

The Impact of Cultural and Citizenship Education on Social Cohesion

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Input

Statement

**The Impact of Cultural and Citizenship Education on Social
Cohesion: Chances – Challenges – Changes**

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Indicators for Social Cohesion in the EU

Social cohesion is not a new, but rather a concept, originally created by the sociologist Emil Durkheim in the late 19th century, which has experienced a fulminant comeback in the course of the past two decades – both in the academic as well as in the political discourse. Trying to make this somewhat vague concept more comprehensible and tangible is all but an easy task and something like nailing jello to a wall. It is due to this vagueness that Paul Bernard, a Canadian sociologist, uses to refer to social cohesion as a ‘quasi concept’ (Bernard 1999: 2): “The concept of social cohesion shows the characteristic signs of a quasi concept that is one of those hybrid mental constructions proposed by politics in order to simultaneously foster consensus on a reading of reality and to forge them. These constructions have two dimensions: They are – on the one hand – relatively realistic, a benefit from the legitimacy conferred by the scientific method, and they maintain – on the other hand – a weakness that makes them adoptable to various situations, flexible enough to follow the necessities of political action from day to day. This weakness explains why it is so difficult to determine what is meant by social cohesion.” In my following presentation I will nevertheless make an attempt to make this ‘quasi concept’ better comprehensible and tangible by discussing approaches aiming to operationalize and to measure social cohesion by way of quantitative indicators.

I shall begin my presentation with some conceptual considerations on definitions and dimensions of social cohesion and will then briefly present three examples of indicator-based measurement approaches of social cohesion before concluding with a short summary.

Let me start with some of the many definitions available. As the head of a commission on behalf of the British Liberal Party, the eminent German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf came to the conclusion that social cohesion characterizes a society “which offers opportunities to all its members within a framework of accepted values and institutions... Social cohesion should not be thought of as harmony, but as a condition of lively civil societies held together by a framework of citizenship” (Dahrendorf et al. 1995: 34). In the notion of Jane Jenson, a Canadian political scientist, “a socially cohesive society is where all groups have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy” (Jenson 1998). A Canadian policy research initiative of the Canadian government defined social cohesion as “the ongoing processes of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity... based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity” (Policy Research Initiative of the Canadian Government 1999: 22). And lastly, in the view of the Council of Europe, “social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization” (Council of Europe, High Level Task Force on Social Cohesion 2008).

These exemplary definitions of social cohesion enfold differences as well as similarities. What they all have in common is obviously the notion that social cohesion is not a uni-dimensional but rather a multidimensional concept. In order to make this concept measurable by quantitative indicators, it is thus crucial to identify the different dimensions of social cohesion more precisely.

Jenson (1998) suggests to distinguish the following five dimensions of social cohesion:

- Belonging vs. isolation, which means shared values, identity, feelings of commitment.
- Inclusion vs. exclusion, which concerns equal opportunities of access.
- Participation vs. non-involvement
- Recognition vs. rejection, which addresses the issue of respecting and tolerating differences in a pluralist society.
- Legitimacy vs. illegitimacy.

An alternative dimensional map of social cohesion has been proposed by Pauline O'Connor (1998), who suggests to distinguish three different dimensions:

- Ties that bind, such as values, identity, culture.
- Differences and divisions, such as inequalities and inequities, cultural diversity, geographical divisions.
- Social glue, which refers to associations and networks, infrastructure, values and identity.

In our own work on developing social cohesion indicators as part of the “European System of Social Indicators” (Noll 2002), we came to the conclusion that these proposals may basically be reduced to just two major dimensions – each covering a number of sub-dimensions (Berger-Schmitt 2000).

The first of these dimensions concerns disparities, inequalities, exclusion, fragmentations and cleavages – each of them representing a potential threat to the cohesiveness of a society. This dimension may thus be considered the inequality dimension of social cohesion.

The second major dimension is supposed to cover those aspects and qualities potentially enhancing cohesion, such as social relations and ties, identity, involvement, participation and a sense of belonging to the same community. We consider this second dimension the social capital dimension of social cohesion.

I do not want to go further into this, but it seems to be pretty obvious that education – including cultural and civic education – may have an important impact on both of these major dimensions of social cohesion, by reducing inequalities, exclusion etc. and enhancing involvement and participation.

In the following second part of this presentation, three examples of indicator based approaches of measuring and monitoring social cohesion will be briefly presented and discussed:

- The European System of Social Indicators, developed by the Social Indicators Research Centre of GESIS;
- The European Commission’s Indicators of Social Inclusion, and
- The social cohesion indicators initiative of the European Council

European System of Social Indicators:

Figure 1 presents a summary view of the conceptual framework of our European system of social indicators, which has been developed around three concepts: quality of life, sustainability and social cohesion (Noll 2002). The function of this framework is to guide and to justify the selection of indicators. Together with sustainability, social cohesion is being used to conceptualize in a certain way the good society or, as we call it, the quality of society. Unfortunately, I don’t have the time to go further into detail here, but I just want to mention that social cohesion indicators within the European System of Social Indicators have been obtained by applying the two major social cohesion dimensions to 13 life domains, such as labour market and working conditions, housing, education, income and consumption, health etc. All together, the European System of Social Indicators currently includes about 120 social cohesion indicators.

The new GESIS – "Social Indicators Monitor – SIMon" (www.gesis-simon.de), which will be accessible by spring 2010, has been developed to provide a comfortable online access to the data from the European System of Social Indicators. It allows for example to directly access the indicators associated with the two social cohesion dimensions mentioned above. Figure 2 shows a user generated listing of indicators related to the first social cohesion dimension, inequalities, disparities and exclusion.

Figure 1:

European System of Social Indicators: Conceptual Framework

	Welfare Measurement	Monitoring Social Change
Individual Level	<p>Quality of Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - living conditions - subjective well being 	<p>Values and Attitudes e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - postmaterialism - gender roles - party preferences etc.
Societal Level	<p>Quality of Society</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural capital - human capital <p>Social Cohesion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - disparities, inequalities, exclusion - social relations, ties, inclusion 	<p>Social Structure e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demographic - social class - employment etc.

To give a better impression of the nature of these indicators, I will present just two examples:

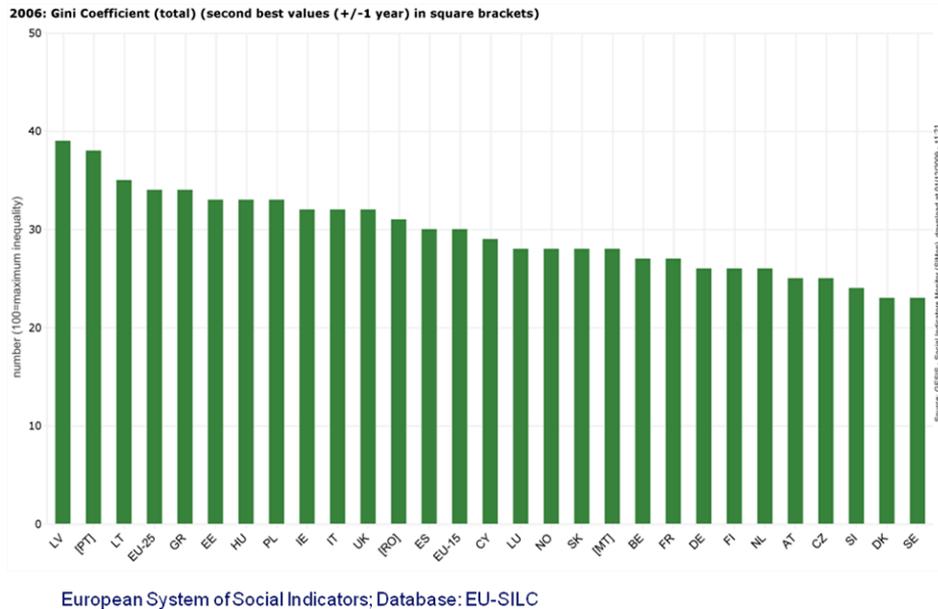
Figure 2:

The screenshot shows the SIMon interface with the following elements:

- Header:** SIMon Social Indicators Monitor, European Data, German Data, gesis Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences.
- Navigation:** Data Selection, Hierarchic, Cartographic, Search, Output, Start, About, Help.
- Left Panel (Goal Dimension):**
 - Life Domain
 - Subjective Living Conditions
 - Subjective Well-Being
 - Disparities, Inequalities, and Soci [...]** (selected)
 - Social Relations and Ties
 - Human Capital
 - Natural Capital
 - Demographic and Socio-Economic Stru [...]
 - Values and Attitudes
- Right Panel (Indicator List):**
 - Disparity of Regional Employment Rates
 - Disparity of Regional Unemployment [...]
 - General Government Gross Debt in % [...]
 - Income Level of Children
 - Income Level of Old People
 - Income-related Inequality of Drezelli [...]
 - Inequality of Employment Rates of D [...]
 - Inequality of Unemployment Rates of [...]
 - Lack of Basic Amenities
 - Overcrowded Dwellings
 - Ratio of Employment Rates of Nation [...]
 - Ratio of Employment Rates of Women [...]
 - Ratio of Unemployment Rates of Disa [...]
 - Ratio of Unemployment Rates of Nati [...]
 - Ratio of Unemployment Rates of Wome [...]
 - Relative Poverty Rate II
 - Relative Poverty Rate III
 - Responsibility For Household Work
 - Severely Hampered in Daily Activities
 - Sex Ratio of Time Spent on Househol [...]
- Footer:** Current Selection, My Sets, Analysis, Maximize +

This first example displays the Gini coefficient, concerning net household income as a measure of inequality for the 27 EU countries (figure 3).

Figure 3:



The Gini coefficient is a measure that may run from 0 to 100, where 0 represents total equality and 100 total inequality. Obviously, European countries are quite different in terms of the extent of income inequality. The most egalitarian countries on this account are Sweden, Denmark and Slovenia. The most unequal EU countries are Latvia, Portugal and not least Lithuania whose Gini coefficient come very close to that of the United States. As a matter of fact, the inequality of incomes within these three countries turns out to be larger than in the European Union as a whole.

The second example concerns poverty rates for the EU-27, which have been calculated differently compared to the usual sort of poverty rates, which refer to national poverty thresholds. The poverty rates displayed in figure 4 have been calculated by using 60 percent of the EU-15 wide median equalized income as a poverty threshold. The indicator exhibits huge disparities between European countries in general, but particularly between the new member states in Eastern Europe and the richer countries in the northern and western parts of Europe. In Latvia and Lithuania, for example, more than 80 percent of the population is poor according to this notion of relative poverty in terms of 60 percent of the EU-15 average. In Luxembourg, the richest EU-country, this percentage amounts to less than 5 percent.

Figure 4:

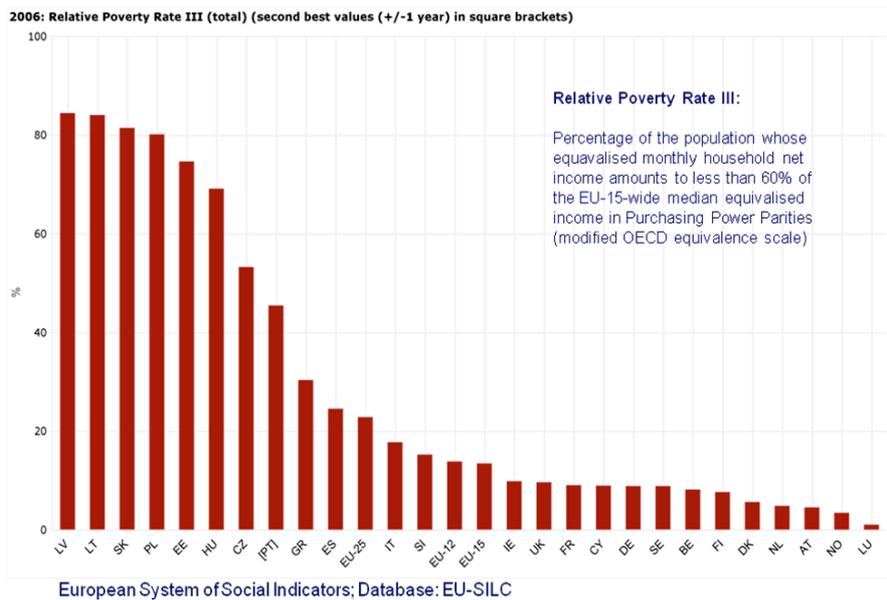
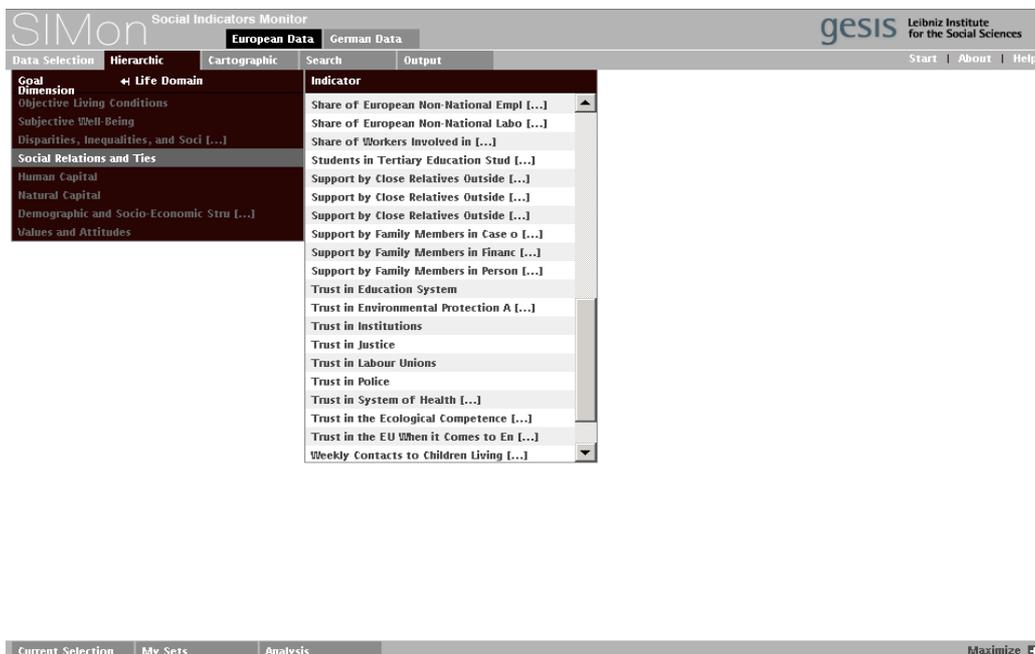


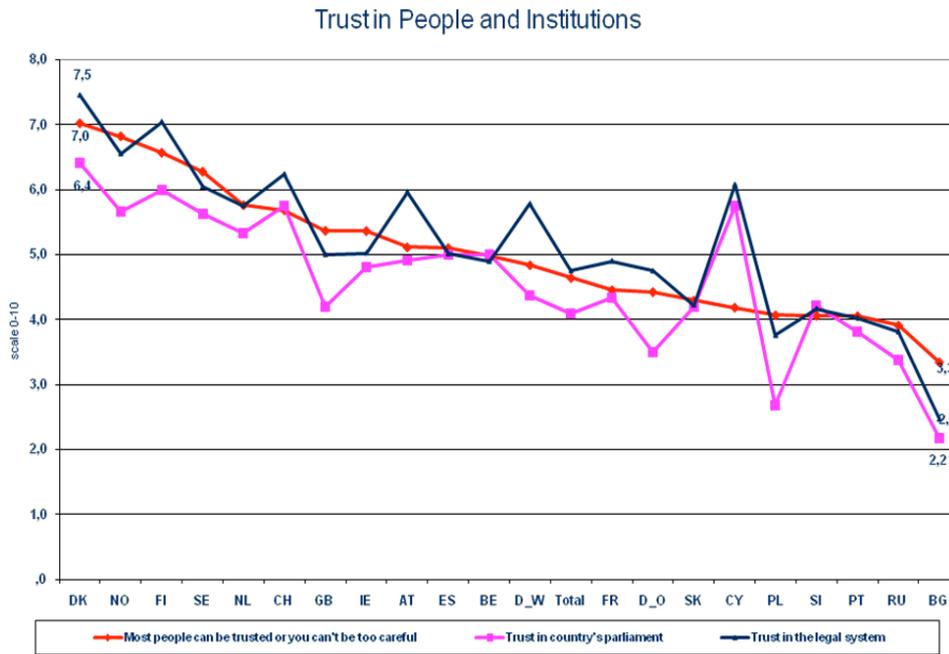
Figure 5 displays another screenshot from SIMon, highlighting some of the indicators relating to social relations and ties – the social capital dimension of social cohesion in our European indicator system.

Figure 5:



Again I will present a few examples of indicators used to measure and monitor this dimension of social cohesion.

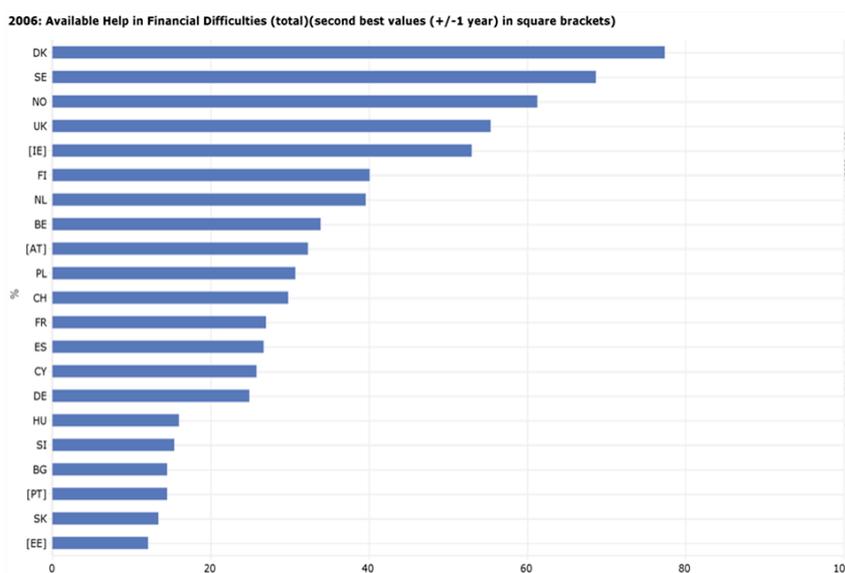
Figure 6:



Source: European System of Social Indicators; Database: European Social Survey 2006

Figure 6 displays three indicators: Trust in people – the red line – and trust in two institutions – the parliament, which is the purple line, and the legal system, the dark blue line. Last night we have already seen a similar chart concerning trust in people in another presentation, and the results across the European countries turn out to be pretty similar, even though the databases used are different. High trust – and thus more cohesive - societies include particularly the Scandinavian countries, low trust societies include foremost eastern and southern European countries.

Figure 7:



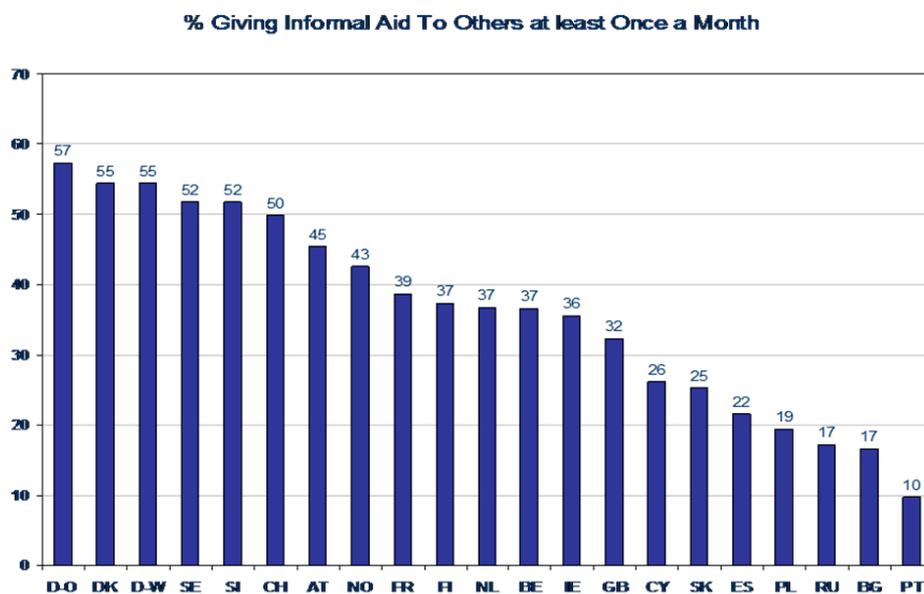
% who could "quite easily" or "very easily" borrow money ...if they were in serious financial difficulties; European System of Social Indicators; Database: European Social Survey (ESS)

The percentage of those people who could quite easily or very easily borrow money if they were in serious financial difficulties is an indicator supposed to measure another aspect of the quality of social relations and thus

the cohesiveness of society (figure 7). The differences between European countries are once more striking. At the top we find exclusively countries from the North and the West of Europe, at the bottom mostly eastern European countries.

The last indicator example relating to the social capital dimension of social cohesion concerns informal aid in everyday life and is catching another important aspect of the civil and cohesive society (figure 8). The chart displays the percentage of the adult population giving informal aid to others, outside one's own family, at least once a month, which varies between more than 50 percent in Germany and some other countries in central and northern Europe and Portugal at the lower end with only 10 percent.

Figure 8:



European System of Social Indicators; Database: European Social Survey

The European Commission's Indicators of Social Inclusion

A second and – from a political point of view most important – approach of indicator based measurement of social cohesion, which I would like to introduce very briefly, are the EU social inclusion indicators which are part of the so called Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The Open Method of Coordination has been established by the European Council of Lisbon as a tool for implementing the EU-Strategy for sustained economic growth and greater social cohesion and shall contribute to a convergence of social conditions by defining common objectives. It requests periodic monitoring of goal attainment based on a set of common indicators. Doing so, the OMC establishes indicators and benchmarks as a means of identifying best practices and mutual learning, but due to the principle of subsidiarity, it leaves institutional solutions and policy choices to the nation states.

As yet, the OMC has been applied to various policy fields already being social inclusion as one of them¹. In this context, social cohesion has been conceptualized as social inclusion, which in turn is mainly understood in terms of the absence of social exclusion. The adoption of this notion of social cohesion has important implications, both politically, as well as in terms of measurement and the choice of indicators. From both perspectives the emphasis is

¹ For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm

clearly on assuring minimum standards of living conditions rather than striving for an optimum and the focus is on population groups at the margins of society rather than society as a whole.

The EU social inclusion measurement approach basically distinguishes three classes of indicators:

- First, the commonly agreed EU-indicators, which are used for comparative monitoring;
- Second, the commonly agreed national indicators to be used for national monitoring; and
- Third, indicators providing background information.

Figure 9 displays some of the so-called primary indicators used by the EU Commission and the member states to monitor social inclusion and social cohesion in Europe. I don't want to discuss the choice of indicators in detail but would just like to point to the fact that many of these indicators refer to inequality, poverty, unemployment or material deprivation, which underlines the fact that this approach really focuses on social exclusion, and primarily in the sense of not meeting a minimum standard of living.

Figure 9:

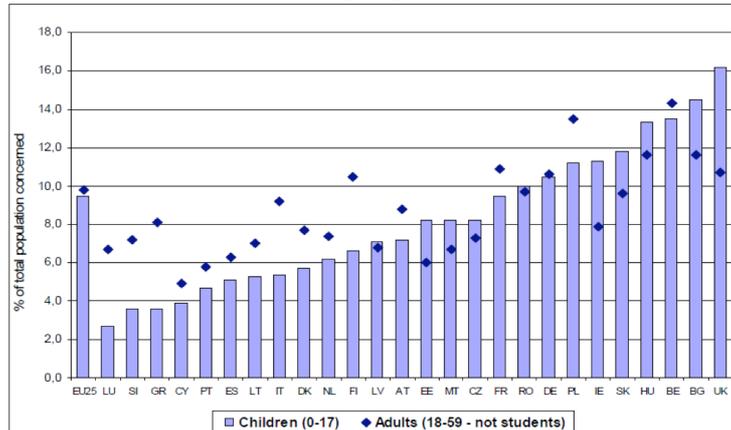
Social Inclusion Indicators: Primary Indicators

- ⇒ lead indicators covering the fields that have been considered the most important elements in leading to poverty and exclusion
- at risk of poverty rate (below 60% of national equivalised median income) + illustrative threshold values (EU)
 - persistent at risk of poverty rate (below current year + at least two of the preceding 3 years) (EU)
 - relative median poverty risk gap (difference between median equivalence income of persons below threshold and the threshold in % of threshold) (EU)
 - long term unemployment rate in % of total active population (EU)
 - population living in jobless households: children (children - 0-17 – living in jobless house-holds in % of all children) (EU)
 - population living in jobless households: prime age adults (18-59) (EU)
 - early school leavers (only lower secondary level) not in education or training (EU)
 - employment gap of immigrants (Nat)
 - material deprivation (EU – to be developed)
 - housing (EU – to be developed)

I am going to present just two examples from the set of indicators used to measure and monitor social inclusion within the EU's OMC-Strategy. The first example concerns two of the primary indicators, the percentage of adults and children that are living in jobless households.

Figure 10:

Figure 4: Adults and children living in jobless households (%), EU-27, 2006



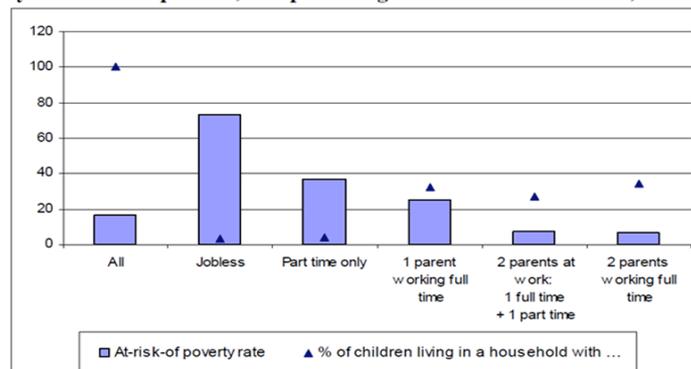
EU-Commission: Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008

As can be seen from figure 10, the percentage of children in jobless households varies between 3 percent in Luxembourg and 16 percent in the United Kingdom, the share of adults between 5 percent in Cyprus and 14 percent in Belgium. The new eastern European member states are obviously more inclusive in this respect than some of the old EU member states.

The second example concerns the risk of poverty rate of children (figure 11), which is broken down by the activity status of parents. The results demonstrate that joblessness increases the risk of child-poverty dramatically.

Figure 11:

Figure 7: At-risk-of-poverty rates of children living in two parents households by activity status of the parents, and percentages of children concerned, EU-25, 2005



Source: SILC (2005) - income year 2004 (income year 2005 for IE and the UK).

EU-Commission: Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008

The Social Cohesion Indicators Initiative of the Council of Europe

Finally, a few words on the Council of Europe's social cohesion indicator activities, which are actually part of its much broader strategy "to develop social cohesion as a set of goals and practices for policy, converting it from a concept into a policy approach". The fact that the Council of Europe maintains its own "Directorate of Social Cohesion"² certainly reflects the particular importance dedicated to social cohesion policy concerns. As it has already been mentioned in the beginning, the Council of Europe defines social cohesion as "the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization" (Council of Europe, High Level Task Force 2008). Departing from this general definition, the Council of Europe has launched two different indicator development activities. One of these activities concerns the development of a detailed and quite complex system of indicators aiming to measure social cohesion comprehensively at different levels. The results of these activities have been published in a report (Council of Europe 2005), which is available on the Council's website, but unfortunately cannot be presented here in more detail because of time reasons.³

Concerning the second activity, the Council of Europe has proposed a set of so called "Policy Watch Indicators" in order to allow and enable member states and other relevant bodies to assess progress towards greater social cohesion. This proposal distinguishes five components of social cohesion:

- Equity and economic well-being
- Dignity and recognition of diversity
- Participation
- Sense of belonging
- Sharing responsibilities.

As yet, only few indicators have been developed within this framework, and some of the indicators listed in the document – e.g. citizens' participation in democratic processes or scope and extent in social and civil rights – are obviously not yet really indicators, but rather sub-dimensions of the broader components. In my opinion it would thus be premature to assess this proposal in more detail at this stage, and we will have to wait and see how this approach will be developed further in the future.

Conclusions

Social cohesion has been characterized as a quasi-concept. This is to say that it is a concept, which is somewhat vague and may be used differently by different parties making use of it. It seems, however, that the different notions of social cohesion are recently converging into a more or less common understanding. There is an agreement that social cohesion must be understood as a multidimensional concept covering different dimensions. There are several approaches operationalizing the concept and providing social cohesion indicators at different levels, such as national or supranational levels or even the community level. However, as yet there is no generally agreed set of social cohesion indicators available which may be applied to each society or groups of societies at all levels and for all purposes. To me it seems doubtful whether this will be achieved in the near future, but it is also questionable if this should be an aim to strive for.

² See http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/default_en.asp

³ See http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/GUIDE_en.pdf

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