

**THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL:
ITS ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING POTENTIALS**

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Background

The debate about the European Social Model (ESM) has gained a lot of momentum during the last few months. There seems to be a tendency to not longer discuss, and question, the (mere) existence of such a model but to start defining its substance.

Dealing with the ESM issue from a more positive, substantial perspective has become ever important from an advocacy point of view, using the ESM concept as a serious and decisive argument. In such a vein, emphasis should shift from dogmatic reflections to practical considerations related to the work of social NGOs.

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Despite all differences with regard to the shaping of social systems in EU Member States, the concept of a European Social Model has emerged which is characterised by common values and principles. Reference can be made here, i. a., to:

- solidarity and social justice;
- non-discrimination and equality;
- social cohesion.

Just in face of the EU constitutional process being (at least) suspended, the ESM offers a strong argumentative scheme in favour of upholding a balance between the economic and the social dimension of European integration. Pure market economy cannot solve (all) social questions and challenges – it is simply not in line with modern European “civilisation”.

The ESM is construed as a right-centred concept. Rooted in social fundamental rights, the model is a plea for creating, and securing, equal opportunities for individuals, groups and nations. This side of the concept (which makes it politically “neutral”, or objective) is strengthened by its components of dialogue and participation, of social services and minimum standards.

Expectations

The aim of the workshop consists in an overall presentation and discussion of the ESM concept as well as of its integral parts. Linked to this, the advocacy and campaigning potentials of the model should be highlighted, both “in theory”, and, as far as possible, in practice of social NGOs and their activists (ideally, presenting examples, experiences, or the like).

One more specific aspect relates to the validity, and usefulness, of the ESM within the realities and settings of new EU Member States, or countries at the EU “borderline” or outside the EU. Would the model not remain an illusion for regions and societies outside “EU old” and other parts of Europe, let alone of other continents?..

As a quite practical question, discussion should be launched with regard to the networking potential of the concept, be it among social NGOs themselves, or as to other actors like

trade unions. Here, and in relation to other items discussed, the workshop would possibly arrive at some very concrete ideas, proposals and conclusions (possibly also in terms of agreements, follow-up steps...)

Organisation

The workshop is conceived as a 90 minutes exercise started with 2, maximum, 3 input presentations, with most of the time being devoted to open debate and brainstorming. The results will be fixed and presented accordingly.

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL

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The social model does exist. It may be defined in terms of common values held by the Member States and common institutions they have built and may be summarized under the following three headings: social state, social market, social partnership.

The Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe sets forth common basic values in the form of an obligation for the European Union to combat social exclusion and discrimination and promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of children's rights. Thus, the Union is endeavoring to ensure sustainable development: based on balanced economic growth and stable prices it seeks to establish a highly competitive social market economy and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment.

The common set of values needs to be concretized with a view to the social dimension of Europe. By agreeing on common minimum standards and gradually implementing the common objectives through the process of coordination in the fields of employment, social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care, Member States have further been developing the European Social Model. In this context, access for everybody to innovative education and training is a priority.

The social partners and civil society have been brought into the decision-making processes and bear responsibility for the implementation of these objectives.

WHAT IS INTEGRATION?

Walter Schmid

(Lucerne School of Social Work)

Integration has become a key term in politics and everyday language. Quite literally, many consider integration the key to the solution of a variety of social problems. Then again, the frequent use of the term has contributed little to bringing it into sharper focus. What does integration really mean? Listening to people today, you often get the impression that they are not talking about the same thing. While for some, integration describes the peaceful coexistence of different population groups, for others it means the individual's efforts to secure his or her place in a host society. What for some signifies participating in economic and public life, for others means displaying