributed solid new comparative evidence on issues such as employment conditions and the changing structure of labour markets; inequality of income; social disparities in educational attainment and the role of education in furthering social mobility; differences and inequalities in patterns of family formation and intergenerational solidarity; the causes and consequences of the gender division in paid and unpaid work; patterns of and institutional conditions for dealing with migratory processes and for the integration of ethnic minorities. The project produced important comparative European microdata and spread competence in the use of advanced methods for the study of such phenomena. A major accomplishment of the project was the training and involvement of young scholars in comparative and cooperative research.
Outcomes

At the end of the project 14 books, 9 special journal issues, 306 papers in scientific journals, and 161 chapters in edited volumes had or were on the way to be published, while 58 papers were foreseen to be published.

A large number of young scholars was trained and became competent in comparative research.
EUMARGINS

http://www.sv.uio.no/iss/english/research/projects/eumargins

Project reference: 217524

EU contribution:
EUR 1 418 732

From 2008 to 2011

Project coordinator:
UNIVERSITETET I OSLO, Norway

young migrants • social exclusion • inclusion • unemployment • socio-political activism • urban areas

On the Margins of the European Community

Description

EUMARGINS used in-depth analyses and interviews to look at social inclusion and exclusion of young migrants in Estonia, France, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden. The central concept of the project was that a range of factors inhibit or encourage the abilities of individuals and groups to make the transition from being excluded to being included within societies. The aim of EUMARGINS was to identify and prioritise those factors that matter most for specific young adult migrant groups and in different countries. The project also put forward recommendations that can assist with the transition from exclusion to inclusion, focusing in particular on dominant factors such as (un)employment and related education aspects.

The project looked at young people with immigrant origins in seven urban areas in seven different European countries, using a comparative framework to identify the most and the least marginalised groups. The project also looked at the interplay between education and opportunities in the labour market. In addition, other relevant areas of interest for young adults were investigated, including leisure and socio-political activism.

EUMARGINS was based on a combination of biographical and ethnographical data collection and on the analysis of available statistical data.
Outcomes

EUMARGINS produced a collection of books and policy briefs. The book Inclusion and Exclusion of Young Adult Migrants in Europe: Barriers and Bridges explores the plight of migrants in many contexts such as welfare states, old colonial countries and ex-communist countries. The book Young Migrants: Exclusion and Belonging in Europe investigates the life experiences of these young adults in relation to migration, work, education, civic participation and politics. The project also resulted in several policy briefs on immigration discourses in media and politics, on segregation in ethnic schools and on job discrimination against young adults with immigrant backgrounds.
Social Inequality and Why It Matters for the Economic and Democratic Development of Europe and Its Citizens.
Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective

Description

Social inequality matters for the life chances of individuals and their families and for the democratic and economic future of Europe. The fundamental aim of the proposed project was to create and disseminate new knowledge that would facilitate the achievement of greater social equality, and therefore enhance the social cohesiveness, and democratic and market development in Central and East European (CEE) states.

The project investigated the multifaceted character of social inequality in CEE states, where the extent and character of social inequality has been dramatically impacted by the transition from controlled economies to forms of market and democratic systems. It assessed the economic and political causes of social inequality among both individuals and countries and its consequences for social cohesion, economic development, social conflict, social mobility, democratic consolidation, and international integration.
Outcomes

The research proceeded comparatively by examining differences within Central and East European (CEE) states (including EU members, Associated States, and International Cooperation target states in the Former Soviet Union) and by looking at changes over time in the character and consequences of social inequality within CEE. By analysing ‘best practices’ within CEE states and other parts of the world, the project produced policy relevant output in order to

- underpin individual and household strategies that may reduce social inequality,
- contribute to understanding of factors that may reduce social conflict, and
- enhance economic development, democratic consolidation and European integration.
Growing Inequalities’ Impacts

Description

The GINI project focused on inequalities in income/wealth and education and their social/political/cultural impacts. It combined an interdisciplinary approach, improved methodologies, wide country coverage, a clear policy dimension and broad dissemination in order to explain impacts and tease out implications for policy and institutions. The project highlighted potential effects of individual distributional positions and increasing inequality for a host of ‘bad outcomes’ (societal and individual) and allowed feedback from impacts to inequality in a frame of policy-oriented debate and comparison across 25 EU countries, USA, Japan, Canada and Australia.
Outcomes

According to the project’s findings since the 1980s income inequality has increased in most of the developed world. At the same time, country studies revealed significant variations in the ways and extent to which individual nations have attempted to alleviate associated pressures or to handle their consequences. GINI researchers also examined country-specific differences concerning educational inequalities, and social as well as political and cultural impacts of increasing inequalities in income, wealth and education. Another research focus was on redistributive and educational policies. The policy recommendations put forward by GINI cover, among others, policies related to the welfare state, unemployment and active labour market policies, exclusion, resourcing policies and education.
Meeting the challenges of Economic Uncertainty and Sustainability through Employment, Industrial Relations, Social and Environmental Policies in European Countries

Description

The core objective of the project was to establish the full array of policies and practices that govern and distribute protection from economic uncertainty in contemporary European and other advanced societies, particularly in the light of the new instabilities produced by the financial crisis and its aftermath. The aim was to provide both academic research and public policy-makers with detailed knowledge and a classification of policies and their effects. Knowledge derived from the research made possible an appraisal of the achievements and weaknesses of various policy types.
Outcomes

At several points we found possibilities for positive-sum and constructive solutions similar to those of the original Danish and Dutch flexicurity achievements. However, the scope for these is frequently undermined by the central thrust of the neoliberal policy frame, and in particular of European marketization policies. The project argued that it is essential that public policymakers and business interests recognize that the negative externalities of uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety and declining trust that markets can create cannot be resolved through markets themselves - unaided by public policy. Therefore marketization increases rather than reduces the need for public policy and public resources that offset these negative consequences. Possibilities for doing this are undermined by the insistence of EU policy that social policy is just another area in which markets must operate, rather than one in which they should be counter-balanced.
Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation

Description

ImPRovE is an international research project that brings together ten outstanding research institutes and a broad network of researchers in a concerted effort to study poverty, social policy and social innovation in Europe. The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

• How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?
• How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?
Outcomes

The project has provided new social indicators, especially in the area of reference budgets and minimum income protection; insightful analyses of poverty and the Europe 2020 targets; research on employment and the welfare state; and contributed to a better understanding of the interaction between local projects of social innovation and the traditional welfare state. In its last phase, the project develops policy scenarios that foster insight into how poverty can be effectively reduced in EU Member States.
Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education

Description

The INCLUD-ED project analysed educational strategies that contribute to overcoming inequalities and promote social cohesion, particularly focusing on vulnerable and marginalised groups. The study focused on the interactions between educational systems, agents and policies, up to the compulsory level (i.e. pre-primary, primary and secondary education, including vocational and special education programmes). The consortium carried out 22 case studies in Europe and 6 longitudinal studies analysing schools in marginalized regions that accomplish good educational results. It also explored connections with other areas of social policy (employment, political participation, health, housing) and considered the gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue. The detailed analysis led to the identification of ‘Successful Educational Actions’ (SEAs) and ‘Integrative Successful Actions’ (ISAs) with universal components transferable across contexts. INCLUD-ED implemented a Communicative Methodology, based on dialogue between researchers and end-users. According to this communicative approach, researchers, parents, youth, teachers, other social agents and policy-makers were involved in all stages of the project and presented the main results of the project at the European Parliament.
Outcomes

• INCLUD-ED’S results have been published in more than 110 articles in indexed journals and the book “Successful Educational Actions for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe” (Ed. Springer).
• The implementation of the Successful Actions in different territories has improved educational outcomes, enhanced social cohesion and increased opportunities and quality of life of youth and children in more than 100 communities. Improvements reach 60% in the rate of students who pass the official exam on reading skills, particularly in schools with high rates of migrant students.
• INCLUD-ED’s findings have been reflected in resolutions and political recommendations by the Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe.
Inequality: Mechanisms, Effects and Policies

Description

The INEQ project had three objectives: a. investigate the economic and social mechanisms that are producing polarisation and inequality within European countries and EU neighbouring Countries; b. investigate the effects inequality has on societies, and its connection to economic performance and social integration; c. identify actual and potential policies - at the national, EU and global levels.
Outcomes

Three key economic mechanisms that lead to inequality were studied: the impact of technological change and human capital; the impact of global trade; FDI and finance. These were integrated into a general economic modelling for EU countries which allowed simulating the inequality impact of different policies.

As regards social processes, the gender and ethnic/immigrant factors leading to social polarisation and inequality were also addressed in the case of EU countries.

Finally, in terms of policy a variety of economic (taxation, expenditure, welfare reform) and social (gender, immigrant, social rights) policies that affect inequality within Europe were analysed, showing how public decision making contributes to or can restrain inequality producing mechanisms. A policy blueprint was prepared with detailed recommendations on how national and EU policies could contribute to reducing inequalities.
MYPLACE

http://www.fp7-myplace.eu

Project reference: 266831

EU contribution: EUR 7 994 449

From 2011 to 2015

Project coordinator: UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER, United Kingdom

youth • civic engagement • political participation • political heritage • youth activism • radicalism

Description

MYPLACE explores how young people’s social participation is shaped by the past, present and future shadows of totalitarianism and populism in Europe. MYPLACE starts from the premise that these political trends are rooted in radical and populist political and philosophical traditions that are pan-European in nature; enjoying a popularity that is cyclical rather than novel.

The particular concern of MYPLACE is with the current generation of young people. This generation does not share any first-hand memory of the Cold War or any direct experience of living under a communist, authoritarian or fascist regime. They do share, however, the experience of growing up during the first global capitalist crisis in the post-World War II period. This vulnerable social position of young people makes them a prime recruitment target for parties and movements of the extreme right.

In order to understand whether young people will allow themselves to be manipulated by extreme political movements, MYPLACE employs a combination of survey, interview and ethnographic research. This research provides new pan-European data on: the degree of engagement or disengagement from politics and civic activism among young people; their political values and attitudes and how they are shaped by local, national and pan-European political heritages; and the degree of support for, activism in, or receptivity to extreme political movements and agendas.
Outcomes

With 30 research locations across 14 countries, the MYPLACE project has produced multiple pan-European data sets. These include a questionnaire survey of young people aged 16-25, follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of these young people, 44 ethnographic studies of youth activism grouped under 6 thematic clusters, and ethnographic observations at 18 sites of memory including expert interviews with staff, focus groups and inter-generational interviews. Findings from the project were published in Pilkington, H. and Pollock, G. (eds) (2015) Radical futures? Youth, Politics and Activism in Contemporary Europe, Sociological Review Monograph Series, Oxford: Wiley.
Creating and Adapting Jobs in the Context of a Socio-Ecological Transition

Description

The objective of the project is to analyse possible future developments in European labour market(s) under the main assumption that European societies are now facing or preparing to face profound transitions (‘megatrends’) that will have a major impact on employment; particularly for some groups in the labour force or sectors of the economy. These natural and societal megatrends will reshape the global conditions for Europe, posing numerous challenges to societies and policy-makers in the area of labour.
Outcomes

NEUJOBS has found that job polarisation is a key contributor to inequality. The concentration of wage growth among high-skilled workers, combined with disproportionate job growth at the upper and lower ends of the skill distribution, has resulted in a more unequal economic environment. Rising demand at the upper and lower ends of the occupational skills distribution took place during the decade from 1998 to 2008. Job polarisation also occurred in 17 out of 25 EU countries between 2000 and 2010 and the trend is expected to continue if no measures to tackle it are taken. Simultaneously, NEUJOBS finds that with the expanding education sector we will see a continuing replacement of low-skilled workers by medium-skilled workers. This means that the medium-skilled might temporarily assume positions for which they are overqualified. The call for policy-makers therefore is to tackle polarisation, as it is likely to increase socio-economic inequalities within societies along lines of ethnicity, gender, age and skill.
Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation

Description

PIDOP examined the processes that influence democratic ownership and participation in nine European countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland), Germany, Italy, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey. Drawing on the disciplines of psychology, politics, sociology, social policy and education, it examined macro-level contextual factors (including historical, political, electoral, economic and policy factors), proximal social factors (including familial, educational and media factors) and psychological factors (including motivational, cognitive, attitudinal and identity factors) which facilitate and/or inhibit civic and political engagement and participation.

The project had a distinct focus on the psychology of the individual citizen and the psychological processes through which macro-level contextual factors and proximal social factors exert their effects upon citizens’ civic and political engagement and participation. Young people, women, minorities and migrants were examined as four specific groups at risk of political disengagement. As part of the project, multi-level process models of civic and political engagement and participation were constructed to explain how and why different forms and interpretations of democratic ownership and participation develop.

The involvement of stakeholders ensured the relevance and applicability of policy implications and recommendations that emerged from the research.
Outcomes

PIDOP provided a comprehensive analysis of the factors that impact civic and political engagement and participation. It also showed how the impact of macro, demographic, social and psychological factors varies depending on the specific form of participation and national context. Political interest, internal efficacy, organisational membership and previous high quality participation experiences were found to be relatively robust predictors of participation in most contexts. Theories to explain these findings were developed.

In addition, the project developed a set of evidence-based recommendations for policy, practice and intervention that can be used by politicians, political institutions, media producers, educational professionals, schools, youth workers and other civil society actors to enhance levels of participation among youth, women, minorities and migrants.
Work and Life Quality in New and Growing Jobs

Description

The Walqing project addressed the aim of EU policy to create ‘more and better jobs’. Although employment has expanded in Europe from 2000 to 2007, roughly half of this growth occurred in areas with problematic working and employment conditions. Walqing investigated the quality of these jobs, their impact on employees’ quality of life and the conditions for the development of ‘better’, high-quality jobs.
Outcomes

Approximately half of the job growth in Europe after 2000 consisted of jobs with below-average job quality. The “new and growing” sectors in Europe have certain features in common: They are labour-intensive services that are spatially distributed. They feature comparatively low wages, physically hard work, low and misrecognised skills and patchy to low unionisation. Additionally, they are structured by strong gender and ethnic segmentation. Through the accumulation of disadvantages, they reiterate social vulnerability, health risks or discontinuous employment.

Nevertheless, favourable configurations of pay, work quality and professionalisation are possible. They are contingent on inclusive employment regimes and an active social partnership supported by policy that is capable of maintaining and developing standards of training, and creating secure and continuous employment that is sustainable over the life course.
Making Capabilities Work

Description

WorkAble provided knowledge on how to enable young people to succeed in European labour markets and to actively shape their own development. It assessed the political and institutional strategies aiming to cope with the high rates of youth unemployment and dropping out of school and upper secondary education. Applying the capabilities approach, WorkAble explored how educational strategies are implemented and assessed whether and how they enable young people to convert knowledge, skills and competencies into labour market capabilities. 13 partners from different disciplines in ten European countries collaborated closely in a multidimensional research process. They followed a three-phase research design:

• a comparative institutional mapping and analysis of vocational and labour-market policies in all educational regimes
• case studies to reconstruct the conceptions, aspirations and practices of local actors who implement educational and training programmes and of the young people who attend them
• quantitative secondary analyses of national and European longitudinal data to reveal how effectively these strategies close the capability gap for young people.
Outcomes

WorkAble produced a series of recommendations for stakeholders and politicians, including appropriate training and education strategies that can enable young persons to cope with economic and social challenges. It created a new wide-ranging theoretical understanding of the conditions for the functioning of educational and welfare systems in Europe. In addition, it contributed to expanding young people’s capacity to act as full citizens while also developing transversal and integrated economic, educational and social strategies for closing the capabilities gap.
Young People in Public Care: Pathways to Education in Europe

**Description**

Children and young people in public care are at high risk of failing to achieve social and labour market inclusion in adulthood, which is due at least in part to their low level of education. YiPPEE focused on the post-compulsory phase, the 18 to 24 age group, using a multi-method approach: literature and policy reviews, published and unpublished statistics, an evaluation of the impact of legislation, and interviews with a wide range of respondents. 170 young men and women in care at age 16 were interviewed face-to-face as well as carers and managers of care services. There were strong similarities in the life-story narratives of the young people in all countries, in particular their experience of early neglect and abuse, for which care and education systems do too little to compensate. Although research participants were selected for having shown ability and motivation, few were able to access tertiary education or were on track to do so (8% compared with 40% of their peers). Three main factors were identified: pressure to enrol in short-term vocational training to become self-supporting as early as possible, lack of information and poor guidance, and insufficient practical and emotional support from carers and professionals.
Outcomes

The project produced, for the first time, cross-national quantitative and qualitative evidence on this neglected issue. It raised awareness of the importance of educational attainment for children in care internationally through publication of four books, conference presentations and numerous journal papers as well as special issues of the European Journal of Social Work and Children and Youth Services Review. There is clear evidence of impact on policy and practice arising from recommendations in the national and international reports available on the website as well as in published accounts of findings in all partner countries. Project findings contributed important evidence to the EC policy review Social Inclusion of Youth on the Margins of Society.
Youth, Unemployment, and Exclusion in Europe: a Multidimensional Approach to Understanding the Conditions and Prospects for Social and Political Integration of Young Unemployed

Description

YOUNEX put forward new insights on the social and political exclusion of unemployed youth, analysing its causes, processes and perspectives for change and social integration. It generated a new body of data on the young unemployed (in particular those in long-term unemployment) and on precarious youth through:

• a multidimensional theoretical framework that combines macro-level, meso-level, and micro-level explanatory factors and takes into account various dimensions of exclusion such as social and political exclusion or individual well-being

• a cross-national comparative design that includes European countries with different institutional approaches to unemployment (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland)
Outcomes

Results of individual surveys revealed that long-term unemployed young Europeans can be described as politically uninterested rather than politically excluded. They are not a homogenous group and differ in a range of areas. Qualitative in-depth interviews offered significant insights, especially in terms of how young people cope with their situation and on what the impact of unemployment on social and political exclusion is. An analysis of related EU policies has also been carried out, revisiting relevant policy agendas, initiatives and recommendations by institutions in Europe. In addition, an organisational survey showed that civil society organisations (CSOs) are particularly adept at supporting the integration of unemployed youth and therefore represent an important vehicle for achieving it.
2.
Horizon 2020 projects
Social Exclusion of Youth in Europe: Cumulative Disadvantage, Coping Strategies, Effective Policies and Transfer

Description

The youth labour market was especially hit by the economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath, which had detrimental effects on the social cohesion of our societies. Against this background, the aim of this interdisciplinary and internationally comparative project is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of youth labour market vulnerability for risks of social exclusion in Europe. A multidimensional dynamic perspective on both objective and subjective dimensions of the social exclusion of young people is adopted in order to identify the complex interrelationships and potential risks of cumulative disadvantages and possible compensatory mechanisms. We address three broad dimensions: implications of labour market insecurities for youth’s risk of poverty and material deprivation, their subjective well-being and health status, and their ability to achieve independence from parental home.
Expected outcomes

The aim of this project is to provide an understanding of the consequences of youth labour market vulnerability. We search to understand how disadvantaged youth perceive their situation and try to cope in different economic, institutional and cultural environments. We investigate youth social exclusion in national contexts and assess policies addressing it. A central objective of this project is to learn about examples of best practices and provide suggestions for reforms and policies that help improve the social situation of young people.
**Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration & Markets**

**Description**

This project addresses the challenges and barriers that European countries face in managing the mobility of people. For markets to function optimally, we identify two migration-related drivers of growth: the efficient use of existing human capital and managing mobility of human capital both from within and from outside Europe. A key barrier for these growth drivers is ethnic inequality. Inequality can be a result of the skill composition and resources of the migrant population, but also of markets not functioning optimally (for example due to ethnic discrimination, or institutional arrangements that affect the flexibility of the labour market).
Expected outcomes

• To outline the factors related to the successful labour market incorporation of migrants;
• To contribute to the scholarly knowledge of the causes of discrimination, by carrying out a cross-national analysis of ethnic discrimination in the European labour market;
• To better understand the ability of EU societies to attract human capital by capturing the ‘lived’ experiences of mobility and migration;
• To analyse how institutional arrangements can reduce ethnic inequality and enhance the two drivers of growth in order to realise a competitive and innovative European labour market;
• To formulate a set of policy lessons informed by empirical evidence and our own analyses of institutional arrangements.
Innovation-fuelled, Sustainable, Inclusive Growth

Description

The project addresses the following clusters of cross-cutting themes:
• Patterns of innovation; structural change; financialisation; inequality; growth.
• Globalisation; the importance of manufacturing; climate-change and green revolution; links between innovation, demand generation and employment.

The general idea is to have ensembles of policies (science and innovation policies, mission-oriented industrial policies, competition, fiscal and monetary policies) and institutional changes which interconnect in order to promote innovation-fuelled, sustainable, socially inclusive growth.
Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of ISI-Growth are twofold.

Firstly, to provide novel and comprehensive diagnostics of the relationships between innovation, employment dynamics and growth in an increasingly globalised and financialised world economy.

Secondly, to elaborate policy scenarios in order to deliver a coherent policy toolkit to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
QuInnE

http://www.quinne.eu

Project reference: 649497

EU contribution:
EUR 2 498 869

From 2015 to 2017

Project coordinator:
LUND UNIVERSITY, Sweden

innovation • job quality • employment • social inclusion • inequality • work organization

Description

QuInnE investigates how job quality and innovation mutually impact each other at the organisation level, and what employment outcomes result from this interaction. The interaction between job quality and innovation is investigated as potentially mutually supportive.

Job quality is a multi-dimensional concept covering various aspects of work organisation and the terms and conditions of employment. Drawing on the Oslo Manual, both technical and non-technical innovations are investigated, with an emphasis on organisational innovation.

Through quantitative analyses and qualitative organization-level case studies, the factors and also the mechanisms and processes by which job quality and innovation impact each other are identified. The effects of this interaction between job quality and innovation are then analysed in terms of employment outcomes. The latter are then tracked in terms of their impact on social inclusion and inequality.
Expected outcomes

QuInnE will produce three main outcomes:

• new scientific understanding of the innovation-job quality-employment dynamic;
• new diagnostic and developmental tools to monitor, measure and improve this dynamic at the firm and workplace level as well as approaches to analysing this dynamic at the national level - which directly feeds into the third outcome;
• evidence-based advice on developing policy to boost innovation and economic and employment growth in the EU, along with an awareness of ensuing impacts on social inclusion and inequality.
Description

In 2013, the Commission launched a major endeavour to rebalance economic and social progress with the Social Investment Package (SIP). Our ambition is to contribute to strengthening the philosophical as well as the institutional and empirical underpinnings of the SIP, based on social investment in human rights and (individual and collective) capabilities. Our consortium is embedded in the network ‘Alliances to fight poverty’, a network of civil society organisations, trade unions, policy makers and academics co-ordinated by the Flemish Christian labour movement Beweging.net, and committed to a more inclusive Europe. We will actively involve European citizens severely affected by the crisis in the co-construction of knowledge and the design of a more powerful and effective social investment agenda.
Expected outcomes

This overall objective translates into the following specific objectives:

• Development of innovative methodological tools for participative research, involving mixed teams of researchers, workers from civil society organisations and trade unions, professionals and people from vulnerable groups in the co-construction of knowledge on social policy issues;

• Diagnosis of the social damage of the crisis in terms of human rights, social (dis)investment, loss of (collective) capabilities, through participatory research;

• Analysis of the relationships between the rise of the precariat, poverty and social exclusion, the decline of social cohesion and trust, and the threats to democracy and solidarity;

• Development of a theoretical model of social investment, with a focus on the effective promotion of human rights and capabilities;

• Application of the social investment model in the field of active labour market policies and social protection;

• Application of the social investment model to public intervention in five selected basic service markets: water provision, housing, early childhood education, health care and financial services;

• Analysis of the macro-level boundary conditions for successful implementation of the SIP;

• Capacity building in civil society organisations (including trade unions) for the promotion of the European social investment agenda, through networking, policy recommendations, and dissemination of the research findings.
Solidarity in European Societies: Empowerment, Social Justice and Citizenship

Description

SOLIDUS analyses in depth actions of solidarity which are being developed across Europe, the extent to which they respond to dialogic and inclusive processes, the related outcomes and the policy developments. The project incorporates previous findings on successful actions combating the crisis – e.g. by creating employment or improving access to health – and further explores their solidarity dimension. These actions and policies will thus contribute to the construction of more inclusive and prosperous societies, by exerting an influence both at the macro (social inequalities) and micro-levels (psychological wellbeing). SOLIDUS will identify common elements among these in order to examine their transferability to different contexts. To cover this objective, the project studies the outcomes of these actions in five policy areas: employment, housing, education, health and civic engagement. Simultaneously, special attention will be paid to social investment policies which are supporting these initiatives.
Expected outcomes

SOLIDUS will identify successful practices and policies (solidarity actions) which demonstrate that they are contributing to overcoming the social inequalities generated by the crisis in different policy areas. Therefore, SOLIDUS will measure the social, economic and political impact of these expressions of solidarity. In addition, the project will explore the common features that make solidarity successful, allowing the possibility of transferability to other contexts.

Furthermore, SOLIDUS will contribute to a better understanding of European solidarity both as an intellectual concept and in its practical expressions (at spatial, community and individual levels) in both formal and informal settings and its link with the provision of common social goods.
Transnational Solidarity at Times of Crisis

Description

The economic crisis in Europe has placed solidarity at the top of public and policy agendas. But how strong is solidarity amongst Europeans, after almost 60 years of European integration? What do we know about beneficial and detrimental factors? And what should be done to safeguard or enhance European solidarity at the level of citizens, non-governmental organisations and policies? These and other questions are at the centre of TransSOL. TransSOL is a transnational research project dedicated to providing systematic and practise-related knowledge about European solidarity at times of crisis. It brings together researchers and civil society practitioners from eight European countries—Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The project started in June 2015 and will run until May 2018.
Expected outcomes

Gather systematic data on contextual factors: Identify, measure and compare the inhibiting or beneficial impact of contextual factors upon European solidarity in different countries. Assemble a systematic and cross-national database on solidarity in Europe: Map the broad range of existing practises and projects at the local, national and cross-national levels in order to present a detailed picture of solidarity initiatives and action cases across Europe. Develop a multidimensional data set that allows measurement and analysis of European solidarity at various levels. Identify best practises for European solidarity and develop evidence-based policy recommendations.
Publications relevant to inequality policy
An ever closer union among the peoples of Europe? -
Rising inequalities in the EU and their social, economic and political impacts

The Treaty on European Union is based on an ‘ever closer union among the peoples of Europe’. Scientific research in social sciences and the humanities funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme shows that socioeconomic inequalities have generally increased in the EU over the last 20 years. A dual trend in inequalities has been observed during periods of economic growth as well as since the onset of the financial and economic crisis in 2008.

First, inequalities reinforce the exclusion of already fragile citizens, trapping them into lives of exclusion from an early age. This issue triggers many questions as to what models of economic policy the EU should adopt and how these models should be combined with stronger social policies in favour of inclusion and solidarity. Second, rising inequalities threaten the quality of our democracies in Europe. Democracies thrive on equal treatment, proper regard to merit and opportunities for the excluded and the poor to live better lives.

To ensure these rights, the EU needs to develop and implement targeted public policies in areas such as education and employment. This publication is aimed at supporting the agenda for jobs, fairness and democratic change put forward by Jean-Claude Juncker and the newly appointed European Commission.


http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_reviews/ki-na26814enc.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none
In the context of the changing demographic structure of society, Europe’s future prosperity and sustainability largely depend on its ability to take advantage of the potential of all generations. In times of economic and financial crisis in particular, Europe needs a strong young generation to be a driver of sustainable and inclusive growth that will ensure long-term development. Youth represents the backbone of future Europe and we need to prepare the generation that will lead and support the EU in 2040 and after.

This publication gives an overview of the most relevant projects on youth and youth-related policies. The results of these projects are highly relevant for the new Juncker Commission agenda on «Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change», and in particular relevant for the EU Youth Strategy, as the research aims to ensure the full participation of youth in an innovative, inclusive, sustainable and democratic Europe. Thus, they provide solid suggestions as to how EU and national policies can most adequately address the challenges faced by young people today, and how to set the EU on a course for a better future.

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Economic growth has a top priority on the agenda of European economic policy. Since the 2008 economic crisis, Europe’s growth performance has been sluggish and incapable of reaching the level of growth in the USA, which has recovered much faster from the economic crisis. The low growth and high unemployment in Europe has negative effects on the lives of European citizens and on European states. It has entailed increased inequality and raised new sustainability issues. However, at the same time, Europe’s growth pattern has experienced important qualitative changes as Europe has become more knowledge based and globalised, and solving the current challenges provides new growth opportunities, as social innovation shows.

This publication presents those FP7 SSH research projects, which took up the task of understanding the (lack of) European growth dynamism and Europe’s readiness to enter into a new and sustainable growth path. Understanding the reasons for Europe’s relatively weak productivity performance and weak investment in R&D, innovation and other intangibles as well as lack of knowledge-intensive firms provide insights necessary for designing better and more targeted European growth and job creation policies. Research has also taken up the European risk capital markets as a necessary condition for growth as well as the role of social innovation and creativity as a source of job creation and inclusive growth.

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Adult and continuing education in Europe: Using public policy to secure a growth in skills

Adult and continuing education has the dual function of contributing to employability and economic growth, on the one hand, and responding to broader societal challenges, in particular promoting social cohesion, on the other. Companies and families support important investments that have, to date, ensured important growth in both skills and the ability of the European population to innovate. Thanks to this commitment, Europe today has a wealth of organisations specialising in adult and continuing education. The sector has grown in importance, both as an increasingly significant player in the economy and in view of its capacity to respond to the demand for learning by the knowledge economy. As this book shows, adult and continuing education has a critical role to play in ensuring Europe copes with the phenomenon of education exclusion that, repeated year after year, generation after generation, undermines social cohesion and the growth of employment. Public policies must respond to two strategic challenges: to encourage the propensity to invest in adult and continuing education and to guarantee the reduction of educational exclusion.


http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_reviews/ki-na25943enc.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none
New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment

The Europe 2020 employment strategy and, in particular, its initiative on ‘an agenda for new skills and jobs’ aim to support the full employment goal of the Lisbon Treaty. In a context of growing challenges for employment policies in Europe, this report questions current approaches and calls for increased policy learning amongst EU Member States. The report argues that there is room for improvement in employment policies in Europe. It emphasizes the importance of improving access to education, developing more transversal skills and balancing job security and flexibility.


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The Social Sciences and Humanities comprise a range of scientific disciplines examining the relations between humans in their societal contexts. While the Humanities deal particularly with history, culture and various forms of human behaviour, Social Sciences tend to focus on the social interactions of individual human beings and groups. They address questions such as: How do people live and work together in contemporary societies? Why do individuals organise themselves into communities and want to share the same future? What do Europeans think about globalisation and how do they react to it? Why and how do citizens engage in or abstain from electoral and other forms of political participation?

Addressing such far-reaching questions, the Social Sciences and Humanities play a critical role in anticipating and accompanying the evolution of societies, while satisfying humanity’s deep-rooted interest in reflecting on life. Consecutive European Union Framework Programmes for Research have acknowledged the significance of Social Sciences and Humanities research and have supported it at EU level over the past decades. Horizon 2020 recognises Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) as an ensemble of separate disciplines and highlights their particularly high aptitude to fruitfully collaborate with other disciplines in tackling major societal challenges.

Project information