The Aspect of Culture in Promoting Social Inclusion in the European Union: Is the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) Working for Ethnic Minorities?

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Introduction

In the context of making the European economic area competitive while reaching certain social and economic goals, the 2000 European Council at Lisbon initiated an ambitious implementation scheme on its Social Agenda introducing the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) as an instrument to streamline and optimize Community and Member States' policies. The OMC method is a 'soft governance' approach aimed at generating real political commitment and different types of norms, procedural as well as substantive, through a highly institutionalized process of information sharing, deliberation, monitoring and learning.[1] The method was first introduced in the area of employment and has been followed by an OMC on Social Inclusion (OMC/Incl.). Other focus areas are social protection/pensions and health care. The OMC on employment has recently undergone a first evaluation, and the Commission is preparing to subject the OMC/Incl. to its first evaluation.[2] No OMC focuses specifically on minority inclusion but the OMC/Incl. has developed into one of the key areas of European Union (EU) policy implementation that addresses the socio-economic exclusion of members of ethnic and Roma/Sinti minorities.

The OMC processes are part of the Lisbon Strategy, under which policy the EU formulated a number of measures to facilitate the shift towards an information society, stimulate research and development and the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), complete the internal market, ensure sustainability of public

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[1] The OMC is defined in the Lisbon Strategy as involving (1) fixing guidelines combined with specific short, medium and long term timetables for achieving the goals, (2) establishing quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different member states and sectors as a means of comparing good practices, (3) translating European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, and (4) periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organized as mutual learning processes.
[2] "Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion, 2002-2006: Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Coordination." Call for Proposals – VP/2005/009, p. 4.

finance, and modernise the European Social Model by strengthening education and training, developing an active employment policy and modernising social protection.[3] Specifically on employment, the goals of the Lisbon Strategy aim to raise the employment rate from an average of 61 per cent in 2000 to 70 per cent by 2010 and to increase the number of women in employment from an average of 51 per cent in 2000 to more than 60 per cent in 2010. On the inclusion of ethnic minorities, the Lisbon Strategy is however silent.

Following its adoption, the Lisbon Strategy has been evaluated every spring to measure its progress. In spring 2005, the Strategy was re-focused as a result of poor performance in the Member States. The pace of reform would have to be stepped up significantly if the 2010 targets were to be achieved.[4] The re-focused Lisbon Strategy calls for a renewed effort at creating socio-economic inclusive societies. This involves breaking down barriers to the labour market by assisting with effective job searching, facilitating access to training and other active labour market measures and ensuring that work pays, as well as removing unemployment, poverty and inactivity traps. In this context, special attention should be paid to promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged people in the labour market, particularly through the expansion of social services and the social economy.

Although the re-focused Lisbon Strategy does not refer explicitly to ethnic minorities and Roma/Sinti groups, it is clear from the reports published by the Commission and the Council on the joint progress made toward social inclusion in EU15[5] as well as in the new member states[6] that ethnic minorities are slowly becoming a policy issue. However, while the reports were able to reveal increased attention within Member States to the social exclusion of ethnic minorities, they also stated that little progress had been achieved. While many Member States pay attention to policies for the integration of ethnic minorities, Roma/Sinti groups as well as refugees and migrants,

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[3] See Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, 23-24 March 2000 for the original documents included in the Lisbon Strategy available at (accessed 19 April 2005):
http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm.
[4] Daniel Gros and Jørgen Mortensen, "The European Productivity Slowdown. Causes and Implications." *CEPS Policy Brief*, No. 54. July 2004.
[5] Joint Report by the Commission and the Council on Social Inclusion. 7101/4 of 5 March 2004,
[6] Report on social inclusion 2005: An analysis of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (2004-2006) submitted by the 10 new Member States. European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, February 2005.

the Commission was not entirely satisfied with the level of performance of National Action Plans (NAPs) in the area of promoting social inclusion of ethnic minorities.[7] Most Member States continue to present the issue in rather general terms, highlighting health, housing and employment as areas of particular concern. In many cases, only a brief reference is made to migrant and ethnic groups being at risk, with little attempt made to analyse the situation or factors which lead to exclusion.

Specifically, in the area of culture the Commission laments the fact that Member States have not efficiently developed the strategic importance of promoting cultural inclusion and the importance of incorporating measures of social inclusion into existing cultural policies. The Commission is particularly concerned with the fact that Member States do not address the importance culture can have in promoting social inclusion. Although the reports state a number of approaches towards increasing access to culture mainly in the area of cultural activities, promoting cultural activities is not seen by Member States as a vital aspect of good practice on the social inclusion of ethnic minorities.

The lack of cohesive programmes aimed at linking social inclusion with culture has also been pointed out by a group of experts who studied the cultural policies of eight EU15 Member States.[8] They found that although inclusion in cultural activities is often an important stepping stone in preventing or addressing social exclusion, there is nevertheless a lack of drive at central government levels to actively promote engagement in cultural activities as an important tool for addressing social exclusion. Indeed, the lack of awareness of the positive role culture can play in addressing social exclusion seems to be more of a national rather than a local problem.

More importantly, according to the experts, stronger emphasis also needs to be placed on embracing cultural diversity. The underlying approach of Member States varies enormously. In some Member States a great deal of emphasis is placed on providing language tuition to excluded minorities. Whilst this is necessary to help counteract

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[7] Joint Report by the Commission and the Council on Social Inclusion, p. 48.
[8] Roberta Woods, Lynn Dobbs, Christopher Gordon, Craig Moore and Glen Simpson, "Report of a thematic study using transnational comparisons to analyse and identify cultural policies and programmes that contribute to preventing and reducing poverty and social exclusion." The Centre for Public Policy, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2004.

exclusion it is also necessary to develop programmes to encourage cultural diversity to flourish. The group of experts recommended that Member States should address the role that cultural policy and practices have in addressing the needs of people who are socially excluded. Stakeholders and civil society groups must be invited to contribute to policy making and asked their views about the importance of participation in cultural activities as a means of reducing social exclusion. Moreover, they argued that culture needs to be broadly defined and go further than the remit of the cultural policy (the arts, sports, media, theatre, museums, libraries) to embrace opportunities to enhance the quality of life for everyone and to provide access routes out of marginalisation and unemployment. Finally, the experts asserted that the piloting of indicators to measure the impact of the participation in cultural activities on social exclusion should take place. It is therefore clear that cultural activities and protecting the right of ethnic minorities to culture may contribute to social inclusion but may not necessarily alone ensure effective social inclusion without also addressing the issue of cultural diversity.

Culture Counts

The aspect of culture as a means to promote social inclusion is relatively new to the Member States of the EU. It has, however, been explored in other fora, such as the international development community,[9] the UN,[10] and international think tanks[11] as well as the academic community.[12] Although there is widespread agreement now that "culture counts," there seems less understanding of what it entails to address cultural aspects of social exclusion. The success rate of cultural policies raises a number of issues in terms of the definition of culture. Do we operate with thin or thick definitions? Do we operate with a bracketed definition, or must we take a holistic approach? Which areas of cultural life contribute to the promotion of social inclusion, and which risk exclusion? How do we link culture to socio-economic exclusion? Do

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[9] See Dena Ringold, *Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges.* World Bank, 2000; *Durban Plus One: Opportunities and Challenges for Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in Development.* World Bank, Office of Diversity Programs, 2003, and Glenn C. Loury, "Social Exclusion and Ethnic Groups: The Challenge to Economics." Paper prepared for the Annual World Bank Conference, 28-30 April, 1999.

[10] UNESCO World Culture Report, 2000.

[11] See Mark Leonard and Phoebe Grittith with Kate Arthurs and Richard Tite, "European Inclusion Index: Is Europe Ready for the Globalization of People?" The Foreign Policy Centre, 2003.

[12] See among others, Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture. Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton University Press, 2002) and Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

we find indicators in the Gross Domestic Products (GDP), or must we search for different sources? Not only does the complex reality of culture make it difficult to define measuring tools, it has also been almost impossible to map culture with a view to measuring and benchmarking. It is thus with good reason that the Commission has called for greater use of cultural policies in the OMC/Incl. precisely because culture is seen as a promoter of inter-cultural dialogue and thus enhances social inclusion in plural societies. Without greater understanding of how cultural tools work, the Commission's call will yield few good results.

Cultural activities risk becoming exclusionary unless cultural diversity is accepted as the paradigm for society. Human action exerting exclusion results in a relationship of otherness in so far as the act of exclusion creates boundaries between cultures. Thus, cultures are formed through complex dialogues with other cultures. The demarcations of cultures and of the human groups that are their carriers are extremely contested, fragile as well as delicate. To possess the culture means to be an insider. Not to be acculturated in the appropriate way is to be an outsider. Hence, the boundaries of cultures are always securely guarded, their narratives purified, their rituals carefully monitored. These boundaries circumscribe power in that they legitimize its use within the group.[13] As culture has an importance in ensuring social inclusion, the binary inclusion/exclusion relation requires indicators that measure this relationship in terms of the extent of exclusion. The relevant indicators for measuring the impact of cultural policies on social inclusion are therefore *inter*-cultural indicators.

However, despite culture's importance in national identity and the growing recognition of its role as an economic driver frequently culture represents a relatively low political priority. Rather, culture tends to be seen not in terms of citizenship but as a means to preserve cultural heritage. Even though the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in 2001 stipulates in the Preamble that

> Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material,
> intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it
> encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together,
> value systems, traditions and belief,

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[13] Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture.*

it often means that the human and social capital dimensions are missing or under-represented in policy and priorities. Moreover, citizenship is often seen as mono-cultural drawing on the ideology of one nation to one state. But this is a reality which does not exist as nation and state rarely coincide. Consequently, there is political resistance to see that the right to cultural self-expression must be grounded in universally recognized citizenship rights to be different rather than considered an alternative to these. This view of citizenship must be inclusive ensuring that multiple identities are able to identity with it and develop loyalty in support of it. In other words, Member States must engage in self-reflexive questioning on their own practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Specifically, with regard to ethnic minorities and Roma/Sinti groups, traditional cultural policies that fail to address cultural diversity and inter-cultural exchanges risk low performance and poor cost-effectiveness. This is because the cultural differences between ethnic minorities and Roma/Sinti groups, on the one hand, and majorities, on the other, are usually more intractable due to circumstances and situation of co-habitation than is the case with immigrant communities. Immigrants have by and large instrumental reasons for adaptation to the majority society,[14] whereas ethnic minorities often reject adaptation due to intrinsic values of culture, heritage and birth.[15] Heretofore, integration of immigrants has been the greatest concern in EU15 states, whereas large-scale immigration is not as yet a major issue in the ten new Member States. These states have, on the contrary, a stronger need to address the social exclusion of ethnic minorities, especially Roma/Sinti groups.

Cultural Indicators and Methodological Problems

The co-existence of several cultures within a state requires inclusion policies that can be measured by inter-cultural indicators. The effectiveness of cultural policies as well as other inclusion policies is however difficult to measure unless good cultural diversity indicators exist. While indicators on culture have been put forth by some actors, none exist specifically on the aspect of culture in the social inclusion of ethnic

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[14] The exception being perhaps certain religious groups adhering to strict canon that does not easily adapt to the customs of the host state. Even such religious groups have instrumental reasons for wishing to belong to society.

[15] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship. A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)

minorities. The EU's Social Protection Committee (SPC) provided a list of eighteen comparable indicators for social exclusion in 2001, none of which pertained to culture.[16] Defining a common framework of comparable cultural indicators is fraught with problems and there is a general scepticism regarding the link between culture and social inclusion. The complex reality of culture renders the goal of seeking comparable indicators virtually unattainable. Moreover, precise rankings between Member States are not possible. However, broad comparisons are possible and changes over time can be discerned. There is therefore a dire need to seek to develop a good working framework of inter-cultural indicators that address the social exclusion of members of ethnic minorities within the EU.

The realization by Member States of the need to deal with culture and specifically inter-cultural exchanges in relation to social inclusion calls for greater attention to the importance of identifying inter-cultural indicators. While the common social indicators adopted by the European Council at Laeken in 2001 have contributed to the social inclusion progress, further development has been called for in the development of indicators through the evaluation of experiences at the member state level.[17] Specifically with respect to ethnic minorities, it was recently suggested that education and access to the labour market of the younger generations of ethnic minorities should be addressed in future integration policies.[18] Unfortunately, the recommendation was confined to education and employment and did not embellish as to whether improvement in these areas could depend on enhanced inter-cultural exchange policies.

The conceptual underpinning of inter-cultural indicators is crucial, and it is clear that they involve parameters whose values depend on ethical judgements. It has been proposed that indicators on culture have at least three dimensions: conservation, creativity and identity.[19] Moreover, inter-cultural indicators must take into consideration culture in relation to social inclusion both as an objective and as a

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[16] Report on Indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion. Social Protection Committee, October 2001.
[17] "Report of the High-level Group on the future of social policy in the enlarged European Union." Employment and Social Affairs, EU Commission, May 2004.
[18] Ibid.
[19] See contribution by Lourdes Arizpe in the proceedings from the Seminar "Measuring Culture and Development: Prospects and Limits of Constructing Cultural Indicators", Florence, 4-7 October 1999.

process. Cultural vitality, cultural diversity and global ethics depend on the freedom of cultural expression, participation in cultural creation, access to cultural activities and the right to have a cultural identity. In addition, a balance must be found that measure and describe the benefits and aspects of culture, including verification of strengthening of identity, sovereignty, visibility and development as well as opportunities in all sectors of public life (economic, commercial, financial, political, social and artistic). Inter-cultural indicators must also address the risks of using certain indicators while omitting the use of other indicators.

Inter-cultural indicators are furthermore a tool of policy dialogue that rely primarily on qualitative data unlike socio-economic indicators which are defined primarily in terms of quantifiable data, such as access, income levels, social security, level of education and housing as well as certain legal rights. Qualitative indicators include; the model of integration followed, levels of tolerance in terms of attitudes towards other cultures (of the minority as well as the majority), analysis of diversity management programmes and the role of the media. This is in addition to some quantitative data, such as the frequency of minority-majority contacts and contacts to kin-state, rates of inter-marriage, language skills, delinquency, discrimination, and incidences of racism. An index of inter-cultural indicators thus draws the attention away from the preoccupation with GDP as an indicator and instead becomes policy relevant in order to give a clear message as to what is desirable and what is not. The reason why using the GDP as an indicator is not a very illuminating approach is that it does not answer questions about certain important factors, such as opportunities, political liberties, and the quality of majority and minority relations let alone inter-cultural exchanges. Member States that do well on GDP per capita may not necessarily do well on these factors. Hence, inter-cultural indicators must reveal information about the state of inter-human affairs in the Member States. In other words, inter-cultural indicators must aim at verifying inter-cultural exchanges (between majority and minorities).

Verifying 'soft indicators' such as inter-cultural indicators involves sociological and cultural anthropological studies as well as communication studies that survey local actions and sources with a view to evaluating the extent of inter-cultural dialogue, exchange and understanding as well as the level of tolerance. The lack of available

qualitative data is usually a major obstacle in this respect. Similarly, benchmarking in inter-cultural research is very difficult. As Member States have argued numerous times, situations in Member States are very different and some times even unique. An index of common inter-cultural indicators would therefore have to be very general, leaving space for ambiguities and dilemmas to be addressed. An advisory system of evaluation may be feasible, such as for instance a grading system indicating favourable, less favourable and unfavourable results. By keeping advisory systems simple and transparent, benchmarking will not develop into a "naming, shaming and blaming" game. As the overall results of benchmarking must be considered modest, monitoring and self-reporting may also contribute to promoting benchmarking.

Culture as a Facilitator of Inclusion

Although it has been argued that a concern with the distribution of economic opportunities and resources has been displaced by a preoccupation with the acknowledgement of cultural identities and differences, there is little evidence of this in the NAPs of the OMC/Incl. This is curious given that a variety of explanations have been offered for this possible shift of emphasis. Some accounts focus on the globalization and the fading power of the nation-state which have contributed to the erosion of established national identities from both above and below. Thus, new spaces have opened up for the creation of new sorts of identities. Other accounts refer to the end of the post-war social democratic consensus placing a new emphasis on the individual thus also leading to an increased interest in identity. Social justice in terms of redistribution of resources and recognition of identities is therefore at the forefront of this debate.

While some argue that redistribution and recognition are two mutually irreducible elements of an account of social justice,[20] others contend that a suitably differentiated account of recognition can provide the basis of a theory of just inclusion of its own.[21] Recognition on this latter account is not only a political aspect and a question of good governance. Rather social recognition is more important. Setting aside academic

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[20] Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation" in Fraser and Honneth (eds.), *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (Verso, 2003), pp. 7-110.

[21] Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition: A Response to Nancy Fraser" in Fraser and Honneth (eds.), *Redistribution or Recognition?* pp. 110-198.

disputes, both approaches hold that the distribution of resources has a very significant influence on the life-chances of those individuals affected by such a distribution. Moreover, they hold that in order to realize this, governments must pay attention to both the distribution of economic resources and the recognition of cultural identities.

Culture in the economy supports the view that individual economic action is based on culturally engendered capabilities. The idea that capabilities are fostered through culture relies on the view that certain functions are particularly central in human life, and these functions render the human being a dignified free being who shapes her life in co-operation and reciprocity with others. A human life is shaped by these human powers of practical reason and sociability, and each human being is thus a bearer of value, and an end in herself. To subordinate the ends of some individuals to those of others is considered profoundly wrong, and to deprive the individual of the cultural support to develop her capabilities may result in some individuals living beneath a certain level of capability.[22] In other words, the value of culture must be appreciated as a valuable contribution to the individual's development and capability to function in society, especially the individual's capability to act in the economic sphere without risking exclusion.

Conclusions

If socio-economic exclusion of ethnic minorities is to be eradicated in the EU, Member States must come to understand that exclusion due to cultural membership is not only a matter of discrimination but also of disrespect. Discrimination as a concept sprung from the very notion of cultural differences, disrespect emanates from an inability of the individual to allow others to be different. Inclusion is therefore a question of respecting cultural differences in the public realm, and the aspect of culture in public policies on social inclusion must address exclusion in terms of disrespect. In other words, it is not enough to see culture in terms of the folklore traditions and cultural festivals; such an approach only puts cultural minorities in a relationship of otherness. Culture in public policies must be understood in terms of cultural diversity that require inter-cultural exchanges based on dialogue and understanding. The design of public policies that aim at using culture to include ethnic

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[22] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, pp. 71-73.

minorities in the mainstream culture of majorities without forcing ethnic minorities to relinquish their own culture is therefore vitally important.