closing gaps in European social citizenship

The Social Dimension of the European Union: Grand Strategies, Governance Framework and Policy Development in the EU (2000-2020)

EUROSHIP Working Paper No.10

January 2022

Angelo Vito Panaro
Viola Shahini
Matteo Jessoula

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 870698. The opinions published in this deliverable only reflect the authors` view. The Agency and the Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

EUROSHIP Working Papers are outputs from EUROSHIP project (euroship-research.eu). The series is edited by the project coordinator Professor Rune Halvorsen. The working papers in the series are intended to meet the European Commission's expected impact from the project:

i) to advance the knowledge base that underpins the formulation and implementation of relevant policies in Europe with the aim of exercising the EU social rights as an integral part of EU citizenship and promoting upward convergence, and
ii) to engage with relevant communities, stakeholders and practitioners in the research with a view to supporting social protection policies in Europe. Contributions to a dialogue about these results can be made through the project website euroship-research.eu, or by following us on Twitter: @EUROSHIP_EU.

To cite this report:

Panaro, A, Shahini, V, Jessoula, M (2022) The Social Dimension of the European Union: Grand Strategies, Governance Framework and Policy Development in the EU (2000-2020). EUROSHIP Working Paper No. 10. Oslo: Oslo Metropolitan University. DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.18162761. Available at: https://euroship-research.eu/publications.

© Copyright is held by the authors

The original version of this working paper was submitted to the European Commission's Research Executive Agency (REA) as EUROSHIP Deliverable 9.1 in December 2022.

Authors

Angelo Vito Panaro, University of Milan, Italy
Viola Shahini, University of Milan, Italy
Matteo Jessoula, University of Milan, Italy

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 5
2. EU Social Policy in the 1950s-1970s, in brief 6
3. Tackling the "social deficit": EU Social Policy 1980s-1990s 8
4. The "Lisbon" decade, 2000-09 9
4.1. Lisbon I and the three social OMCs (2000-2004) 9
4.2. Lisbon II and the launch of the "Social OMC" (2005-2009) 11
5. From Lisbon II to Europe 2020: Changing the Social Toolkit in the Storm 12
5.1. From neglect to "socialization": EU's social policy and the European Semester (2010-2014) 14
5.2. "Socializing" the European Semester, 2015-2020 15
6. The European Pillar of Social Rights 15
7. Assessing EU's social dimension in the last two decades 19
7.1. Assessment of the social dimension of the Lisbon strategy 19
7.2. The EU 2020 strategy: missed target(s)… established comprehensive rights (better, principles) 21
7.3. The Semester as key governance framework: strengths and limits of a "socialized" process 23
References 28

The Social Dimension of the European Union: Grand Strategies, Governance Framework and Policy Development in the EU (2000-2020)

Angelo Vito Panaro, Viola Shahini, Matteo Jessoula

Abstract: *This paper reviews the evolution of EU social policy over the last two decades and provides an assessment of the most recent strategy, Europe 2020, in the field of social policy along four different layers of analysis: EU priorities, grand strategy, governance mode and policy initiatives. Since the launch of the EU integration process with the Rome Treaty, the history of EU social policy has gone through moments of stasis and periods of intense activities. During the 1950s-1970s, economic and monetary issues were ranking high on the EU agenda while social policy, in particular social protection, was still a property of national Member States (MS). Over the last two decades of the 20th century, the Delors' Commission (1984-1994), on the one hand, and the adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, on the other hand, contributed to increase the importance of social policy issues in the EU agenda. However, it was only with the launch of the Lisbon strategy (2000-2010) and later the European 2020 strategy (2010-2020) that substantive changes in the EU priorities and governance modes emerged in the field of social policy. This paper thus focuses mostly on the evolution of an EU social dimension over the last two decades. In doing so, it rests on an historical analysis of the main steps from Lisbon I (2000-2004) to the launch of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR, 2017) and its Action Plan (2021). The aim of the report is to examine how these steps have contributed to increase the political salience of social issues and promoted a new integrated policy framework. We find that both "soft" mechanisms and "hard" initiatives have promoted an upward social convergence among the Member States. Overall, this paper combines insights from different approaches to shed light on the achievements and shortcomings of the two grand strategies – Lisbon and Europe 2020 – and their importance in terms of governance modes and policy initiatives in the social policy domain.*

1. Introduction

This report aims to provide a twofold contribution to the overall EUROSHIP project. First, it lays out an historical description of the main social policy developments since the launch of the EU project in the 1950s. To this end, it identifies the changes in EU's governance framework and policy tool-kit aimed at strengthening the EU social dimension in 2000-2021, against the backdrop of previous developments in the 1950s-1990s. Second, it provides an assessment, according to the recent scholarship, of the "social" components of the two EU overarching strategies since 2000, namely the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020.

Throughout the report, particular attention will be devoted to the overarching strategies and their governance frameworks in the field of social policy. Table 1 outlines the four analytical dimensions we use to structure the review: ***EU priorities, grand strategies, governance modes,*** and ***policy initiatives***.

EU priorities reflect overall social and economic objectives that support the EU integration process whereas the **grand strategies** identify the overarching set of ideas and instruments that have been set at the EU level in order to reach such goals. EU **governance modes** are types of political steering in which modes of guidance – such as coordination and negotiation – are employed and social and political actors engage in deliberation and problem-solving efforts (Heritier, 2002; Wallace *et al.*, 2005). Finally, **policy initiatives** are the actions implemented by supranational policymakers to foster social cohesion and promote upward social convergence.

Table 1. Analytical dimensions of EU social policy review

Analytical dimensions	Definition
EU priorities	Overall objectives in the field of economic and social policy
Grand strategies	Overarching set of ideas and instruments used to pursue EU priorities
Governance modes	Modes of guidance employed and network of public and private actors engaged in deliberation and problem-solving efforts
Policy initiatives	Actions implemented to foster social policy convergence

Source: Authors' elaboration

Following these four dimensions of analysis (Table 1), it is possible to disentangle the historical trajectory of EU social policy in four different phases. A first phase (1950s-1970s) started with the Treaty of Rome and the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, where EU *priorities* were devoted to economic integration and issues such as growth and jobs vis à vis national sovereignty in the field of social protection (Ferrera, 2005). During this period, EU *governance* in the social sphere mostly relied on binding instruments for the member states (i.e. directives and regulations) in order to accommodate the common market.

A second phase followed (1980s-1990s) where policymakers engaged in more collaboration in social policies in order to avoid a "race-to-the-bottom" of social standards. During this period, the Delors' Commission introduced a new *governance* initiative, namely the European social dialogue, which was subsequently incorporated in the Maastricht Treaty (1993). Subsequently, in the second half of

the 1990s, new *initiatives* such as the European Employment Strategy (EES) and the adoption of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) increased the salience of employment and social policy at the EU level, thus leading the EU to start integrating labour policies within the economic governance framework.

A third phase (2000-2009) was characterised by a shift in EU's *priorities*: on the one hand, in the economic field with the introduction of austerity measures and principles of macroeconomic balance; on the other hand, in the social field by posing more attention to issues of poverty and social exclusion. In particular, the launch of the Lisbon Strategy (2000) committed the EU to the achievement of new sets of medium-term goals – e.g. four general objectives directed towards the fight against poverty and social exclusion – and inaugurated a new mode of EU social *governance*, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). Within the new *strategic* framework, together with a shift in *priorities* and *governance* modes, a series of *policy initiatives* in the field of social exclusion, pension and healthcare sectors were also launched.

Finally, the adoption of a new grand strategy, Europe 2020, and the European Semester as a *governance* framework, marked the fourth phase (2010-2020) of EU social policy, bringing substantive changes in EU priorities and social governance. In particular, during this last phase, the launch of a new *policy initiative*, namely the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in 2017 then followed by the recently adopted "Action Plan" (March 2021), represented a revitalization of the social dimension in EU *priorities* and *governance* framework - from macroeconomic balance towards putting forward legislative proposals with social content. The EPSR has led to the adoption of, and proposals for, several directives and recommendations in the field of employment, social protection, work-life balance, childcare, and healthcare (Sabato and Corti, 2018; Vanhercke *et al.*, 2018; Ferrera 2019; Björn 2019; Polomarkakis 2020; Ricceri 2020;).

Overall, the report is organized into two separate parts. A first descriptive part - from Section 2 to Section 6 - lays out an historical reconstruction of the EU social dimension and identifies the main social policy developments since the launch of the EU integration process. A second analytical part (Section 7) reviews the recent scholarship on the social dimension of the latest EU overarching strategies, namely the Lisbon strategy and Europe 2020.

More specifically, Section 2 and 3 provide a review of major changes in EU priorities, governance modes and policy initiatives during the first two phases (1950s-1970s and 1980s-1990s) of EU social policy, while Section 4 illustrates the key features of the Lisbon strategy and discusses the impact of OMC in the field of social exclusion, pensions sand healthcare. Section 5 and 6 present policy developments since 2010, focusing on the grand strategy "Europe 2020", the European Semester and the EPSR. Section 7 provides an overall assessment of the grand strategies and their respective governance frameworks and policy initiatives in the last two decades, according to recent scholarship. Section 8 concludes.

2. EU Social Policy in the 1950s-1970s, in brief

The launch of the European integration process in the 1950s brought together two institutional architectures: the welfare state and the European project that, according to Ferrera (2005), can be identified as the most significant achievements of European societies in the 20th century. However, the encounter between the two was particularly challenging because of the inherently different

"guiding logics" of the two institutions (Ferrera 2005; Rasnača and Theodoropoulou 2020). On the one hand, the welfare state is a product of the historical development of the nation-states and thus it essentially rests on a logic of "closure", since it presupposes the existence of a well-defined cohesive community established in a geographical space where members are linked to each other by common risks, similar needs and emotional ties (ibid, p. 205-206). On the other, the European integration process is mostly guided by the logic of "opening up", as it aimed to foster free movement and remove spatial demarcations and closure practices that nation-states had historically built on.

The first phase of EU's integration (1950s-1970s) was a time when EU *priorities* were directed towards the establishment of the common market with the aim of fostering economic growth across nation states and promote workers' mobility. During this period the EU social dimension remained weak (Vanhercke *et al.*, 2021). The social dimension was also set on a different - although parallel - track fully respecting national sovereignty in the field of social protection (Ferrera, 2005). In this scenario where EU institutions were mostly concerned with economic growth and industrial development, there was a clear division of competences and governance between the economic and the social sectors, with EU policymakers' attention being mostly directed to economic and financial issues and (subsequently) the monetary union, rather than to advancements in social policy areas such as education, healthcare, pensions, poverty, and social exclusion (Armstrong, 2012). Social policy initiatives at the EU level thus mostly concerned the labour market, with regulations of working conditions and especially free movement of workers across the member states (Daly, 2006) in order to accompany the common market project. In particular, the European Economic Community made arrangements across the six founding countries – France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands – to enhance worker mobility by abolishing discrimination on working conditions and social security benefits based on the nationality principle (Streeck, 2018).

Despite this weak start, a series of policy initiatives in the 1970s produced a first shift in the EU social dimension. The Social Action Programme of 1974 increased the involvement of social partners in the economic and social decisions of the European Community, while the Regulation 1408/71 "on the application of social security schemes to employed persons and their families moving within the Community" challenged the territorial principle of national welfare systems and introduced the principle of benefit exportability (Ferrera, 2009). With the abandonment of the nationality requirement to access social security schemes, some core social rights became transferable across the member states. In this view, the institutional framework that was put in place during this phase, with the four freedoms and competition rules, on the one hand, and the Regulation 1408/71, on the other hand, contributed to the "de-bounding" of national sovereignty in the field of social protection (Ferrera 2005; 2009)

Importantly though, the European social agenda in this period can also be conceptualized as a social-democratic project aimed at responding to the diffusion of unofficial strikes and the rise of labour militancy in Europe, restoring industrial and political peace, as well as facilitating the deepening of a European single market rather than at strengthening the social dimension of the EU project per se (Streeck, 2018).

3. Tackling the "social deficit": EU Social Policy 1980s-1990s

If the "social deficit" (Armstrong, 2010) was an initial characteristic of the EU, during the second phase (1980s-1990s), there was a change in the EU *governance* mode in the social sphere. Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, national actors engaged in more collaboration in different social policy domains in order to avoid a "race-to-the-bottom" of social standards, maintain the legitimacy of European integration, and contribute to the European political identity (Büchs, 2007). Two main factors were particularly important in steering the gradual process towards a more social EU: the Delors' Commission (1985-1995) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997).

First, Jacques Delors' presidency of the European Commission (1985-1995) produced a shift in EU *priorities* since it took a clear stance and effort to strengthen the "social dimension" of the EU. The Commission framed the EU discussion in terms of the necessity for national markets to be "socially regulated". The completion of the single market (1992) and the launch of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) were accompanied by Delors' belief that the single market could not be fully completed without enhancing social cohesion. The support from both the employers and unions was essential to make the project successful (Vanhercke *et al.*, 2021).

At the same time, the socialist party in France and social-democratic governments in the United Kingdom and Germany were advocating a new and inclusive approach to *social policy governance* across the member states, based on convergence towards "best practices" rather than on legislative harmonization (Vanhercke *et al.*, 2020). As a consequence, social policy and labour market issues became relevant during this period (Daly, 2007). In fact, together with an increased salience of the topic, three countries – namely Austria, Finland, and Sweden – with highly developed social protection models, inclusive social protection systems, high levels of social spending, and strong trade unions, eventually joined the EU in 1995, thus contributing to reinforce the already present claims for a (re-)structuring of the EU social dimension.

In this situation, where both the Delors Commission and the member states were arguing for a more social Europe, the main effort in the social sphere was the adoption of the "Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights for Workers" in December 1989, which was subsequently incorporated in the Treaty of Maastricht as a "Protocol of Social Policy" in 1992. According to Daly (2008), the Protocol led to major changes in EU' social policy *governance*. That is, it extended the qualified majority voting to issues of health and safety of workers and their working conditions and allowed actors outside the political arena - i.e. trade unions - to intervene in shaping the EU social policy agenda (Daly, 2008). Building on the idea that the single market could not be fully completed without strengthening social cohesion and full cooperation among business and social actors (Vanhercke *et al.*, 2021), the Delors period therefore led to the adoption of a new *governance* initiative, namely the *European social dialogue*, which was subsequently incorporated in the Maastricht Treaty (1993). The European social dialogue implied interactions among different representatives of EU social partners (trade unions and employers) and received a major boost in 1998 with the creation of the so-called "European sectoral social dialogue committees" which set the basis for strengthening cooperation among EU institutions, the member states and the social partners. The creation of the EU social dialogue was then seen as both a necessary component to enhance the "social dimension of the internal market" and a way to legitimize the European integration process by strengthening EU's social dimension.

A second step worth noticing towards a stronger European social dimension in this second phase was the adoption of the Treaty of Amsterdam and the launch of the European Employment Strategy (EES). On 17 June 1997, the European Council agreed on a draft of the Treaty of Amsterdam which received formal ratification in November 1997. The Amsterdam Treaty included an aim to strengthen EU policymaking in areas of employment and social policy. Ferrera and Gualmini (2004) identified four main principles as core objectives in the field of employment:

(i) promotion and acquisition of new labour skills;
ii) creation of new firms and businesses;
(iii) promotion of better working conditions; and,
iv) more equal opportunities and reduction of the gender gap in the labour market.

The European Council discussed these four pillars, emphasizing the policies for social inclusion and the problem of job quality (Ferrera and Gualmini, 2004). Additionally, the European Employment Strategy was set to establish common objectives and targets for employment policy, and in particular to provide coordinated guidance of national employment policies with the aim of reducing unemployment rates and increasing employment. The European Employment Strategy was the result of a series of actions undertaken by trade unions and social and political actors to raise awareness on the importance of social policies in mitigating problems linked to both the undergoing monetary integration (1995-2005) and long-standing structural problems (e.g., low employment rates, high long term unemployment). Following the previous trend, the Amsterdam Treaty highlighted the relevance of employment and social policy at the EU level and triggered the integration of labour policies within the economic governance framework. Yet, it was not until the beginning of the new century, with the launch of the Lisbon Strategy, that a major restructuring in EU social *governance* and a shift on the EU agenda towards the harmonization of social policies – from employment to social protection – materialized.

4. The "Lisbon" decade, 2000-09

4.1. Lisbon I and the three social OMCs (2000-2004)

The European Council meeting that took place in Lisbon in March 2000 marked the beginning of a new phase for the EU integration process with the launch of the Lisbon strategy. In particular, the new *grand strate*gy represented a watershed in the development of social policy at the EU level.

First, in terms of EU *priorities*, the agreement reached in 2000 aimed to achieve two ambitious goals:

1) a comprehensive transformation into a European "knowledge-based economy" with a strengthening of MS' competitiveness in global markets, and
2) a solution to longstanding common socio-economic problems, such as productivity stagnation, (un-)employment, poverty, and social exclusion (Armstrong, 2010; Ferrera and Rhodes, 2000; Natali, 2009).

Different from the previous phase, the new strategy envisioned a triangulation of economic, employment and social policy as equally important and mutually reinforcing pillars towards the establishment of a new sustainable EU growth model (Armstrong, 2010; Barcevičius *et al.*, 2014).

Second, the Lisbon strategy formally introduced the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as a *new governance framework* in some social policy domains to achieve those objectives: Although the OMC had already been adopted with the launch of the EES in 1997, the Lisbon Strategy developed it as governance instrument in other social policy areas such as education, pensions, healthcare, and social inclusion.

In a nutshell, the Open Method of Coordination is a governance framework emphasizing problem-solving and policy development via mutual learning. It relies on an interactive cyclical process that involves Member States agreeing on a set of non-binding Common Objectives and engaging in a series of rounds of "planning and review" activities based on national reports (i.e. National Action Plans) with the aim of progressively establishing a European-wide framework of analysis and action.[1] The Council and the Commission issue "soft" recommendations to evaluate progress towards Common Objectives. In other words, the Open Method of Coordination aims at emphasizing problem-solving and policy development through peer review, dialogue, exchange of "best practices", soft incentives and normative reflection (Daly, 2006, pp.466). It is a "soft tool" where there is in principle no "hard" legislation or sanctions but it only builds on the principle of "governance by objectives" (Lelie and Vanhercke, 2013).

During the Lisbon I phase (2000-2004), the European Council authorized the OMC in a wide range of policy areas, including poverty and social inclusion, pensions and healthcare

With regards to ***the OMC in Poverty and Social Inclusion***, three main *initiatives* need to be highlighted. First, in December 2000, the Nice European Council approved a set of "Common Objectives" followed by the presentation of "National Action Plans" (NAPs) by MS. Those objectives aimed to i) facilitate access to employment, rights, resources, goods and services; ii) help the most vulnerable and iii) activate a range of interest and bodies (Barcevičius *et al.*, 2014). According to Agostini *et al.*, (2013), the Nice Objectives reflected the EU's purpose of leaving MS to determine their own priorities. In this regard, the "National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion" (NAPS/incl) had to indicate practices and strategies used by MS to achieve the common objectives. Second, during the Laeken European Council meeting in December 2001, the Belgian Minister for Social Affairs Frank Vandenbroucke demanded a group of experts to develop a series of indicators to measure social exclusion. The group then produced a set of eighteen indicators, the so-called Laeken indicators, covering four dimensions of poverty and social exclusion (Agostini *et al.*, 2013). Third, the Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion (2002–2006) aimed to support the OMC process by encouraging cooperation and exchange activities among MS, social partners and NGOs (Ferrera et al., 2002). The actions proposed in the framework of this programme included three main goals; i) improving the understanding of social inclusion, ii) organising exchange on policies and promoting mutual learning in the context of national actions plans and iii) developing actors' ability to address social exclusion effectively. Importantly, one of the main achievements of the Social Inclusion OMC was the involvement of different stakeholders, both at the national and supra-national levels (Agostini *et al.*, 2013).

The launch of ***the OMC on Pensions*** formally took place with the European Council meeting in Barcelona in 2002. However, important steps in this sector had already been already undertaken between 1999 and 2002 (Busilacchi *et al.*, 2009). In particular, in 1999 the Member States were invited to "review pension and health care spending in order to be able to cope with the financial

[1] See EUR -LEX Glossary at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open_method_coordination.html

burden on welfare spending of the ageing population" (European Commission 1999), while in 2001 the Commission Communication COM(2001) 362 on "supporting national strategies for safe and sustainable pension" already defined an integrated EU approach in this field and identified 10 out of 11 common objectives that would be later summed up in the three main principles – adequacy, financial sustainably and modernization of pension systems – in the Gothenburg meeting (Commission 2001). The Laeken European Council meeting at the end of 2001 eventually translated the three Gothenburg principles into 11 substantive indicators (Busilacchi *et al.*, 2009). With regards to priorities in the pension sector, the Stockholm and Gothenburg meetings in 2001 emphasised the EU structural problems linked to an ageing population and the inability for public pension pillars to guarantee adequate pensions for the future. Over the years, though, a clear reform trajectory emerged, which included more and longer employment; a reduction of public pension liabilities; the development of supplementary private pensions; securing access to pensions for all groups in society.

Finally, the ***OMC*** intervened ***on Health and Long-term care***. Initially, the Member States failed to commit to an agenda in the healthcare sector, until 2004 when the Commission discussed the OMC in terms of "ageing" demographics and more importantly, agreed with the MS on which indicators to use in the evaluation and peer-review process. Thus, different from the OMC in the fields of social inclusion (from 2000) and pensions (from 2001), the progress of OMC in the healthcare sector was very slow. Among other factors, Vanhercke (2010) argues that health is a "very crowded law and policy-making space" (p. 118) thus it is difficult to define a common strategy on which national actors and EU institutions agree upon. In support of such arguments, when the Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) organized a Social OMC meeting in 2001, DG ECFIN and DG EMPL were mainly defending their interests instead of collaborating towards EU-level decisions (Barcevičius *et al.*, 2014). Hence, the institutional framework in this sector was very fragmented and the social agenda was divided among different institutional fora (Copeland and Papadimitriou, 2012). This tension was also one of the reasons why the OMC healthcare was subsequently streamlined in Lisbon II (see Zeitlin and Vanhercke, 2015).

4.2. Lisbon II and the launch of the "Social OMC" (2005-2009)

In 2004, the mid-term review developed by the "Kok High Level Group" reported that the Lisbon strategy had been inefficient as "too many targets were seriously missed" and argued that the OMC needed more effective "naming, shaming and faming" mechanisms to fulfil expectations (Kok 2004). Thus, in the enlargement of the EU to 25 (soon 27) members and with a majority of centre-right governments, the new Commission under the presidency of J. Manuel Barroso (2004- 2014) produced substantial changes in the overarching Lisbon architecture and its governance mode in the social policy field:

In terms of *priorities*, "jobs and growth" became the core objectives of the revised Lisbon strategy (Lisbon II year 2005 – 2009), while social cohesion was devalued and mostly conceptualized as a result of the achievement of the other two goals – economic and employment growth – rather than as an objective itself (Daly, 2012). Built on this logic, the European Employment Guidelines of the EES were fused with the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (BEPGs) into a single set of 24 Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs. Different from Lisbon I (2000-2004) that had supported the importance of combining greater social cohesion together with economic growth and better jobs (Barcevičius *et al.*, 2014), the integrated guidelines clearly demonstrated i) the supremacy of

economic priorities over employment objectives and ii) a “downgrading” of social policy in the hierarchy of EU priorities as they were not included in the integrated guidelines (Daly, 2007). Finally, a particular attention was devoted to the identification of new objectives; i.e., gender equality, mutual interaction between EU objectives of economic growth and better jobs with EU’s Sustainable Development Strategy and good governance and transparency.

In terms of social *governance*, the OMC was transformed from a tool used for economic and social governance to a specific initiative seeking to bring economic and employment policies into a mutually reinforcing equilibrium. More specifically, the Commission pushed for an “internal” streamlining of the OMC process in social inclusion, pensions, and health/long-term care into one single OMC on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (Social OMC). In terms of policy *initiatives*, particularly important was the 2008 Commission Recommendation “on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market” (EC 867/2008) which set the basis for a comprehensive strategy that combines income support, inclusive labour market policies and equal access to quality services. At the same time, mutual learning both horizontally (among fields) and vertically (among actors, including NGOs) had remained a distinctive feature of the OMC during the 2005-2010 period (Vanhercke et *al*. 2020)

5. From Lisbon II to Europe 2020: Changing the Social Toolkit in the Storm

The 2010s represented a turning point for the EU. The outburst of the financial crisis (2007-2008), the subsequent Global Recession (2009) and especially the sovereign debt crisis (2010-2012) threw the Eurozone into turmoil, casting doubts about the viability of the EU project. Against this backdrop, the end of the Lisbon II strategy was followed by the launch of a *new overarching strategy*: Europe 2020.

Endorsed by the 27 EU Heads of State and Government in June 2010, the new strategy aimed at bringing (some) social objectives back to the core of EU policy coordination (Jessoula, 2015). It was designed as the successor to the Lisbon Strategy and aimed to build on partnership for “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” (European Commission, 2010). Overall, the Europe 2020 was composed of three main elements: *targets, flagship initiatives, and guidelines*.

First, the Council set **common quantitative targets** in five areas to be reached by 2020. Those areas included: employment, research and development, climate change and energy use, (early school leaving and participation in tertiary) education, poverty, and social exclusion. Particularly important are the *headline targets in the area of poverty and social exclusion area*, where Europe 2020 committed to lift 20 million EU citizens out of poverty by 2020 - out of a total 120 million people in this condition. In setting the target, there was also a new reflection on poverty at the EU level, as the target referred to people “at risk of poverty or social exclusion” (AROPE), a measure composed of three different indicators: (i) at risk of poverty (AROP); (ii) severe material deprivation (SMD); and (iii) joblessness, i.e. people living in households with low work intensity (LWI). Importantly, even though these dimensions had the same weight, they represent different challenges for the various MS. For instance, as argued by Agostini *et al*. (2013), while income poverty was the main challenge in the Mediterranean countries, the Eastern European countries were mainly affected by (severe) material deprivation.

The second element of Europe 2020 was the **flagship initiatives** aimed at reaching the headline targets by supporting stakeholders' actions at supranational and national level. There were seven such *initiatives*: on digital agenda, innovation, youth employment and mobility, sustainable development, industrial policy, employment and anti-poverty policies. In the field of social policy, the most significant *initiative*, at least in the original design of the strategy, was the *European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion* (EPAP). It aimed to address the needs of groups particularly at risk, tackle severe exclusion and vulnerabilities, break the cycle of disadvantage and step-up prevision efforts. Special emphasis was then devoted on innovation and experimentation in social policy (European Commission 2010).

The third constitutive element of the Europe 2020 were the economic and employment **integrated guidelines**. Six of them referred to economic policy while four concerned employment policy. With reference to poverty and social exclusion, Guideline 10 points at "promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, clearly supporting income security for vulnerable groups, social economy and social innovation, gender equality and the poverty headline target."

In addition to the introduction of EU priorities in the social policy field, the new strategy also launched the **European Semester**, which eventually **became the governance framework of EU2020**, aimed at improving socioeconomic policy coordination and strengthening macroeconomic stability and growth. The Semester is an annual policy coordination cycle, in which the Commission monitors and assesses to what extent reforms undertaken at the national level allow Member States to meet the five headline targets at the EU level by 2020. The preparatory phase of the Semester starts in November with the Commission adopting the so-called Annual Growth Survey (AGS), in which the Commission identifies the key budgetary and structural policy challenges and suggests priorities for action. Building on this document, the Commission publishes Country Reports (CRs), in which it assesses the progress each MS has made in addressing the previous year Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs). Based on this review, the Commission also proposes an updated status for each country in the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP). Taking into consideration priorities from the AGS, by the end of April, Member States draft their National Report Programs (NRPs) – in which they specify the actions each country have undertaken, and will undertake, to boost jobs, growth and investment, while preventing macroeconomic imbalances and preserving social cohesion (European Commission, 2010) – and their Stability or Convergence Programmes. Afterwards, the Commission reviews NRPs and drafts CSRs to be considered in the national decision-making process of the following year national budget and policy plans. Finally, in July, the Council endorses CSRs to each MS on economic and social policy reforms.

In a nutshell, the launch of Europe 2020 represented a discontinuity from the Lisbon strategy in several respects:

- First, in terms of *priorities*, Europe 2020 reaffirmed the visibility of employment and social issues both at the national and the EU-level, although the bias towards fiscal consolidation and economic recovery in the early years of the novel strategy resulted in a subordination of social and employment objectives to economic objectives after the Global crisis (Agostini *et al.*, 2013).
- Second, the new strategy set common "hard" quantitative targets in five different policy areas and outlined the initiatives aimed at reaching the headline targets. Importantly, a quantitative target was set in the field of poverty and social exclusion, a change that marked a quantum leap – at least on paper – for EU's action in this field (Jessoula, 2015, Jessoula and Madama, 2018).

- Third, Europe 2020 changed the social policy tool-kit, shifting the focus towards poverty and social exclusion, whereas pensions and health care (almost) "disappeared" from EU's social dimension.

However, with regards to governance modes, the relationship of the new strategy with the Social OMC remained rather ambiguous when the new strategy was launched. As argued by Agostini *et al.* (2013), the suspension of the Social OMC did not only brake up an important legacy but also diluted social reporting activities in the socio-economic coordination framework. To put it differently, at the outset of Europe 2020, the social governance of the new strategy was still obscure and the role of the European Semester was not yet clearly defined.

5.1. From neglect to "socialization": EU's social policy and the European Semester (2010-2014)

Despite the weak start of the Europe 2020 strategy in the field of poverty (Sabato *et al.* 2018) and more generally in the social dimension, the literature provides evidence of a gradual "socialization" of the European Semester since 2012 (Jessoula, 2015; Zeitlin and Vanhercke, 2015; Sabato *et al.,* 2018).
Among the *policy initiatives* aimed at strengthening the social dimension in the Semester, Sabato *et al.* (2018) highlight the "reinvigoration" of the social OMC; the launch of the Social Investment Package (SIP); and the Commission Communication on the social dimension of the EMU.

Regarding the first, in 2011, the Social Protection Committee (SPC) decided to "reinvigorate" the Social OMC by adjusting the Common objectives on social protection and social inclusion according to the Europe 2020 framework, continuing regular strategic reporting, reinforcing mutual learning and encouraging MS to involve (social) stakeholders in the decision-making process and in the drafting of national reform programmes as well (SPC 2011a; 2011b). In addition, MS were invited to draft (on a voluntary basis) short National Social Reports (NSRs), which would be assessed in the annual report of the SPC on the social dimension of Europe 2020. This way, the SPC strengthened its multilateral surveillance capacity and monitoring of the social situation within the Semester by endorsing its own Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) aimed at reinforcing and supporting social policy coordination, thematic surveillance and peer reviews (SPC, 2012). The monitoring and evaluation process thus provided the basis for SPC's input into the adoption of the CSRs (Barcevičius *et al*., 2014).

As for the second *initiative*, in line with the AGS' encouragement towards Member States to "invest in job-rich and inclusive growth", the Commission launched the Social Investment Package (SIP) in February 2013. The SIP aimed at providing guidance in redirecting MS' national social policy reforms towards social investment throughout the life-course (European Commission, 2013a). Importantly, it built on the need for investing in human capital - starting from early childhood and continuing throughout life - helping individuals to prepare to confront life risks and enabling them to live up to their full potential in social and economic life (European Commission, 2013a). At the same time, in April 2013 the Council recommended the launch of a "Youth Guarantee" whose main purpose was to "*ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education*" (European Council, 2013). This *initiative* was

consistent with the main substance of the SIP which was oriented towards promoting links between national social policy within the European Semester while at the same time emphasizing the need to invest in human capital throughout the life-course (De la Porte and Heins, 2015).

Turning to the third initiative, in October 2013 the European Commission advanced two specific proposals aiming at reinforcing the social dimension of the EMU (European Commission 2013b). The first proposal highlighted the need to reinforce the current framework for the surveillance of macroeconomic imbalances by complementing existing indicators with others capturing the social implications of those imbalances – including the AROPE indicator and its sub-indicators. The second proposal instead recommended the establishment of a "scoreboard of key employment and social indicators" to be used in draft Joint Employment Reports in order to allow better and earlier identification of employment and social problems. The scoreboard was subsequently included in the draft Joint Employment Report in November 2013.

5.2. "Socializing" the European Semester, 2015-2020

After the 2012-13 attempts to strengthen the EU's social dimension, the Semester and its social dimension were significantly revamped by the Juncker Commission in 2015, allowing for greater involvement of the European Parliament, national parliaments and stakeholders in the discussion of the economic and social policy measures to be considered in the national budgets. Additional changes introduced by the new Commission included: (i) the reduction in the number of the Country Specific Recommendations; (ii) the introduction of Country Specific Recommendations for the Euro Area; and (iii) the introduction of a range of employment and social aspects in the AGS (European Commission, 2015).

Importantly, the need to reinforce the social dimension of the Semester ranked high on the agenda of the Juncker Commission (Sabato *et al*., 2018). Most of the initiatives proposed by the Commission explicitly pointed at the need to complement the EMU with a social dimension. To this purpose, the Juncker Commission "streamlined" the Semester process thus leading, according to Zeitlin and Vanhercke (2015), to a further "socialization" of both its policy content and governance procedures. More specifically, Juncker pushed for a stronger social agenda which would not only correct the social consequences of the economic crisis, but it would regain the citizens' trust in Europe (Juncker, 2016). It is worth noting that soon after the appointment of the Juncker Commission, attention shifted from the SIP towards the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) (Sabato *et al*., 2018).

6. The European Pillar of Social Rights

The exigence of enhancing the EU social dimension and the ambition to earn a "social triple A" for Europe pushed the European Commission to launch a new *initiative*: the **European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)**. The Pillar was officially proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in November 2017. It sets out **twenty principles** for a strong social Europe in three main areas: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; social protection and inclusion (cf. table 2). The EPSR aims at strengthening the social acquis of the EU by steering a renewed process of upward social convergence across MS (European Commission, 2017). Importantly, a "social scoreboard" was also established to monitor the principles included in the Pillar, and it contributed to embed the Pillar into the Semester (Vesan *et al*., 2021). Since then, the

Pillar became the driving force behind the European Semester's social dimension (Fronteddu and Bouget, 2020).

Table 2. The European Pillar of Social Rights

Areas	Principles
Equal opportunities and access to the labour market	1. Education, training and life-long learning 2. Gender equality 3. Equal opportunities 4. Active support to employment
Fair working conditions	5. Secure and adaptable employment 6. Wages 7. Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals 8. Social dialogue and involvement of workers 9. Work-life balance 10. Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment
Social protection and inclusion	11. Childcare and support to children 12. Social protection 13. Unemployment benefits 14. Minimum income 15. Old-age income and pensions 16. Healthcare 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities 18. Long-term care 19. Housing and assistance for the homeless 20. Access to essential services

Source: European Commission 2017

The novel composition of the European Commission in 2019 opened new opportunities for strengthening the social dimension of the EU (Raitano *et al*., 2021). Taking office in December 2019 the new Von der Leyen Commission announced the Action Plan to bring the European Pillar of Social Rights to life, including proposals on a Child Guarantee, a legal instrument for minimum wages and the temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in and Emergency (SURE) (Von der Leyen, 2019).

To this purpose, in October 2020, two *initiatives* to deal with poverty and social exclusion gained importance at the EU level, namely the proposals for a European framework in the field of minimum income and minimum wages, whose foundations for taking action at the European level had already been laid down with principles 6 (on Minimum Wages) and 14 (on Minimum Income) of the European Pillar of Social Rights. With respect to minimum income schemes (MIS), the Council adopted conclusions on "Strengthening Minimum Income Protection to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond", which were subsequently welcomed by the European Parliament. Even though the EP's resolution calls for legally enforceable social rights and for specific social objectives to be achieved by 2030, it does not openly call for a binding EU framework in the field of MIS (Raitano *et al*., 2021). Instead, the EP proposed a framework for MIS aimed at "*safeguarding the right to a decent life and eradicating poverty and addressing the questions of adequacy and coverage, including a non-regression clause*" (European Parliament, 2020). Differently, based on the art. 153/1 (b) of the TFEU, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on Minimum Wage, aimed at improving the adequacy of minimum wages and increasing

the access of workers to minimum protection (European Commission, 2020a). Table 3 summarizes the main EU social policy developments in the last decade.

Table 3. Timeline of main social initiatives: 2010-2020

2010	Launch of EU2020 and the European Semester; Introduction of quantitative poverty target: lift 20 million EU citizens out of poverty by 2020.
2012	Re-introduction of the Social OMC; Introduction of National Social Reports.
2013	Launch of Social Investment Package; Launch of Youth Guarantee; Establishment of employment and social scoreboard.
2015	Revamp of the Semester and its social dimension.
2016	Launch of public consultation on the EPSR.
2017	Proclamation of the EPSR; Proposal for directive on the work-life balance (principle 9 of the EPSR)
2018	Proposal for a Council Recommendation to improve access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (principle 12); Adoption of Directive 2018/957/EU on the posting of workers.
2019	Proposal for a European framework in the fields of: unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme (principle 13); child guarantee (principle 11); investment in education (principle 1).
2020	SURE; Proposal for a European framework in the field of minimum income (principle 14); Proposal for a European directive on minimum wages (principle 6).

Source: Authors' elaboration

More recently, in March 2021, the Commission published the Action Plan to implement the principles of the EPSR, which outlined *three headline targets* to be reached by 2030, namely: (i) at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment by 2030; (ii) at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year; (ii) the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million by 2030, of which at least 5 million should be children (European Commission, 2021a). Table 4 summarizes the initiatives of the Action Plan to deliver on the EPSR.

More in details, the Action Plan proposes EU strategies on the rights of the child and to combat homelessness. Regarding the former, in June 2021, the Council adopted the European Child Guarantee aimed at preventing and combating children social exclusion by guaranteeing access to early childhood education and care, education, healthcare, nutrition and housing (European Commission, 2021b). As for the latter, in June 2021, the European Commission launched the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness and Affordable Housing initiative, aimed at supporting MS in sharing best practices and identifying efficient and innovative approaches (European Commission, 2021a). Moreover, important *initiatives* include reinforcement of the existing youth guarantee, full implementation of the work-life balance directive and a Council Recommendation on minimum income to be adopted in 2022. Finally, the Action Plan anticipates a Commission initiative on long-term care, aimed at ensuring better access to quality services for those in need, to be announced by 2022.

Table 4. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, 2021

	Principles	Initiatives
Equal opportunities	1. Education, training and life-long learning	Council Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training (2020); Skills and Talent Package (2021); Digital education action plan (2021-2027).
	2. Gender equality	European gender equality strategy (2020-2025); Proposal for a directive on equal pay (2021).
	3. Equal opportunities	Employment Equality Directive and the Race Equality Directive (2021).
	4. Active support to employment	EASE (2021); Youth Employment Support (2020); Reinforced Youth Guarantee (2020).
Fair working conditions	5. Secure and adaptable employment	EURES; Review on posting of workers (2018); Social security coordination rules; Creation of a European Labour Authority (2017).
	6. Wages	Proposal for a directive on adequate minimum wages (2020).
	7. Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals	Reform recommendation to relax or reduce worker protection as well as the laws on individual dismissals at national level; Recognition of new forms of employment.
	8. Social dialogue and involvement of workers	Initiative on Collective Bargaining for the Self-employed (2021); Initiative on Social Dialogue (2022).
	9. Work-life balance	WLB directive (2019); Promote equal sharing of care and work responsibilities.
	10. Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment	EU strategic framework on health and safety at work; New Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (2021); Legal proposals to reduce workers' exposure to hazardous chemicals, including asbestos (2022).
Social protection and inclusion	11. Childcare and support to children	Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2021); European Child Guarantee (2021).
	12. Social protection	Council recommendation on access to social protection (2019).
	13. Unemployment benefits	SURE (2020).
	14. Minimum income	Council Recommendation on Minimum Income (2022).
	15. Old-age income and pensions	Map and exchange of best practices.
	16. Healthcare	Recommendation to reform and strengthen national healthcare systems; Share of best practices.
	17. Inclusion of people with disabilities	European disability strategy (2021-2030).
	18. Long-term care	Initiative on Long-Term Care (2022).
	19. Housing and assistance for the homeless	European Platform on Combating Homelessness (2021); Affordable Housing Initiative (2021).
	20. Access to essential services	Commission Recommendation on Energy Poverty (2020).

Source: European Commission 2021a

Table 5 summarises the changes in the EU social policy over the last two decades according to the four analytical dimensions we presented in the introduction: *EU priorities, grand strategies, governance framework,* and *policy initiatives.* Following the same logic, the next section presents an assessment of the Europe 2020 strategy by comparing the Europe 2020 strategy to the former Lisbon strategy and its main achievements in the field of social policy.

Table 5. Overall architecture of EU social policy (2000-2020)

Grand strategies	EU priorities	Social Governance Framework	Policy initiatives
Lisbon strategy (2000-2010)	"Knowledge-based economy" 4 EU Common Objectives 24 Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs	Social OMC(s)	Leaken indicators (2001); Action Program to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion (2002-2006); Active Inclusion (2009).
Europe 2020 (2010-2020)	"Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth" 10 Integrated Guidelines 5 headline targets	European Semester	Social Investment (2013); Youth Guarantee (2013); EPSR (2017); Directive WLB (2019); SURE (2020); Proposal Minimum Wage Directive (2020); Action Plan (2021); Child Guarantee (2021); Proposal for Council Recommendation on MIS in 2022 (2021).

Source: Authors' elaboration

7. Assessing EU's social dimension in the last two decades

As anticipated in the Introduction, the second part of the report reviews the main achievements of the most recent EU grand strategies, namely the Lisbon strategy and Europe 2020, in the field of social policy. To this end, this section provides a comprehensive discussion of recent scholarship along the four analytical dimensions.

7.1. Assessment of the social dimension of the Lisbon strategy

The Lisbon strategy emerged in a scenario of mounting economic and social pressures and political reshuffling (Natali, 2009). From an economic perspective, the Lisbon strategy aimed to represent a way out from long-term economic stagnation and problems with labour market inefficiency (Begg, 2008) while, from a political point of view, the rise of left-centre governments in the majority of MS increased the relevance of issues linked to unemployment and social exclusion (Pochet 2006). Moreover, the active role of smaller MS (i.e. Portugal) and the recent integration of Scandinavian countries (i.e. Sweden and Finland in 1995) contributed to steer the EU plan agreed upon at Lisbon (de la Porte *et al.*, 2001).

Overall, the Lisbon strategy set a turning point in EU's socio-economic governance (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008; Marlier and Natali, 2010). In particular, it was innovative in two main respects:

- First, it gave a long-term perspective, namely a ten-year *strategy*, to enhance economic competitiveness and face unemployment issues. During Lisbon I economic growth, employment and social cohesion were at the centre of EU priorities as they mutually reinforced each other to reach a new sustainable EU growth model. However, Lisbon II shifted the attention towards macroeconomic balance and the social dimension was downgraded.
- Second, it brought about a *new governance framework* in the social sphere, i.e. the social OMC, based on MS cooperation and mutual learning. The Social OMC introduced non-binding "soft

law" mechanisms to accompany legal instruments, such as directives and regulations. Additionally, it enhanced the interaction between public and private actors, while leaving policy choices in the social field in the hands of MS, according to the subsidiarity principle[2]. Finally, the Social OMC contributed to create an inclusive participatory approach towards policy decisions at the EU level (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006).

What is the scholarly position on the Lisbon strategy? Actually, when looking at the *grand strategy* in the social sphere, the debate is very much divided between Lisbon I and Lisbon II. Initially, several scholars positively welcomed the Lisbon strategy as a promising step towards better EU socio-economic performance and a legitimization of the EU integration process. That is, it was seen as a 'fundamental transformation' of the EU project (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). In this view, the Lisbon strategy emerged as a first attempt to deal with long-standing socio-economic issues in MS. The rise of center-left governments and the increasing active role of peripheral MS contributed to the launch of the Strategy and the definition of its objectives in the social sphere. More specifically, the Lisbon strategy represented a compromise between the economic founding ideas of the EU project, on the one hand, and the need for more policy reforms towards a European social model, on the other hand. It thus represented in many respects a decisive step in the EU approach to social and economic development (Marlier and Natali, 2010).

Yet, after an initial positive and ambitious moment, the Lisbon strategy and the OMC have received strong criticism. In 2004, the European Council established the High-Level Group chaired by Wim Kok to carry out an independent mid-term review on the results of the Lisbon Strategy. It emerged that the Lisbon Strategy was insufficiently focused, as it was "about everything and thus about nothing", and "too many targets will be seriously missed" (Kok, 2004). According to the Kok report, the OMC failed to attain the expectations set with the Lisbon strategy and thus was in need of more "naming, shaming and faming" mechanisms to achieve its objectives in the social sphere (Kok, 2004, p. 43).

Similarly, for what concerns the *governance mode*, the debate over the appraisal of the OMC is divided across scholars. On the one hand, some recognized the role of the OMC in raising the *salience* of national employment and social inclusion policies in many MS (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). In fact, according to these scholars the introduction of new concepts (i.e. social inclusion) in the national debate changed policy thinking (Tucker, 2003), creating a more 'consensus oriented process of policy-making' in the field of social policy (Jacobsson and Vifell, 2003) and favouring policy changes through mutual learning across MS (de la Porte and Pochet, 2004). On the other hand, the OMC was largely criticised for failing to promote stronger economic and social performance in the EU (Creel *et al.*, 2005), uneven participation of stakeholders in the EU coordination of employment and social policies (de la Porte and Pochet, 2005), as well as limited influence of social partners and civil society organizations on policy change, at both national and EU level (Kröger, 2008).

As for social *policy initiatives*, they were indeed quite limited in the Lisbon decade (Table 5 above).

[2] The principle of subsidiarity is defined in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union. It aims to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made to verify that action at EU level is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level.

7.2. The EU 2020 strategy: missed target(s)… established comprehensive rights (better, principles)

The social dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy initially prompted diversified – as well as contrasting – responses among interested scholars.
On the one hand, several contributions pointed at the novelties and the strengthening of the EU' social dimension compared to the Lisbon decade. Especially in the field of anti-poverty policies, the new overarching strategy marked a major discontinuity vis-à-vis the Social OMC of the Lisbon phase (2000–10) by replacing the vague objective of 'eradicating poverty', included in the former Lisbon Strategy, with the possibly less ambitious but more realistic and potentially more incisive quantified poverty target. Lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020 was, in fact, one of the five targets as well as the main social innovation of Europe 2020. Moreover, in order to reach the quantified poverty target, a new flagship initiative, the 'European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion', was also launched, and a key link between the new strategy and European funds was introduced: in the 2014–20 multi-annual financial framework, Member States (MS) were actually required to allocate at least 20 per cent of European Social Fund's resources to combating poverty. As a result of these novelties, as argued by Jessoula and Madama (2018), the Europe 2020 institutional framework might potentially entail a quantum leap for EU's action in anti-poverty policies or, to put it differently, the fight against poverty and social exclusion could be given 'a chance' in the Europe 2020 framework.

However, other contributions cast doubts on the potential and the effectiveness of the new strategy – and more generally the EU project – in pursuing social goals. They highlighted at least three main weaknesses. First, some inconsistencies related to the selection of quantitative indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion (Pochet, 2010; Copeland and Daly, 2012; 2014; Armstrong, 2012; Peña-Casas, 2012). Second, the disregard in the overall strategy for two key policy fields which had been at the core of the social dimension in the Lisbon decade - pensions and health care – jointly with the initial uncertainties regarding the social governance framework and the fate of the social-OMC. Third, in the early years of Europe 2020 (i.e. 2010–2012), the social dimension of the EU's overarching strategy was largely displaced by the narrow focus on financial stability, economic recovery and related austerity measures.

An overall assessment of the strategy is well beyond the scope of this working paper (cf. EMCO and SPC, 2019); however, at least with respect to its main targets, an assessment of the *substantial effects* of the Europe 2020 strategy in the social sphere points in the following directions.

In terms of *outcomes*, although the EU achieved an employment rate of 73.1 per cent in 2019 (Eurostat online) which is very close to the Europe 2020 target of 75 per cent, unemployment and economic inactivity remained very high in some countries, especially among vulnerable groups (women, low-skilled, young people and migrants). Also, in the field of poverty and social exclusion, there has been a very limited progress along several dimensions (cf. Bouget *et al.*, 2015; Frazer and Marlier 2016) and especially towards the target which seems, in fact, unreachable (cf. Eurostat online). The latest Eurostat figures show that, in 2019, there were 107.5 million Europeans at risk of poverty or social exclusion, representing 21.4 per cent of the population: a considerable reduction from the peak of 123 million in 2012 and around 8.5 million fewer individuals than in 2008, taken as the reference year when the strategy was designed, but still far from the original objective of a reduction of 20 million.

Despite this negative assessment in terms of outcomes, Jessoula and Madama (2018) argued that the launch of the Europe 2020 strategy remarkably increased the *political salience* of the poverty issue both at the national and the supranational level. However, their comparative findings in six selected EU countries showed that the setting of the quantitative poverty target and subsequent implementation of the strategy led to the emergence of two distinct 'worlds' among EU's MS. In some countries – Germany, Sweden, and the UK – the launch of Europe 2020 prompted a lively reaction by national governments aimed at tackling supranational 'intrusion' in domestic social policy-making: in fact, the inclusion of the poverty target among the five main Europe 2020 quantitative objectives was actually perceived to have the potential of greatly increasing the visibility of the issue at the supranational level, thus legitimizing further interference by European institutions in domestic anti-poverty agendas. "Here, claims about the *defence of national 'social' sovereignty* went in parallel with the domestic reframing and reinterpretation of the EU anti-poverty target in accordance with country specific approaches as well as governments' orientations to combat poverty and social exclusion" (Jessoula and Madama 2018, p. 188). Differently, in countries like Belgium, Italy, and Poland, the Europe 2020 strategy produced the most relevant substantive effects in terms of increased salience of both the poverty issue, and anti-poverty policies as well, when compared to NAPs/Incl. in the OMC framework.

Strengthening the social dimension: the EPSR

In the assessment of the Europe 2020 strategy, it is also important to single out that the launch of the EPSR represented a major shift in EU priorities and governance framework in the social sphere. As many scholars argued, the EPSR acted as a 'game changer' towards the revival of EU's social dimension (Vanhercke *et al.,* 2018; 2020; Pochet, 2020; Garben, 2020). Although these scholars acknowledge that the Pillar's motivation remains within the paradigm of economic growth, they also agree that this flagship initiative rebalanced the EU social and economic dimensions. For instance, Sabato and Corti (2018) saw the Pillar as a more assertive policy framework emphasizing the notion of social rights as compared to efficiency and fiscal sustainability. In a similar vein, Vanhercke *et al.* (2018) argued that the launch of the EPSR and its Action Plan put forward legislative proposals with social content, leading to a revival of directive proposals in the field of employment, social protection, work-life balance, childcare, and healthcare.

In addition to this revitalization of the EU social policy agenda, scholars pointed to an empowerment of social actors. Although a gradual emergence of a multilevel open stakeholder mobilisation aimed at strengthening the social dimension of the EU may be detected since the launch of the Europe 2020 strategy (Agostini *et al.,* 2013), according to Vanhercke (2020) the EPSR created real opportunities for the social actors to be more closely involved in the governance of the European Semester and to further "socialize" the next EU grand strategy. Similarly, Vesan and Corti (2019) argued that, since the announcement of the Pillar, the Commission promoted greater stakeholder involvement, organizing broad public consultation.

Sabato and Corti (2018) push the argument further, seeing the Pillar as a truly 'political' instrument, in contrast to previous, mostly 'technical' EU social policy frameworks such as the Social OMC and the SIP. They explain this 'political turn' of the Pillar referring to its political context, development, endorsement and its rights-based language. Regarding the political context, the authors argue that the Pillar was launched in a post-crisis context characterized by the prevalence of austerity-oriented structural reforms, rise of nationalism and Brexit vote. In this context, as noted by Garben (2020),

the EPSR was seen as a suitable political platform to 'rebuild Europe's social credentials' (see also Pochet, 2020). With regards to governance mode, the authors argue that in contrast to previous social policy frameworks, the Pillar was subject to broad public consultation, allowing for active involvement of social actors during both the consultation and implementation stages of the Pillar (Sabato and Corti, 2018). Additionally, the Pillar was endorsed and proclaimed by a wide range of institutional and political actors such as the European Commission, the European Parliament and national governments in the Council (ibid, p. 59). Finally, with the introduction of the EPSR, the authors point to a shift in the approach to social policy, moving from a productive 'factor-based' narrative towards a 'rights-based' language. In this regard, Vanhercke *et al.* (2020) added that 'rights' can be understood as sources of power, and power is one of the key ingredients of politics.

7.3. The Semester as key governance framework: strengths and limits of a "socialized" process

After a weak start on the identification of the proper governance instrument to accompany the Europe 2020 strategy, it turned out clear that a new institutional and governance framework, i.e. the European 'Semester', was set to promote a stronger socioeconomic coordination via more effective integration (at least on paper) between social and well established financial-economic policies. Nowadays, the literature is divided on the assessment of the European Semester as the appropriate governance framework to fulfil the goals set with the Europe 2020 strategy.

On the one hand, scholars point to i) increasing socialization of the Semester; ii) enforcing mechanisms of mutual learning and upward convergences across MS; ii) expansion of policy instruments in the field of social policy. With regards to the first aspect, many scholars supported the thesis of a gradual "socialization" of the Semester, meaning that there has been a growing emphasis on social objectives and an enhanced role for social actors in the EU cycle of the process (Zeitlin and Vanhercke, 2015; 2017; Verdun and Zeitlin, 2018). Building on a similar logic, Verdun and Zeitlin (2018) argued that, even though the Semester involves no legal transfer of sovereignty from the MS to the EU level, it has given EU institutions a more visible and authoritative role in monitoring, evaluating and guiding national policies. Similarly, Vanhercke *et al.* (2021) concluded that the European Semester has fostered mutual learning and upward convergence across MS in the field of social policy. Also, they showed that in the most recent Semester cycles (2018–2019), the socialization of the Semester was characterized by an increase in social protection recommendations (Vesan *et al*., 2021), and Bekker (2018) observed an increase in the number of CSRs in the field of employment and social policies over the years. However, according to Miró (2020), this has occurred in a context of progressive flexibilization of the EU fiscal framework, which culminated in the temporary relaxation of SGP rules after the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis. Overall, according to these scholars, the European Semester has contributed to increase attention on the social dimension and promote upward social convergence among MS, thus leading to more balanced mix between social investment and social protection prescriptions, on the one hand, and economic integration, on the other.

However, according to many scholars, the creation of the Semester has also produced some limitations (Crespy and Schmidt, 2017; Dawson, 2018; Costamagna, 2018; Jordan *et al*., 2020). First, this literature argued that the Semester has deepened the EU influence on national social and employment policies, shifting competencies in the social policy field from MS to the EU institutions. In the absence of a strong democratic legitimacy, a shift in the competencies from national to

supranational levels have generated political reactions and hindered the stability of the EU itself. Second, contrary to the optimistic view, some observers argued that the Semester has reinforced the subordination of social goals to the imperatives of economic competitiveness and fiscal discipline at the EU level (Dawson, 2018; Costamagna, 2018; Jordan *et al.,* 2020). These scholars pointed to the prevalence of austerity-oriented structural reforms and a limited focus on social policy, especially in the pre-Pillar phase. More specifically, they argued that the new governance framework institutionalized a structural bias towards the domination of economic over social governance.

Overall, in the context of economic pressures and political reshuffling, the Semester has thus institutionalised the EU's less prescriptive "soft" approach to social policy areas (Vanhercke *et al.,* 2020) compared to the economic field. Many observers, in particular, raised some concerns about the effectiveness of "soft" policy coordination claiming that its success ultimately rests on the national governments' willingness to implement EU recommendations in the social field (cf. Vanhercke *et al.,* 2020; Brooks *et al.,* 2021; Raitano *et al.,* 2021). In an analysis of CSRs in the social policy field, Copeland and Daly (2014) argued that, although there has been an increase in the proliferation of CSRs in the social policy field, they still rest on a voluntary action and they hardly produced binding commitments. The 2019 EMCO and SPC drew similar conclusions by showing that relatively few CSRs are considered to be "fully" implemented – 5 per cent in the areas of employment and social policies – with most implementation considered to be either substantial or partial (EMCO and SPC, 2019, p.5).

7.4. Beyond "soft" coordination: a revival of EU's social policy initiatives

In earlier sections we have documented the shift towards a "more Social Europe" and the role of the Semester in the increasing emphasis on social objectives (Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018). What were the consequences in terms of policy initiatives? Also, to what extent did the new policy initiatives strengthening the EU social dimension and push for upward converge across MS?

In order to have a better assessment of the Europe 2020 strategy in reference to the policy initiatives, it is important to divide Europe2020 in a pre- and post-Pillar phase. Before the launch of the Pillar, in fact, the bulk of the policy initiatives was mostly embedded in the European Semester.

In the Semester, the Europe 2020 strategy combined supranational "hard" quantitative targets with "soft-law" mechanisms (Jessoula and Madama, 2018). In this phase, as mentioned above, the European Commission adopted two policy initiatives, namely the Social Investment Package (SIP) in February 2013 and the Commission Recommendation establishing the Youth Guarantee in April 2013. Since these policy initiatives were mostly linked to the European Semester, this led to policy coordination and mutual learning rather than to radical changes and binding commitments for MS.

With the launch of the EPSR in 2017 though, there has been a change in the nature of policy initiatives in the field of healthcare, social inclusion and poverty. In line with the twenty principles set by the EPSR, there was a series of "hard" initiatives that paved way for a stronger EU social dimension. First, in 2017 the Commission adopted the proposal for directive on the work-life balance (WLD) (Principle 9), and in 2018 the EU also intervened in social services and social protection with the Council Recommendation to improve access to social protection for workers

and self-employed (Principle 9) and the EU Parliament and the Council Directive concerning access to social services for posted workers.

Moreover, over the last two years, the new Commission under the presidency of Ursula Von den Leyden, has pushed for more binding and hard initiatives in the field of unemployment (Principle 13), childcare (Principle 11) and education (Principle 1). More recently, instead, the Pillar gave momentum to other two important initiatives, namely a proposal for Council Recommendation on minimum income (Principle 14) and the proposal for an EU Directive on adequate minimum wages (Principle 6).

One of the most important triggers of such change was the changing composition of the European Commission, in 2015 and in 2019, which highlighted the non-binding nature of the Semester in the social sphere and contributed to promote a series of new policy instruments and initiatives in the latter field. In particular, Vesan and Pansardi (2021) and Vesan *et al.* (2021) argued that the European Commission played an entrepreneurship role in the shift from "soft" mechanisms to the proliferation of "hard" policy initiatives. By comparing the speeches of two European Commission Presidents – Barroso and Junker – these authors provided clear evidence of a change in the configuration of the social policy discourse, which was reflected in a move from the social-retrenchment language (Barroso) to a rights-based language (Junker). Additionally, the Juncker Commission's entrepreneurial activity was also clear in the re-organization of the tasks within DG EMPL and DG ECFIN and the adoption of a new monitoring tool such as the EPSR Social Scoreboard. These entrepreneurial activities contributed to open a window of opportunity towards the reinforcement and consolidation of the EU social dimension.

Overall, while during the pre-Pillar phase policy initiatives were mostly embedded in the Semester and directed to "soft" mechanisms of policy coordination and mutual learning, the EPSR and more recently its Action Plan have contributed to the proliferation of "hard" initiatives in the field of social protection.

8. Conclusions

This report highlights the major steps undertaken towards the construction of a European social dimension. To this end, the report disentangles key social policy developments since the launch of the EU project in 1950s. However, particular attention is devoted to major innovations in the social sphere at the EU level in the last two decades. Overall, the report builds on four dimensions: *EU priorities, grand strategies, governance mode* and *policy initiatives*. Following these fourfold layers of analysis, it is possible to identify three changes in the construction of an EU social dimension.

First, when looking at *grand strategies* and related *priorities*, the overall set of ideas in the social field has changed from Lisbon to the Europe 2020 strategy. More specifically, during Lisbon I economic, employment and social cohesion were mutually reinforcing in order to reach a new sustainable EU growth model; by contrast, during Lisbon II the bulk of the attention shifted toward macroeconomic balance and the social dimension was downgraded. The launch of Europe 2020 reaffirmed the *EU propriety* of social policy in the EU project, and especially the definition of "hard" quantitative targets restored stronger emphasis on employment, poverty and social inclusion.

An important step in the construction of a "social Europe" was a change in the *governance mode,* from the Social OMC to the launch of the European Semester and its gradual socialization with Europe 2020. While the Commission pushed a tree-dimensional OMC in Lisbon I into a single instrument in Lisbon II where social inclusion, pension and health/long-term care were streamlined into a Single OMC, the launch of the European Semester with Europe 2020 combined "soft" mechanisms – which had proved to be "ineffective" in promoting social convergence across MS – with "hard" quantitative targets in order to create more binding commitments of EU in the social sphere. Moreover, the gradual socialization of the Semester has given EU institutions a more visible and authoritative role in monitoring, evaluating and guiding national policies, also promoting – according to some scholars – upward social policy convergence across MS and an expansion of policy instruments in the social field.

Last but not least, there has been a change in the nature of *policy initiatives* in the field of healthcare, social inclusion and poverty. In line with the twenty principles set by the EPSR, a series of "hard" initiatives paved the way for a stronger EU social dimension. More specifically, the EPSR gave momentum to a series of policy initiatives in the field of social protection, healthcare, childcare, unemployment, education and poverty and social inclusion. Recently, the launch of the Action Plan represented a step forward in this direction by strengthening the commitment of the EU in adopting new and more binding policy initiatives.

Despite these important achievements in the construction of an EU social dimension, some tensions between MS and EU policymakers still remain. In particular, major events such as the Great Recession, the Brexit referendum and the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic have unraveled long-standing problems in the institutional arrangements of the EU. According to Ferrera (2017), the Great Recession has revealed all the limits of the asymmetry between a centralized monetary and fiscal governance, on the one hand, and decentralized social protection systems, on the other (ibid, p. 4). That is, the inherited tension between economic and social sphere and the presence of the EU "social deficit" that characterized the integration process during the 1950s-1960s still remains.

In this view, the outburst of the Euro crisis has fostered a tension between the economic space – with the launch of the Six Pack, Two Pack and the Fiscal Compact – and the social sphere leading to a shrunk welfare state from 'semi-sovereign' to 'mini-sovereign' (Ferrera, 2017). However, the Euro crisis did not only exacerbate existing conflicts but also activated new ones. For instance, while strengthening fiscal rules, EMU authorities have seized the power to interfere directly in the domestic welfare budgets when stability rules are violated. This has triggered a new line of conflict between EU institutions and MS over the division of competences and the right sphere of actions. Another line of conflict that has emerged is among MS: a major divide between Nordic and peripheral Member States which is rooted in both economic interests and entrenched cultural worldviews (Ferrera, 2017). In this political tension, the emergence of populist parties all around Europe has contributed to undermine the democratic legitimacy of the EU project.

How would it be possible to overcome such tensions to create a more social and united EU? The literature identifies two potential paths towards a more social EU. First, there is a need to reconcile the political and economic sphere with the social one. To reach such a goal, one of the key challenges of the EU is to rebalance two forces: the logic of closure in the social sphere with the logic of opening in the economic sector (Ferrera, 2017; Vandenbroucke *et al.*, 2017). In other words, there is a need for some sort of equilibrium between the market, national autonomy, democracy and welfare. Second, the notion of solidarity should be put back at the heart of the EU project. A strategy of

reconciliation between the logic of economic opening and stability, on the one hand, and the logic of social closure, on the other hand, requires a coherent framework of pan-European solidarity supported by an adequate and effective narrative (Ferrera, 2017, p. 16). The conceptual and political ambiguity that characterized the EU social debate during the last years has produced more tensions among MS and, thus, the EU social narrative has clearly remained unproductive and inefficient (Ferrera, 2017). Hence, according to Vandenbroucke *et al.* 2017, there is a need to create a socially progressive justification of EU integration and enlargement; thus, the EU should move towards a 'holding environment' where welfare state can prosper. Overall, an agenda for a European Social Union, a union of national welfare states with different historical legacies and institutions (ibid, p.4), should be at the center of EU project.

References

Agostini, C., Sabato, S. and Jessoula, M. (2013), “Europe 2020 and the Fight Against Poverty: Searching for Coherence and Effectiveness in Multilevel Policy Arenas”, *Working Paper LPF3/13*, Turin, Centro Einaudi.

Anderson and Heins (2021), After the European Elections and the First Wave of Covid-19: Prospects for EU Social Policymaking, In B. Vanhercke, S. Spasova and B. Fronteddu (eds.) *Social Policy in the European Union: State of Play 2020*, Brussels, European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) and European Social Observatory (OSE), pp. 13-32.

Armstrong, K.A. (2010), *Governing Social Inclusion*, Oxford University Press, available at:https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199278374.001.0001.

Armstrong, K.A. (2012), “EU Social Policy and the Governance Architecture of Europe 2020”, *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 285–300.

Armstrong, K.A., Begg, I. and Zeitlin, J. (2008), “The Open Method of Co-ordination and the Governance of the Lisbon Strategy”, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 46 No. 2, pp. 436–450.

Barcevičius, E., Weishaupt, J.T. and Zeitlin, J. (Eds.). (2014), *Assessing the Open Method of Coordination*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Begg, I. (2008), “Is there a Convincing Rationale for the Lisbon Strategy?”, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 46 No. 2, pp. 427–435.

Bekker, S. (2018), “Flexicurity in the European Semester: Still a Relevant Policy Concept?”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 175–192.

Björn, H. (2019) A European Social Semester? The European Pillar of Social Rights in practice, Working Paper 2019-05, ETUI, pp. 1-76

Bouget, D., Frazer, H., Marlier, E., Sabato, S., and Vanhercke, B. (2015), *Social Investment in Europe: A Study of National Policies*, European Social Policy Network (ESPN), Brussels, European Commission.

Brooks, E., de Ruijter, A. and Greer L. Scott (2021), Covid-19 and European Union health policy: from crisis to collective action, in Vanhercke, B., Spasova, S. and Fronteddu, B. (eds), *Social Policy in the European Union: State of Play 2020*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 33-52.

Busilacchi, G., Jessoula, M. and Raitano, M. (2009), Il Mac e le politiche pensionistiche: Italia e Europa, *Rivista Italiana delle Politiche Sociali,* 4/2009.

Büchs, M. (2007), *New Governance in European Social Policy*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Copeland, P. and Daly, M. (2012), "Varieties of Poverty Reduction Inserting the poverty and Social Exclusion Target into Europe 2020", *Journal of European Social Policy,* Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 273-287.

Copeland, P. and Daly, M. (2014), "Poverty and Social Policy in Europe 2020: Ungovernable and Ungoverned", *Policy & Politics,* Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 351-366.

Copeland, P. and Papadimitriou, D. (2012), *The EU's Lisbon Agenda: Evaluating Success and Understanding Failure*. Pelgrave Studies in European Union Politics.

Costamagna, F. (2013), The European Semester in Action: Strengthening Economic Policy Coordination while Weakening the Social Dimension? *Working Paper LPF5/13*, Turin, Centro Einaudi.

Creel, J., Laurent, E. and Le Cacheux, J. (2005), "Delegation in Inconsistency: The 'Lisbon strategy' Record as an Institutional Failure".

Crespy, A. and Schmidt, V. (2017), The EU's economic governance in 2016: beyond austerity, in Vanhercke, B., Sabato, S. and Bouget, D. (eds.), *Social Policy in the European Union: State of Play 2017*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 107-123.

Daly, M. (2006), "EU Social Policy after Lisbon*", *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44 No. 3, pp. 461–481.

Daly, M. (2007), "Whither EU Social Policy? An Account and Assessment of Developments in the Lisbon Social Inclusion Process", *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 1–19.
Daly, M. (2012), "Paradigms in EU Social Policy: a Critical Account of Europe 2020", *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 273–284.

Dawson M. (2018), New governance and the displacement of Social Europe: the case of the European Semester, *European Constitutional Law Review*, vol. 14 no. 1, pp. 191-209.

de la Porte, C. and Heins, E. (2015) "A New Era of European Integration? Governance of Labour Market and Social Policies Since the Sovereign Debt Crisis", *Comparative European Politics,* Vol. 13 No.1, pp. 8–28.

de la Porte, C. and Pochet, P. (2004), "The European Employment Strategy: Existing Research and Remaining Questions", *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 71–78.

de la Porte, C. and Pochet, P. (2005) 'Participation in the Open Method of Co-ordination. The Cases of Employment and Social Inclusion', in J. Zeitlin and P. Pochet (eds.) with L. Magnusson The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action: The European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies, Brussels, P.I.E-Peter Lang, 353-389.

de la Porte, C., Pochet, P. and Room, B.G. (2001), "Social Benchmarking, Policy Making and New Governance in the Eu", *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 291–307.

EMCO and SPC (2019), Assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Joint Report of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and Social Protection Committee (SPC). Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2019.

European Commission (1999). '*A Concerted Strategy for Modernising Social Protection.'* Communication from the Commission COM(1999) 347 (14 July).

European Commission (2001) "Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee", Brussels, 3 July 2001 COM(2001) 362 final.

European Commission (2008) "Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market", Brussels, 3 October 2008, C(2008)5737

European Commission (2010a), The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Brussel, 16 December 2010 COM(2010) 758 final.

European Commission (2010b), Communication from the Commission: Europe 2020 – A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth. Brussels, 03 March 2010 COM(2010) 2020.

European Commission (2013a), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – Including Implementing the European social fund 2014-2020. Brussels, 20 February 2013 COM (2013) 83 final.

European Commission (2013b), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Strengthening the Social Dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union. Brussels, 02 October 2013 COM 2013) 690 final.

European Commission (2015), Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union: Commission Takes Concrete Steps to Strengthen EMU. European Commission Press Release, Brussels, 21 October 2015.

European Commission (2017), Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights. Brussels, 26 April 2017 COM (2017) 250 final.

European Commission (2020a), Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Adequate Minimum Wages in the European Union, Brussels, 28 October 2020 COM (2020) 682 final.

European Commission (2020ab), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Union of Vitality in a World of Fragility, Brussels, 19 October 2020 COM (2020) 690 final.

European Commission (2021a), The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, Luxembourg.

European Commission (2021b), Council Adopts European Child Guarantee, European Commission, News 14 June 2021.

European Council (2013), Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on Establishing a Youth Guarantee. 2013/C 120/01.

European Council, European Commission and European Parliament (2017), Interinstitutional

Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights. Brussels, 13129/17.

European Parliament (2013), Strengthening the Social dimension of the EMU: European Parliament Resolution of 21 November 2013 on the Commission Communication Entitled 'Strengthening the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)'. 2013/2841(RSP).

European Parliament (2017), A European Pillar of Social Rights. European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2017 on a European Pillar of Social Rights (2016/2095(INI)).

European Parliament (2020), Resolution of 17 December 2020 on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions. P9_TA(2020)0371

Ferrera, M. and Rhodes, M. (2000), "Recasting European welfare states", *West European Politics*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 1–10.

Ferrera, M. (2005), *The boundaries of welfare: European integration and the new spatial politics of social protection*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Ferrera, M. and Gualmini, E. (2004), *Rescued by Europe? Social and Labour Market Reforms in Italy from Maastricht to Berlusconi*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.

Ferrera, M., Matsaganis, M. and Sacchi, S. (2002), "Open Coordination Against Poverty: the New EU `Social Inclusion Process'", *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 227–239.

Ferrera, M. (2017) "The Stein Rokkan Lecture 2016 Mission Impossible? Reconciling economic and social EUrope after the euro crisis and Brexit", *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.56, No. 3, pp. 3-22

Ferrera, M. (2019) "Towards a European Social Union, The European Pillar of Social Rights and the Roadmap for a fully-fledged Social Union, A Forum debate", Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione Luigi Einaudi, Torino

Frazer, H., & Marlier, E. (2016), Minimum income schemes in Europe. *A study of national policies,* European Social Policy Network (ESPN), Brussels, European Commission.

Fronteddu, B. and Bouget, D. (2020), "Twenty Years of European Social Policy: Key Events from 1999 to 2018". In B. Vanhercke, D. Ghailani, S. Spasova and D. Natali (eds.) *Social Policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the long and winding road*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 203-224.

Garben, S. (2020), Balancing fundamental social and economic rights in the EU: in search of a better method, in Vanhercke B., Ghailani D., Spasova S. with Pochet P. (eds.) *Social Policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the Long and Winding Road*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 57-70.

Heritier, A. (2002), *Common goods: Reinventing European integration governance*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Jacobsson, K. and Vifell, Å. (2003), "Integration by deliberation? On the Role of Committees in the Open Method of Coordination", presented at the Paper for the workshop 'The Forging

of deliberative Supranationalism in the EU', 7-8 February 2003, Florence, p. 32.

Jessoula, M. (2015), "Europe 2020 and the Fight against Poverty - Beyond Competence Clash, Towards 'Hybrid' Governance Solutions?", *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 49 No. 4, pp. 490–511.

Jessoula, M., and Madama, I. (2018), *Fighting poverty and social exclusion in the EU: A chance in Europe 2020*. Routledge.

Juncker, J. C. (2016), State of the Unions Address 2016: Towards a Better Europe – a Europe that Protects, Empowers and Defends. European Commission Press Corner, Strasbourg, 14 September 2016.

Juncker, J. C., Tusk, D., Dijsselbloem, J., Draghi, M. and Schulz M. (2015), Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union. European Commission.

Kohler-Koch, B. and Rittberger, B. (2006), "Review Article: The 'Governance Turn' in EU Studies*", *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44 No. s1, pp. 27–49.

Kok, W. (2004), Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment. Report from the High-Level Group Chaired by W. Kok. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, November 2004.

Kröger, S. (2008), "Nothing But Consultation: The Place of Organised Civil Society in EU Policy-making across Policies", *European Governance Papers (EUROGOV), No C-08-03*.

Lelie, P. and Vanhercke, B. (2013), "Inside the Social OMC's Learning Tools: How «Benchmarking Social Europe » really worked", European Social Observatory, available at: https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2419.7202.

Marlier, E. and Natali, D. (Eds.). (2010), *Europe 2020: Towards a More Social EU?*, Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang.

Miró, J. (2020), "Austerity's Failures and Policy Learning: Mapping European Commission Officials' Beliefs on Fiscal Governance in the Post-Crisis EU", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 1224–1248.

Natali, D. (2009), "The Lisbon Strategy a Decade on: a Critical Review of a Multi-Disciplinary Literature", *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 111–137.

Peña-Casas R. (2012),"Europe 2020 and the fight against poverty and social exclusion: forced into marriage?, in Natali D. and Vanhercke B. (eds.) *Social developments in the European Union 2011*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE.

Pochet, P. (2010), "What's wrong with EU2020?", Policy Brief, European Social Policy 2, Brussels, ETUI.

Pochet, P. (2020), "Twenty years of the publication 'Social policy in the European Union': what have we learned", in Vanhercke B., Ghailani D., Spasova S. with Pochet P. (eds.) *Social Policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the Long and Winding Road*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 13-34.

Polomarkakis K. A. (2019) "The European Pillar of Social Rights and the Quest for EU Social Sustainability", *Social & Legal Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 183-200

Raitano, M., Gallo, G., Jessoula, M and Pagnini, C. (2021), *Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion: Including through Minimum Income Schemes*. Publication for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, Luxembourg, European Parliament.

Rasnača, Z., Theodoropoulou, S. (2020) "EMU and the European Pillar of Social Rights: Do (Shall) the Twain Ever Met?", *Social Policies*, Vol. 2, pp. 331-354

Ricceri, M. (2020), Social Precariousness and the European Pillar of Social Rights. In R.D. Hepp, D. Kergel and R. Riesinger (eds) *Precarized Society Social Transformation and the Welfare State* , Springer, pp. 9-40.

Sabato, S. Agostini, C., Natili, M. and Jessoula, M. (2018), Europe 2020 and the Fight Against Poverty: From Target to Governance. In M. Jessoula and I. Madama (eds.) *Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU*. Routledge, pp. 14-35.

Sabato, S. and Corti, F. (2018), 'The times they are a-changin'?' The European Pillar of Social Rights from debates to reality check, in Vanhercke, B., Ghailani, D. and Sabato, S. (eds.), *Social Policy in the European Union: State of Play 2018*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 51-70

SPC (2011a), Draft Background Paper to the SPC from the Ad-Hoc Group on Reinvigorating the Social OMC in the Context of the Europe 2020 Strategy. SPC/2011 09/1.

SPC (2011b), Opinion of the Social Protection Committee on: Reinvigorating the Social OMC in the Context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, 17 May.

SPC (2012), Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) – Methodological Report by the Indicators Sub-group of the Social Protection Committee. 17 October.

Streeck, W. (2018), "European Social Policy: Progressive Regression", *SSRN Electronic Journal*, available at:https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3303811.

Tricart J. P. (2020), Once Upon a Time There was the European Social Dialogue, in Vanhercke B., Ghailani D., Spasova S. with Pochet P. (eds.) *Social Policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the Long and Winding Road*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 75-103.

Tucker, C.M. (2003), "The Lisbon Strategy and the Open Method of Coordination: A New Vision and the Revolutionary Potential of Soft Governance in the European Union", presented at the Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 28-31 August, p. 57.

Vandenbroucke F., Barnard C., De Baere G. (2017) A European Social Union after the Crisis, Cambrdge University Press

Vanhercke, B. (2020), From the Lisbon strategy to the European Pillar of Social Rights: the many lives of the Social Open Method of Coordination, in Vanhercke B., Ghailani D., Spasova S. with Pochet P. (eds.) *Social Policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the Long and Winding Road*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 99-123.

Vanhercke, B., Ghailani, D. and Sabato, S. (2018), *Social Policy in the European Union: State of Play 2018*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE.

Vanhercke, B., Ghailani, D., Spasova, S. and Pochet, P. (2020), *Social policy in European Union 1999-2019: the Long an winding road*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE.

Vanhercke, B., Sabato, S. and Bouget, D. (2017), *Social Policy in the European Union: State of Play 2017*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE.

Vanhercke, B., Spasova, S. and Fronteddu, B. (2021), *Social Policy in the European Union: State of Play 2020*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE.

Verdun, A. and D'Erman, V. (2020), Two Decades of Change in Europe: Post-Crisis Social Policymaking in the EU, in Vanhercke B., Ghailani D., Spasova S. with Pochet P. (eds.) *Social Policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the Long and Winding Road*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 37-56.

Verdun, A. and Zeitlin, J. (2018), "Introduction: the European Semester as a new architecture of EU socioeconomic governance in theory and practice", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 137–148.

Vesan P. and Corti F. (2019), "New Tensions over Social Europe? The European Pillar of Social Rights and the Debate within the European Parliament", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 57 No. 5, pp. 977-994.

Vesan, P., Corti, F. and Sabato, S. (2021), "The European Commission's Entrepreneurship and the Social Dimension of the European Semester: From the European Pillar of Social Rights to the Covid-19 Pandemic", *Comparative European Politics*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 277–295.

Vesan, P. And Pansardi, P. (2021), Speaking social Europe: A paradigmatic shift in the European Commission Presidents' social policy discourse?. *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 356-379.

Von der Leyen, U. (2019), Opening Statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session by Ursula von der Leyen, Candidate for President of the European Commission, European Commission Press Corner, Strasbourg, 16 July 2019.

Wallace, H., Wallace, W. and Pollack, M. A. (2005), *Policy Making in the European Union*, 5th edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Zeitlin, J. and Vanhercke, B. (2015), Economic Governance in Europe 2020: Socializing the European Semester Against the Odds? in Natali D. and Vanhercke B. (eds.) *Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2015*, Brussels, ETUI, OSE, pp. 65-95.