

'The UK out, Social Europe in? Recalibrating the EU's socio-economic priorities in the wake of the Brexit Referendum'

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Outline

- Introduction & Aim
- UK & Social Europe
- Brexit, the White Paper & the Reflection Paper
- European Pillar of Social Rights & Recent Initiatives
- Conclusion

Introduction

- UK & EU (Social) Integration: a tremulous affair
 - Free market vision for the EU
 - Reluctance & wariness to partake therein
 - A veto player?
- EU post-Brexit: a land of opportunities?
 - White Paper on the Future of Europe
 - Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe
 - European Pillar of Social Rights & Associated Developments
- Towards a genuinely Social Europe?



UK & Social Europe

- Treaty of Rome: focus on economic aspects
- 1970s: Resurgence of Social Europe
 - Proposals on parental leave, and fixed-term/part-time workers vetoed
- 1980s: Criticisms towards the Common Market programme
 - Led to the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers (1989)
 - UK opposed and acceded only in 1997
- 1990s: Social Chapter (Protocol & Agreement on Social Policy)
 - 1992: annexed to the Treaty of Maastricht. UK opt-out.
 - 1997: incorporated to the Treaty of Amsterdam. UK opt-out ended.
- 2000s: Charter of Fundamental Rights
 - Social and economic rights objected
 - Protocol 30 opt-out
- 2010s: Dismantling the social acquis through EU Reform Deal

The UK as a veto player

- Blocks the realisation of Social Europe
 - Despite QMV at EU policy-making post-SEA
 - Drives impetus down through opposition and opt-outs
 - In 2010s even showed a disintegrationist attitude



'if a veto player with significant differences enters or leaves [...], important policy changes will follow'
(Tsebelis, 1995)

White Paper on the Future of Europe & Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe

- 5 scenarios in the WP:
 - a. Carrying on, b. Single Market, c. Those who want more do more, d. Doing less more efficiently, e. Doing much more together
- 3 scenarios in the RP:
 - I. Free movement – *Reduced SE*
 - II. A la carte – *Divergent SE*
 - III. Further integration – *Genuine SE*

Can (III) become a reality post-BREXIT?

SE the third pledge of the Rome Declaration of March 2017 (27MS)

Issues with competence & legitimacy → Treaty Reform & SME

European Pillar of Social Rights



European Pillar of Social Rights

- 20 principles and rights under 3 main categories:
 - Equal opportunities and access to the labour market
 - Fair working conditions
 - Social protection and inclusion
- Effort to deliver on the SME paradigm
- Various means to achieve its goals, primarily through soft-law
- Need for concrete measures/Past developments overplayed?
- UK's response: no need for further action

Associated Developments

- Work-life balance Directive
 - Replaces 2010 Parental Leave Directive
 - Introduces paternity leave of 10 days
 - Makes parental leave non-transferrable and paid at least at sick pay level
 - Introduces carers' leave of 5 days/year
 - Expands flexible working arrangements

Associated Developments

- Consultation on access to social protection for people in all forms of employment
 - Strives to foster upward social convergence
- Consultation on a possible revision of the Written Statement Directive (91/533/EEC)
 - Extension of scope to cover atypical forms of work
 - Introduction of minimum floor of contractual rights
- Interpretative Communication on Directive 2003/88/EC
- Recommendations on Investing in Children and Active Inclusion

Appraisal

- Early stage
- Uncertainty
- Danger of decreasing standards
- Legislative initiatives encouraged
- Involvement of Social Partners
- Commitment and wide scope

Conclusion

- UK & Social Europe: an uneasy relationship exemplified by June's 2016 referendum
- Momentum for further Social Integration?
 - EU proposals
 - But still dangers lurking
 - Smaller and less rigid veto players eg. CEE
 - Widespread Euroscepticism
 - Dependent on the reforms' actual content
- Cautiously optimistic?
- Brexit Referendum showed detachment from the EU
 - Could a Social Europe agenda remedy that?

Thank you for your attention!

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