

**The Open Method of Coordination as a Device to Increase Citizen
Support for the European Union: A Systems Theory Perspective**

by

Danny Vassiliou, B.A.

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ABSTRACT

The Lisbon Strategy was ushered in by the European Council Meeting in March 2000 in Lisbon aiming to make the European Union “the most competitive economy in the world and achieving full employment by 2010.”¹ This coincided with the introduction of the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) as an instrument of the Lisbon Strategy which was applied to the area of social policy. Following a mid-term review, one of the explicit aims of a revised OMC was to increase citizen involvement in the process in order to raise support for it – and thereby the EU – which the EU could use as a leverage to pressure the Member States to undertake reforms. The present research and deliberations focus on Germany and the United Kingdom and attempt to tackle the question of whether the revision strategy has worked by viewing it through a system’s theoretical lens, in particular as it applies to the concept of support. The conclusion indicates that the revised OMC strategy has not led to citizen involvement in the process, while the increased levels of support have not materialised in concrete terms, though we cannot completely discount the possibility that the new strategy has had a positive effect on the German citizens’ feelings towards the EU.

¹ European Commission. “Lisbon Strategy,” http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/lisbon_strategy_en.htm (Accessed on March 14, 2010).

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

“An ever closer union among the peoples of Europe” is one of the aims of the Treaty of Rome, and the passage is repeated in subsequent EU treaties. This expressed ideal is central to this work as it neither defines a geographically bounded ‘Europe’ nor does it prescribe a particular end state for it, thereby capturing the unique and evolving nature of the European Union well; it is unique because the European integration project is an unparalleled undertaking, and it is evolving because it necessarily must change and redefine itself in order to survive in its environment and continue serving its original purpose: to prevent war and provide for prosperity in Europe. Consequently, the singularity and evolution of the Union have prompted commendation as well as criticism, indicating a dynamic process.

A primary argument about this process relates to the nature of the European Union, i.e., to the nature of its political organisation: is it an international arrangement that cedes authority only in certain policy areas, for example, trade and competition to a regulatory centre for the benefit of the members who maintain power over their own affairs, leaving non-mandated areas to Member State discretion and, when need be, intergovernmental negotiation? While it is true that some political inroads have been made into non-trade areas as well, many claim that these only go as far as to accommodate the Single Market. Moreover, as Moravcsik puts it, the EU-mandated policy areas are of high complexity and “far less salient to [the general public] than issues dealt with by national governments,” hence the intergovernmentalist explanation for the low interest and participation in EU matters on the part of the citizens.¹

¹ Andrew Moravcsik, “What Can We Learn from the Collapse of the European Constitutional Project?,” *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2006): 225; see also Liesbet Hooghe, “What drives Euroskepticism?: Party-Public Cueing, Ideology and Strategic Opportunity,” *European Union Politics*, vol.

The limitations of this argument, however, begin to surface when we take the following two points into account: Though it is true that the EU's legislative output is virtually always related to matters of the functions of the Single Market, it is also true that the latter does not exist and function in isolation of society at large, i.e., it is a part of a bigger whole with which it interacts. In a similar manner, EU political activity cannot be seen as confined to a limited set of supranationalist processes: the internal political activities of the Member States and the intergovernmental activities between them as EU members cannot be separated from the EU's realm of activity; they have to be coordinated in view of it, indicating again that the EU is a bigger whole with and within which the Member States interact. Consequently, both of the above considerations point at the EU as a large political system with a multitude of interconnected subsystems, and hint at an evolutionary trait that has allowed the EU to persist and expand its remit into virtually all policy fields in breadth and depth.

The intergovernmentalist argument, then, though reflecting the EU's focus on matters of trade and economy, may no longer be taken as adequate: it reduces the existence and evolution of the EU to one explanatory variable without taking into account that the EU and Member State political systems interact with each other in an increasingly complex fashion; they take advantage actively of various types of political structuring in their interactions for solutions to challenges they face, in addition to competency centralisation, thus creating a multifaceted political process of "community-making". This ongoing community-making necessitates, of course, a corresponding level

8 (March 2007): 5-7; Easton makes theoretical references to subject area complexity and popularity which are much akin to this argument. See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (University of Chicago, 1965), 145-6.

of support from the citizens, which the intergovernmentalist argument considered discounts as unnecessary.

The counterargument used above, on the other hand, would seem to point at a neo-functional view, which sees the EU broadening its activities into all policy areas, and so incrementally weakening the power of the member states while it collects – wholly or partially² – at the centre, gradually making itself bigger than the sum of its parts. If that is indeed the case, then the EU may be seen to have gained an own momentum and to be attempting to expand its prerogatives beyond those of the Community Method.³ The problem here, some claim, is that the EU is rushing ahead into politically sensitive areas without having the ‘requisite’ Member State citizen support behind it and the corresponding solidarity between them.⁴

However, we may consider a third possibility. This one resembles the neo-functional view in the sense that it does indeed see the EU as having gained a momentum that gives it the ability to expand its prerogatives beyond the Community Method, thereby involving various forms of political structuring. It may be claimed, however, that it does so *without* neglecting the need for citizen support. More to the point, the various forms of political structuring may be seen to be pursued by the EU and

² Hantrais points out that market forces and European Court of Justice rulings have circumscribed the sovereignty of the Member States over welfare systems without a corresponding amount accumulating in Brussels. See Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 263. Leibfried makes the same claim. See Stefan Leibfried, “Social Policy,” in *Policy Making in the European Union*, ed. Wallace, Wallace and Pollack (Oxford University Press, 2005), 243. Though Kleinman does not quite disagree, he points out that that globalisation has caused EU Member States to retrench their welfare systems, with EU social policy remaining a primarily regulatory activity dealing with labour market issues but involving “a complex relationship between nations, the European Union, and subnational government – that is, some form of multi-level governance.” See Mark Kleinman, *A European Welfare State?* (Palgrave, 2002), Chapter 3 and pg 221.

³ See Leibfried, *Social Policy*, 243; See also Jonathan Zeitlin, “A Decade of Innovation in EU Governance: The European Employment Strategy, the Open Method of Coordination, and the Lisbon Strategy” (La Follette School Working Paper No. 2007-03, 2007), 2&4; In addition, whether one settles for one or the other course of reasoning, the evolutionary nature of the EU cannot be denied.

⁴ See Stefano Bartolini, *Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building and Political Structuring between the Nation-State and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the Member States as appropriate responses to environmental changes that necessitate the expansion of collective activity into areas which are of primary interest to citizens, i.e., of salience to them.⁵ In turn, this reality could indicate the possibility of a gradually growing European mass interest in what is happening at the political centre. If this is the case, then one could claim that the political output of EU and Member State activities may be used to engage the support of Europeans for the continuing integration process.⁶ This scenario is one where we see the EU moving into sensitive areas not necessarily only as a response to the growing number of challenges of the Single Market, but precisely because these have become so numerous and widespread that the EU and the Member States must react to them in order to build support among the Europeans for the EU's continuing and evolving self, i.e., for integration.

Since it can be argued that the EU is extending its activity into all policy areas, including those of more importance to the public, it compels us to ask what the consequences of this would be for the future of the EU. Will it somehow 'remain' largely intergovernmental, as many claim it is, which would be a Realist guarantee of the continuity of the nation-state, or will its regional integration evolution continue, challenging thereby the political cornerstone of Western democracy, the nation-state? This is, of course, an oversimplification of what are in fact complex processes, however, the developments in the EU in coordinating Member State social policy, an area of

⁵ See Fritz Scharpf, "The European Social Model: Coping with the Challenges of Diversity", *Journal of Common Market Studies* vol. 40, no. 4 (2002): 645-70. On a different note, given the present recession, one must ask how 'insalient' the policy areas under centralised control really are, that is, people see the economy and what it means for their jobs and livelihood as very salient. A well coordinated EU response arguably would have gone a long way in garnering support. Perhaps this is the reason why the EU concerns itself with labour market issues.

⁶ The the growing common interests could be contributing to a common sense of belonging among the peoples of Europe: if the findings of Eurobarometer surveys over time can be taken as an indication, then they show a slowly growing common sense of belonging/Europeanness. See Michael Bruter, *Citizens of Europe?: The Emergence of a Mass European Identity* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Chapter 4 and concluding chapter.

highest salience to any national public, offer themselves as ready and clear examples of the EU expanding its remit into non-mandated, sensitive areas as a response to environmental challenges and as way of gaining citizen support.

Social policy has experienced its own evolution within the EU, and Pochet loosely identifies five different attempts or approaches to develop the social dimension of economic integration. The first came in the early 1960s and was limited to the free movement of workers, whereas the second, in the 1970's he exemplifies with the words of the Treaty of Rome: "to promote working conditions and an improved standard of living for workers, so as to make possible their harmonisation while the improvement is being maintained." The neo-liberal turn of the late 1970s brought about a "pause in social regulation at the European level and a process of deregulation at national level." Fourth, the late 1980's and early 1990s saw a strategy of "minimum norms below which one should not descend in a period of triumphant neo-liberalism and globalisation." The most recent attempt to define the European social dimension is identified as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) after an employment title was included in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997⁷ along with the Social Charter, which notes social policy as "a matter of *common* interest".⁸ Though this is a very broad outline of the way social policy has evolved at the European level, it does indicate a predisposition towards employment and economic objectives, which Hantrais affirms: from a treaty perspective, "any harmonisation of social policies between members states could be justified only insofar

⁷ See Philippe Pochet, "The Open Method Of Co-ordination and the Construction of Social Europe. A Historical Perspective," in *The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action: the European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies*, ed. Jonathan Zeitlin and Philippe Pochet (Brussels; New York: P.I.E. -Peter Lang), 39-41.

⁸ European Commission. "Employment and Social Policy" under "Summaries of EU Legislation," http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/index_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010); emphasis added.

as it was likely to support and strengthen economic policies,”⁹ reaching the conclusion in her analysis of the different areas of social policy development at the EU level that “European social policy was designed primarily for EU workers employed in the regular or formal economy.”¹⁰

More specifically, what the above means is that development in this field has been largely slow and intermittent, with a political output which has retained its early focus of facilitating the labour market.¹¹ Nevertheless, the most recent form of governance,¹² the Open Method of Coordination, may be seen to have given the field of European social policy added momentum, offering the EU and the Member States a decentralised approach to coordinate their social policy areas on an ongoing basis, thereby extending beyond the confines of treaty prescriptions;¹³ the Commission’s 2001 White Paper on governance did, after all, argue that “the OMC *added value* at EU level when little scope

⁹ Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 238 & 240.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 247; See also Kleinman, *A European Welfare State?*, 221.

¹¹ See also Kleinman, *A European Welfare State?* 109; and European Commission, “Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009” under “Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection and Social Inclusion,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/joint_reports_en.htm#2009, p. 11, (accessed on February 23, 2010).

¹² Zeitlin and Pochet suggest at least two critical claims for the OMC’s potential as a new mode of governance: that “it addresses common European concerns while respecting national diversity...” and that it promotes “experimental learning and deliberative problem-solving” (Zeitlin and Pochet, *The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action*, 448). Compare also Sbragia and Stolfi where they term the OMC a policy-making mode (Alberta Sbragia and Francesco Stolfi, “Key Policies” in *The European Union: How does it work?*, ed. Elizabeth Bomberg, John Peterson, and Alexander Stubb, (Oxford University Press, 2008), 122. Zeitlin refers to the OMC as a “broadly applicable new governance instrument.” Jonathon Zeitlin, *A Decade of Innovation in EU Governance*, 3. A different way of looking at this is by applying David Easton’s logic: if the OMC results in the allocation of values for a society, then it could be a form of governance; see Chapter 2 of present work for further details and also Hantrais, who sees it similarly (Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 19-20). The European Commission itself identifies OMC as “an instrument” of the Lisbon strategy (European Commission, “The Process: the Open Method of Coordination” under “Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection and Social Inclusion/Process,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010).

¹³ See Zeitlin, *A Decade of Innovation in EU Governance*; and Zeitlin and Pochet, *The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action*; See also Tobias Vahlpahl, *Europäische Sozialpolitik: Institutionalisierung, Leitideen und Organisationsprinzipien* (Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 2007), 159-67; and European Commission High Level Group. *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment*, by Wim Kok and others. (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004), 35-6.

existed for legislative solutions.”¹⁴ Obviously, though the OMC may seem as an intergovernmental and loose means of looking after the preferences of each state, the counter-argument can be made that EU integration is nonetheless deepening, even if parts of the *Vergemeinschaftung* (collectivisation, community-making) are of a decentralised nature: as a form of Europeanisation,¹⁵ Vahlpahl points out, policy *coordination* represents a minimal strategy (*Minimalstrategie*), that leaves nation-state sovereignty virtually intact. Vahlpahl also rightly points out that “the Open Method of Coordination should also be understood in connection with the realisation of the subsidiarity principle ... allowing for the greatest possible autonomy of the Member States.”¹⁶ Marlier *et al* confirm the latter part of this view: “To take account of the diversity of national social protection systems, the Lisbon European Council, when introducing social policy as a distinct focus of attention for EU cooperation, agreed that the process should be advanced through an *Open Method of Coordination*.”¹⁷ Ferrera, on the other hand, identifies subsidiarity in the OMC but without explicit reference to the term: he sees it rather as “subnational empowerment” and views the Luxembourg Process, which eventually became the OMC, as “the right institutional opportunity for casting the issue of subnational social policy activism into a larger and more legitimate [and ultimately common] framework.”¹⁸ Zeitlin and Pochet, in evaluating the two areas in which the OMC has been applied for some time, i.e., employment and social inclusion, also find that a “growing mobilization of subnational and non-state actors is clearly visible around

¹⁴ Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 20; emphasis added.

¹⁵ In descending order of centralisation, Vahlpahl lists harmonisation, convergence and coordination.

¹⁶ Vahlpahl, *Europäische Sozialpolitik*, 88. The subsidiarity principle intention is “that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen.” European Commission, “Glossary,” http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010).

¹⁷ Eric Marlier, A.B. Atkinson, Bea Cantillon and Brian Nolan, *The EU and Social Inclusion: Facing the challenges* (Policy Press, 2007), 22.

¹⁸ Maurizio Ferrera, *The Boundaries of Welfare: European Integration and the New Spatial politics of Social Protection* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 189 and 208.

both.”¹⁹ Strikingly, then, one of the things the OMC seems to be doing is to promote multi-level involvement in pursuit of common, EU-level goals. This is in stark contrast to the heretofore ideas of convergence and harmonisation of policy, which compromise and subsume sovereignty, respectively.²⁰ Ultimately, however, what is of immediate relevance is the initiative, and perhaps even necessity, felt by the Member States to cooperate in non-mandated areas such as social policy, providing evidence to the earlier claim that the EU pursues various forms of political structuring.

Turning our attention to examining the political output of this cooperation and what it may mean for the EU, we remind ourselves that the intergovernmentalist argument does not see a necessity for the development of further support for the EU within the Member States given its limited mandate, whereas a supranationalist view sees it as something already lacking, given the EU’s expansion of remit. The former is right in the sense that all areas affected can be related back to the Single Market with relative ease, whereas the latter is right in the sense that some of these areas affected are politically salient. To claim, however, that no support is needed, or that there is not enough of it to maintain integration, not only sidelines the relevance, complexity and possible contribution of Member State coordination in social policy; it also does not give due attention to the fact that the EU has made the pursuit of public *involvement* and *support* in social policy coordination part of its OMC strategy, suggesting that the principle of subsidiarity is taken one step further.

¹⁹ In Ferrera, *The Boundaries of Welfare*, 246; for a detailed account see Zeitlin and Pochet, *The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action*, 460-70.

²⁰ Vahlpahl, *Europäische Sozialpolitik*, 6; the three forms of Europeanisation (harmonisation, convergence, coordination) require a variably structured legislative activity at the European level.

Specifically, this pursuit was initiated four years after the launch of the Lisbon process and OMC social policy²¹, that is, in 2004, when the European Council held in Brussels in March of that year requested of the Commission to form a High Level Group which was to carry out an independent assessment of the Lisbon strategy as a mid-term review of its progress. The aim was to “identify measures which together form[ed] a *consistent strategy* for the European economies to achieve the Lisbon objectives and targets.”²² In its final report, the High Level Group, chaired by Wim Kok, former prime minister of the Netherlands, added the element of public support to this strategy: noting that the absence of citizen involvement in social policy coordination ultimately robbed the OMC of momentum, it admonished that

to preserve and improve our social model we have to *adapt*: it is not too late to change. In any event the status quo is not an option. Engaging and involving citizens in the process has two mutually reinforcing attractions: it in effect seeks public support by giving people elements for debate and it leverages that support to put pressure on governments to pursue these goals.²³

As a result, the Commission used the Wim Kok Report to underpin its proposal in February 2005 to “refocus the Lisbon Agenda”.²⁴ In late 2005 it issued the communication “Working together, working better: A new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the European Union”, which the European Council adopted in March 2006 as a new framework for social protection

²¹ The Lisbon process was set up at the Lisbon European Council of March 2000, aiming to make the EU area into “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion...” The OMC is an integral component of this process. European Commission, “The Process: the Open Method of Coordination” under “Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection and Social Inclusion/Process,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010).

²² European Commission High Level Group. *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment*, 5; emphasis added.

²³ *Ibid.*, 44; emphasis added.

²⁴ Commission of the European Communities. *Communication to the Spring European Council. Working Together for Growth and Jobs: A New Start for the Lisbon Strategy*, (Brussels: 2/2/2005), 12.

and social inclusion. The new framework offered revamped objectives which include “transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy,”²⁵ thereby incorporating into its OMC strategy the need to raise citizen involvement as a means of raising support for the process and thus increasing the pace of reforms in the Member States.

This critical step of actively pursuing involvement and support in this area, then, brings us back to our original deliberations and shows that the EU has provided a combined response to the viewpoints and critiques of both intergovernmentalists and neo-functionalists: the interconnectedness of mandated and non-mandated policy areas not only requires collective action (of various permutations) in all; since the more salient areas have to be increasingly brought into the picture, the opportunity offers itself to take advantage of the inherent public interest in these areas to raise visibility and support for the process and thereby for the EU. As a consequence, my thesis is that the EU’s activity in the non-mandated area of social policy – which is of more interest to the public than those under the Community Method – has not only increased, but it also has developed its strategy to involve the citizens in the process with the aim of giving it momentum and gaining their support. This not only provides a solution to pressures caused in the social policy area by other policy spheres, like that of the Single Market. It does so by engaging those whose support is needed in order to do so.

The OMC process, then, may be summarised as follows: The authorities of the EU political system (Commission, Council and national governments) agree on objectives for the Member States to pursue in their own ways as responses to internal and

²⁵ Commission of the European Communities. *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Working Together, Working Better: A New Framework for the Open Coordination of Social Protection and Inclusion Policies in the European Union*, (Brussels: 22/12/2005), 5

external environmental changes, indicating that the Member States are involved in this process as much as the EU is in determining EU-level social policy. This denotes, in turn, that in pursuing OMC objectives, both levels stand to benefit from the potential support national implementation of the objectives may bring about. Adding what is seen as needed momentum to the process, since it provokes national governments to act, comes in the form of new objectives in the strategy which intends to “[involve] ... stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy” and this answers the need for citizen support for the Process. As a matter of course, the foregoing leads us to the logic that the more the EU tries to involve the citizens in its efforts in policy areas close to their hearts, the more it may be seen to be striving for their support. In turn, this promotes a common sentiment among Europeans of having something shared, which is in addition to the common political outputs that add to the ‘we’ feeling, and, thus, to solidarity (whose originator, or anchor, is the EU centre), making the device of support all the more material. Consequently, in order to better understand the process of the system’s attempt to generate support, the rest of this work will concentrate on the following question: Given that social policy is an area that is traditionally in the realm of responsibility of the Member States and that this area is of great interest to their citizens, how is the new strategy of the EU to raise support by involving these same citizens working out?

The Theoretical Framework

The relationship between the Member States and the EU with respect to OMC social policy can be expressed as follows: the two political bodies agree on overarching objectives that are accompanied by specific indicators to be achieved. The Member States

are subsequently meant to translate these into national initiatives for the benefit of the citizens, each state and the EU in general, resulting, ideally, in the involvement of the citizens and their support for the OMC, the Member State governments and EU integration. In general, this points at the EU as an adaptive system whose component parts change in order to survive; more specifically, efforts to coordinate social policy via the OMC could be seen as a calculated adaptation to respond to particular environmental demands, and since social policy is a most salient policy area, these could represent a potentially powerful influence on citizens' feelings of loyalty, particularly with respect to the EU.²⁶

Consequently, the purposeful attempt to exploit the sensitive connection between the area of social policy and citizen support at the EU level will be analyzed here on the basis of a systems theoretical perspective grounded on the concepts developed by David Easton. Ultimately, the idea is to explore the theoretical model, an abstract and behavioural approach to politics, which attempts to explain *system change* and *system persistence*. This model can be viewed as a conceptual framework that sees political systems as input-process-output models needing to fulfil certain functions and having the possibility to create loyalty (and a sense of community) in order to survive the stresses of their environment and, ultimately, continue to evolve. In essence, this model provides conceptual tools for the present analysis, which seeks to understand the OMC not only in narrow policy terms, but more generally as a potential contribution to a strategy of garnering citizen support for European integration.

²⁶ If that is indeed the case, then an influence on solidarity among Europeans can also be seen as possible.

Methodology

Though it was the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) that gave EU social policy an important impetus by having an employment title included in its body, the OMC got its own via the introduction of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 and its re-launch in 2006. The translation of OMC objectives and indicators into national initiatives and the interpretation of the levels of support for the EU in these time periods will thus provide the temporal scope of my empirical research. Defining the field of research even further, the focus will be on the OMC activities relating to social protection and social inclusion, since these two are the two policy areas that receive most OMC attention.²⁷

Pursuing the above question for all 27 Member States would go beyond the scope of this work. Instead, we will examine two countries, Germany and the United Kingdom, the former a Euroenthusiast and the latter a Eurosceptic, to see what effect OMC may be having on each and so get an idea of the OMC's potential in getting citizen support. Subsequently, the model developed could be applied to all Member States since it would provide a point of departure and framework for such research.

Structure of the Work

Chapter 2 contains the initial research method of my thesis, which is an analysis of texts by Easton on the chosen theoretical framework, i.e., political systems theory, and how it relates to the EU, paying particular attention to the concept of support (loyalty), as it is integral to this work. While we are making the connection between general political systems theory and the EU and its processes, we also examine how the above theories accommodate the EU's OMC activities in the social policy field. Chapter 3,

²⁷ The other two areas under OMC social policy are pensions, and health and long term care, which are more recent.

consequently, examines the OMC as output of the EU political system, and attempts to gauge the level of participation that its re-launch has brought about. Chapter 4 considers the OMC and the Member States in question, i.e., Germany and the United Kingdom, analysing the impact OMC has had on the social policies of the two, noting that support as a 'mediated' rather than as a direct product could also be having an influence on the levels of support for the EU. Next, Chapter 5, looks at the relationship between the OMC and citizen perception of the EU's involvement in social policy as well as the support levels for the EU in Germany and the UK, and ultimately draws a connection to the Eurofriendly and Euroskeptical attitudes of the two and their social models. Lastly, Chapter 6 draws together the conclusions.

Relevance

This thesis will be an exploratory study using the lens of the systems theory framework to examine the potential influences of OMC social policy on the loyalty of EU citizens. These three subjects are hot topics in the EU, and their treatment via the proposed theoretical framework is unique. While the aim is indeed to gauge the support the EU may derive from its activities via the Open Method of Coordination in the sensitive field of social policy in two Member States, it is easily conceivable to use the findings in this area as beacons for what might be happening in other Member States and non-mandated policy areas due to OMC, and which may be abstracted to reason that something greater is occurring within the EU as a political unit, which may be the evolution beyond what has been current in the nation-state and IR in the last 300 years.

CHAPTER 2: The EU as a Political System

This chapter deals with the chosen theoretical framework, i.e., the open political systems theory and more specifically *systems persistence* through adaptation, where we will consider how it could accommodate social policy and the OMC, and thus what the latter two may mean, or may be coming to mean, for the loyalty of Member State nationals towards the EU. The reason for opting for David Easton's political system model is two-fold: On the one hand, it provides an abstract and universal framework, which, thereby, can be applied to any political system. On the other hand, the concept of support (loyalty – ultimately, legitimacy) is integral to this framework, as it could be, ultimately, to the subjects at hand, that is, to social policy and the OMC.²⁸ Consequently, we will analyse the EU and the OMC from this broader theoretical perspective as provided by the model and consider the tools for analysis it offers in understanding the concept of support. This will lead us to Chapter 3, where we will consider the OMC as output of the EU system and its effect on participation, and where we will discuss EU objectives in light of the new strategy to increase citizen involvement and support as initiated by the Wim Kok Report.

David Easton: The Open Political System

In examining political systems, Easton tries to get away from the restrictive nature of normative theory, which he sees as confining the focus to particular classes of a phenomenon and seeks a broad, i.e., inclusive, manner of asking a theoretical question relevant to all political systems. In other words, he seeks a general theory that abstracts the “vital processes” in politics. In this manner he provides a shift of focus from specific

²⁸ See, for example, David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (University of Chicago, 1965), 21 and 24. Another reason is that it might help in understanding why the EU continues to exist and thrive.

values to more general matters common to all systems, which ultimately leads him to question how any political system can persist, a question which is relevant to our analysis, given that OMC efforts may be seen as adaptive measures for the purpose of EU system persistence.²⁹ In addition, the author views a system as a flexible conceptualisation, i.e., as “a device to help us to understand a defined and re-definable area of human behaviour,”³⁰ not as a “preconceived model” that is rigid and exclusionary. This not only exemplifies that Easton’s is indeed a general theory; it also calls to the fore two immediate questions: How are we to understand an open political system more concretely, and why does the European Union qualify as one?

Easton offers various related descriptions for an open political system, noting that definition is determined by the kind of emphasis sought, and he provides several that keep with the general nature of his theoretical framework. He views a political system as a “set of interactions through which valued things are authoritatively allocated for a society.” This description is the most central one to his theory and also to the present analysis since we may consider the outputs of OMC as ‘valued things’ which are ‘authoritatively allocated’ for the society of the European Union, even if, primarily, in a ‘roundabout’ way, given that it is ultimately the Member States that do the allocation to meet centrally set objectives. In addition, the other perspectives he mentions keep with the generalist, persistence-through-adaptation theme: he sees a political system as a “means for resolving differences”, as a “set of interactions though which demands are

²⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

³⁰ David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), 67.

processed into outputs” or the way the general resources of a society are “mobilized and oriented to the pursuit of goals”.³¹

Staying with the general description, Easton expounds that political life as a system is a *system of behaviour* within an environment which affects the system and to which political life reacts. This brings him to the following four considerations:

1. Political interactions in a society constitute a system of behaviour;
2. Political life as a system is surrounded by physical, biological, social and psychological environments;
3. Political life is an open system (i.e., interacts with other systems);
4. Systems have the capacity to respond to environmental disturbances and adapt.

The author terms the last point a “critical property”, indicating that political systems have accumulated large repertoires of mechanisms to cope with environmental demands and stresses. This property, common to all social systems, allows them to regulate their own behaviour, change their internal structure or even change their fundamental goals in order to persist.³²

What is it about the political system, however, that distinguishes it from all other social systems? In simple terms, all social systems have their own behaviours which are characteristic to them, and in a structurally differentiated society we are expected to take on the behaviour of each system we step into: familial, religious, etc.³³ In the political system, therefore, we include those behaviours that can be considered political (i.e., contributing to the authoritative allocation of values), noting that its elements may be

³¹ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 153.

³² Ibid., 19.

³³ Easton, “A Framework for Political Analysis,” 68.

redefined as necessary even during the analytic process in order to meet our needs.³⁴

Given this delineation, one can easily imagine that a political system exists alongside other social systems in its environment such as those of culture, social structure, economy, demography and others.³⁵

Easton's theory is further exemplified by the interactions/transactions between this multitude of systems and subsystems that lead to interactions between the variables within a system (primarily demands, support and decisions), which in turn cause it to react, adapt and persist. The reactions of a system to the influences of its environment are, consequently, attempts to reduce stress in order to persist, and in more concrete terms, this occurs via the process of allocating values that flow back into the environment and into the system itself, influencing both, thus showing interaction and a circular relationship.

The set of political interactions in Easton's model can be seen to have one primary goal: to produce values that are allocated for a society and to induce most members of that society to accept these as binding, making the production of values and their acceptance, i.e., primarily legislation (outputs) and legitimacy (support) thereof, two essential variables of political life.³⁶ At its simplest, then, the model of system analysis envisions an open political system with inputs in the form of demands (and support), processes that serve and regulate the volume and content of demands, and outputs in the form of binding decisions whose outcomes feed back into the system as positive or negative support. (See Diagram 2.1) The above generalisations of a political system are not only significant because they help us to "understand one aspect of human

³⁴ Ibid., 67.

³⁵ Easton, "A Systems Analysis of Political Life," 23.

³⁶ Ibid., 21, 24.

behaviour;³⁷ more importantly for our present purposes, they point at an affirmative response to the question of whether the EU is a political system, given that the EU does indeed fit into the model of having demands and support as input, processes to deal with them, and outputs that are binding to all Member States (as political subsystems of the EU), even if the policy areas are circumscribed by treaty.

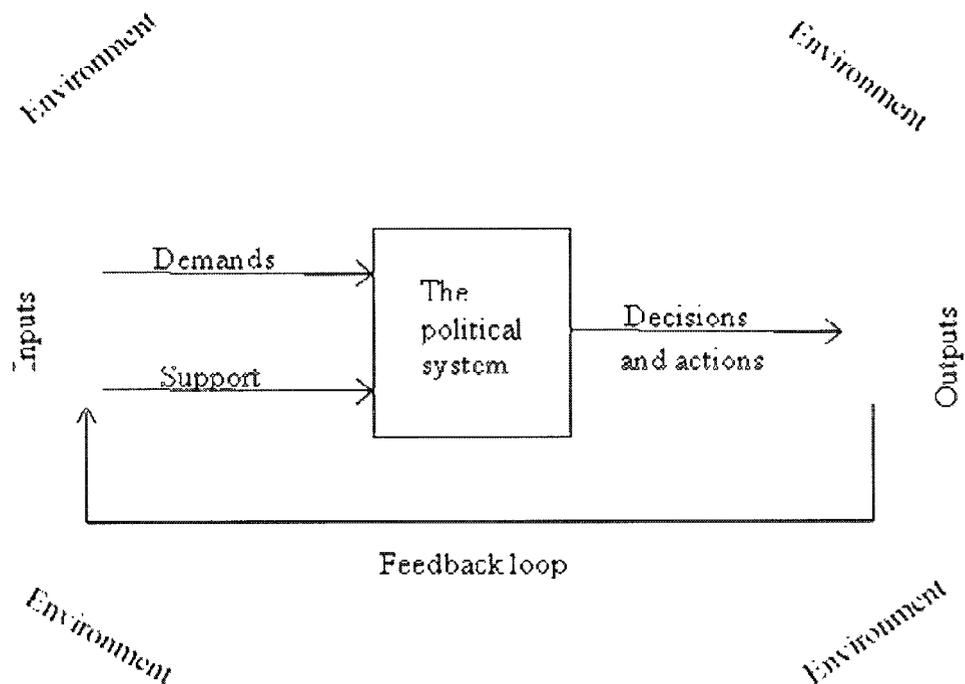


Diagram 2.1 A simplified model of a political system

Source: David Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life”, pg. 32

Variables to be Examined: Demands, Support and Decisions

Demands Having defined Easton’s political system and the EU’s qualification as one, the next step of our analysis requires that we define and identify meaningful variables that are applicable to it in order to pursue our central question. Useful for our present purpose is an additional view of any system, i.e., that of it as a “set of variables

³⁷ Ibid., 22.

regardless of the degree of interrelationship among them.”³⁸ Easton identifies three primary variables: demands, support and decisions, where demands, i.e., inputs into the system, take perhaps the central role since without them the system would cease to exist.³⁹ These are primarily, but not solely, produced by the political community and they are responses to changes in the political system’s environment, i.e., to surrounding systems, though they can also be produced within the system without crossing the political system boundary, making them the “starting point of the political process” and pointing out that it is these that link the political system to the other systems of its environment, a quality that makes a political system an open one.⁴⁰

What is interesting and unusual about the EU as an open political system is that a vast number of the demands (inputs) it deals with are generated by the elites of the system – many of whom are Member State actors –, rather than the general members of the political community, much more so than in the case of unitary or federal states. (This in itself implies that the each Member State’s political community either places its support behind the elite members of this system – see concept of ‘trusted leaders’ in Chapter 5 – or that they acquiesce, leaving the political object in question, in this case the EU, to survive). With reference to the policy-generating OMC subsystem in particular, we see that what can be termed as input is generated by and large by that component of the system called the authorities as a reaction to its environment, that is, a way to deal with systemic stress. Following the generalising inclination of Easton, these reactions are to the changes in the environment, i.e., outputs by other systems/subsystems. Applied to

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ At a simple level, we can easily speculate that in the case of the EU/EC, it arose as a political system as a result of a set of political demands that was created by elites for the purposes of promoting peace and prosperity.

⁴⁰ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 48-54.

the EU, we may describe these environmental changes and the reactions they cause as Marlier *et al* do, i.e., they see changes in the economic domain (system) of the Single Market, which itself can be viewed as a subsystem of a larger, world economic system, as having inevitable consequences for the social domain, which in turn must react.⁴¹ The application can be even more specific: The EU, true to its nature if we follow Moravcsik, acts as the expert centre to which the Member States have outsourced policy areas for specialist treatment. Even from this perspective, Easton would still see the EU as any other governing body, that is, as trying to relieve present discontents and anticipate future ones through its outputs – as these reflect the changes in the environment.⁴² In addition, Moravcsik's point that the policy areas that require specialist, centralised treatment are complicated and are dealt with at the EU-level provides a ready explanation for the fact that most demands are generated by the authorities themselves.

At this point the central question of the effects of OMC activities on citizen support can be seen to be gaining in significance, while the deliberations above provide an answer to a related question of why EU elites delve into the very national social policy area. Recalling Marlier *et al*, the authors see changes in the economic domain (system) as having inevitable consequences for the social domain in the Single Market, which, viewed somewhat differently, sees the elites as simply dealing with 'spill-over' from economic activities in the social field. Given, however, that social policy is a very sensitive area, the choice for OMC seems to be pragmatic as it allows the EU to get

⁴¹ Eric Marlier, A.B. Atkinson, Bea Cantillon and Brian Nolan, *The EU and Social Inclusion: Facing the challenges* (Policy Press, 2007), 17-21; see also Stephan Leibfried "Social Policy." In *Policy-Making in the European Union*. Edited by Helen Wallace, William Wallace, Mark A. Pollack. (Oxford University Press: 2005), 243-78. Fittingly, the European Commission sees the Lisbon strategy as "a response to globalisation". European Commission, "Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs," http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/objectives/index_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010).

⁴² Easton, "A Systems Analysis of Political Life," pp. 384-5.

involved in this realm while leaving the ultimate decisions to the Member States.

Accordingly, this realisation makes our central question even more perplexing.

Support For any political system to survive, a minimal amount of support is necessary. Support, then, is the next major input, and its effects, in theory, are much more visible and salient than those of demands. Easton makes a distinction primarily between two types of support, specific and diffuse, where the former can best be characterised as a *quid pro quo* relationship, where members of the political system at large feel that there is a connection between their wants or demands and the outputs of the activities of the authorities, whether the demands/wants are direct or indirect.⁴³ Specific support, consequently, is support that relates only to those in charge of processing inputs into outputs, that is to say, the authorities of a system.⁴⁴ On the other hand, diffuse support is more durable yet less perceptible: It is the “reservoir of favourable attitudes or good will that helps members [of a system] to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effect of which they see as a damaging to their wants.” It draws on deep-rooted political sentiments and is thus not easily exhausted by dissatisfaction with the outputs of the political system.⁴⁵

Support must, of course, be directed at a particular relevant unit and Easton names three of these, which make up the three major components of the political system: the authorities, the regime and the political community (these are explained in detail in a subsequent section of the present chapter). The generation of support is, of course, a way of reducing systems stress, and it is here that the concept of legitimacy becomes palpable in open political system theory in that it is seen as the “single most effective device for

⁴³ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 268.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 274.

regulating the flow of diffuse support in favour both of the authorities and of the regime.” This “most stable support” derives from “the conviction on the part of the member that it is right and proper for him to accept and obey the authorities and to abide by the requirements of the regime.”⁴⁶ Support, then, becomes the “major summary variable linking a system to its environment.”

At this point, we can relate the variable of support to the EU and OMC from two directions: the first relates to specific support, that is, positive or negative support towards the EU authorities as a result of their outputs. Does the EU’s OMC in social policy, then, generate specific support for it? Even though the OMC processes set common goals for the Member States, the point is that it allows them to pursue these, voluntarily and in their own way for their political communities. This would lead us to assume that the Member States also become the recipients of any corresponding specific support. In order to visualise the relationship between the EU, the Member States and their citizens with respect to OMC, then, what we could attempt is a way to illustrate the process of OMC value allocation and the corresponding flow of (positive or negative) support that takes place between the three variables. Diagram 2.2 provides an image of the, ultimately, two-level interaction with respect to OMC.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 278.

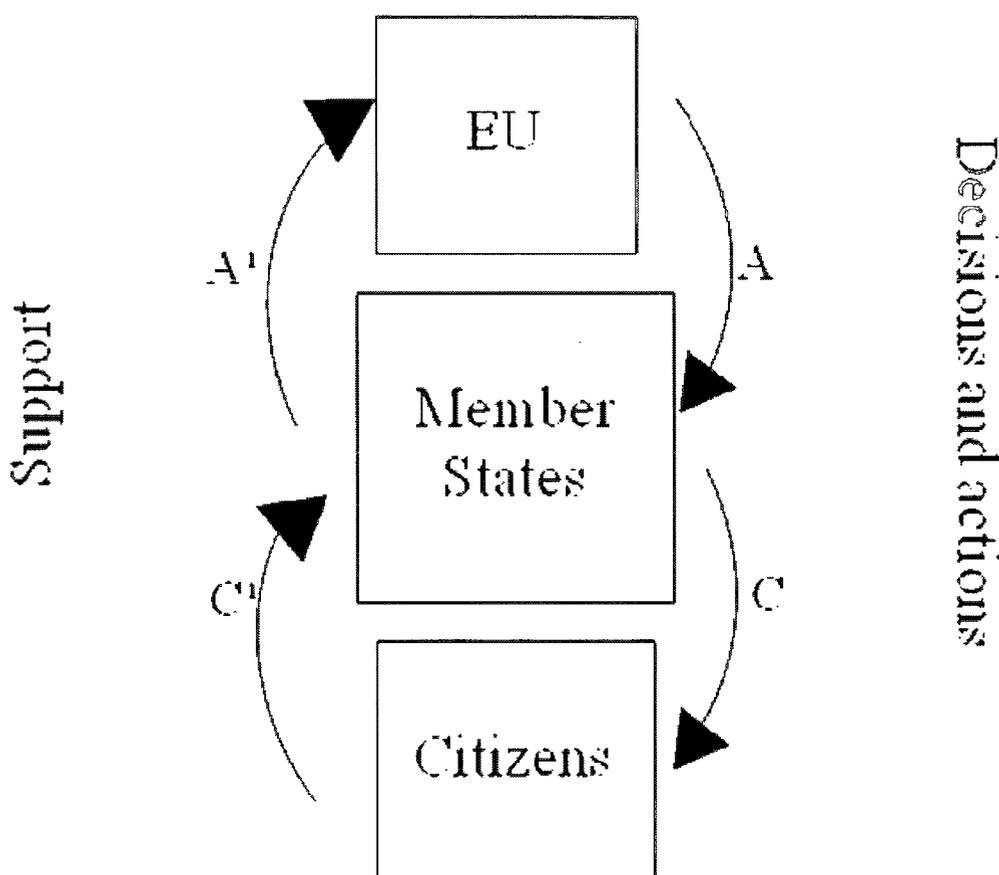


Diagram 2.2 The OMC two-level interaction

Arrow A represents the EU-level OMC decisions and actions (generalised objectives with corresponding indicators) which the Member States have agreed to pursue collectively,⁴⁷ whereas arrow A¹ indicates the support that flows from the Member State governments to the EU for giving them the green light to pursue initiatives to fight systemic stress under the OMC that might otherwise not have been possible without coordination. Arrow C, on the other hand, indicates the decisions (values) that the Member State governments allocate to their citizens because of OMC social policy, with arrow C¹ representing the analogous level of specific support flowing towards the Member State governments from their citizens for these efforts. From the above we see

⁴⁷ We recall that these objectives have been negotiated and set at the EU level by the Member States themselves, giving them perhaps a freer hand in pursuing an agenda at home that would otherwise not have been possible.

that the EU does not directly produce/allocate any values with respect to OMC for its citizens, which would indicate that no specific support ought to be flowing towards the EU from them. This would naturally lead us to assume that there is no possibility that the EU can gain any specific support because of OMC,⁴⁸ however, Easton expands his theory with respect to value allocation and specific support to include such a prospect.

Though the translation of OMC guidelines into national laws and initiatives are obviously value allocation at the national level, it can be argued that, to an extent, it is also value allocation at the EU level for the following reasons: Although formal outputs, i.e., values, must be binding decisions and actions, according to Easton there is also such thing as *non-authoritative outputs*.⁴⁹ Therefore, though the binding decisions (authoritative outputs) brought about by the OMC are produced ultimately by the Member States, the fact that the common objectives are set at the EU level and that the repercussions of ‘naming, faming and shaming’ for (non-)compliance are at least organised by the same make these *non-authoritative outputs* into *associated statements* (or associated performances in the case of repercussions for other policy areas of OMC or otherwise), according to Easton. Consequently, one would expect to conclude at this point that at the EU level OMC social policy can only have non-authoritative, associated outputs with commensurate levels of (admittedly seemingly diminished) support as feedback.⁵⁰

Second, relating the variable of support to the EU and the OMC with respect to diffuse support, could in time this specific support above turn into diffuse support and

⁴⁸ This is precisely what the new Lisbon process strategy tried to change in the OMC – by initiating the idea of citizen involvement in the OMC process.

⁴⁹ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 352.

⁵⁰ Seen somewhat differently, EU social policy can only provide associated outputs for the system in its efforts to adapt because direct outputs would not be accepted by the Member State systems.

add to the pool of good will? Indeed, Easton does give credence to the idea that, in addition to socialised diffuse support,⁵¹ it is possible that (positive or negative) specific support can contribute to diffuse support towards a specific object (the authorities, the regime or the political community) over time: “we can expect that ... sentiments toward the various objects in the system will be affected favourably or adversely by outputs and experienced outcomes as their impact accumulates over time.”⁵² Therefore, specific support does not only function as a link between the political system and its environment through favourable or unfavourable outputs that affect other social systems, whether domestic or supranational; it also has the opportunity to contribute to the feelings of good will and trust, and thus to the legitimacy, of the generating system and its components. The significance here is that even though a low level of specific support may be generated for the EU by OMC efforts, this does have the opportunity to contribute to the level of diffuse support the EU enjoys over time. This approach may be subtle and gradual, but it can be argued to have the possibility to be effective. Moreover, the foregoing argumentation is not to say that diffuse support for the EU as generated by OMC social policy will be added to an empty container; on the contrary, considering that the amount of support, and so the commensurate level of legitimacy, for EU integration has remained fairly constant over time,⁵³ (see Chart 1) OMC social policy may be seen as a way to make a significant contribution to it, given the policy area’s salient nature.

⁵¹ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 280.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 400.

⁵³ European Commission. *Eurobarometer 71*. (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, September 2009), 91.

Q6a Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is...?

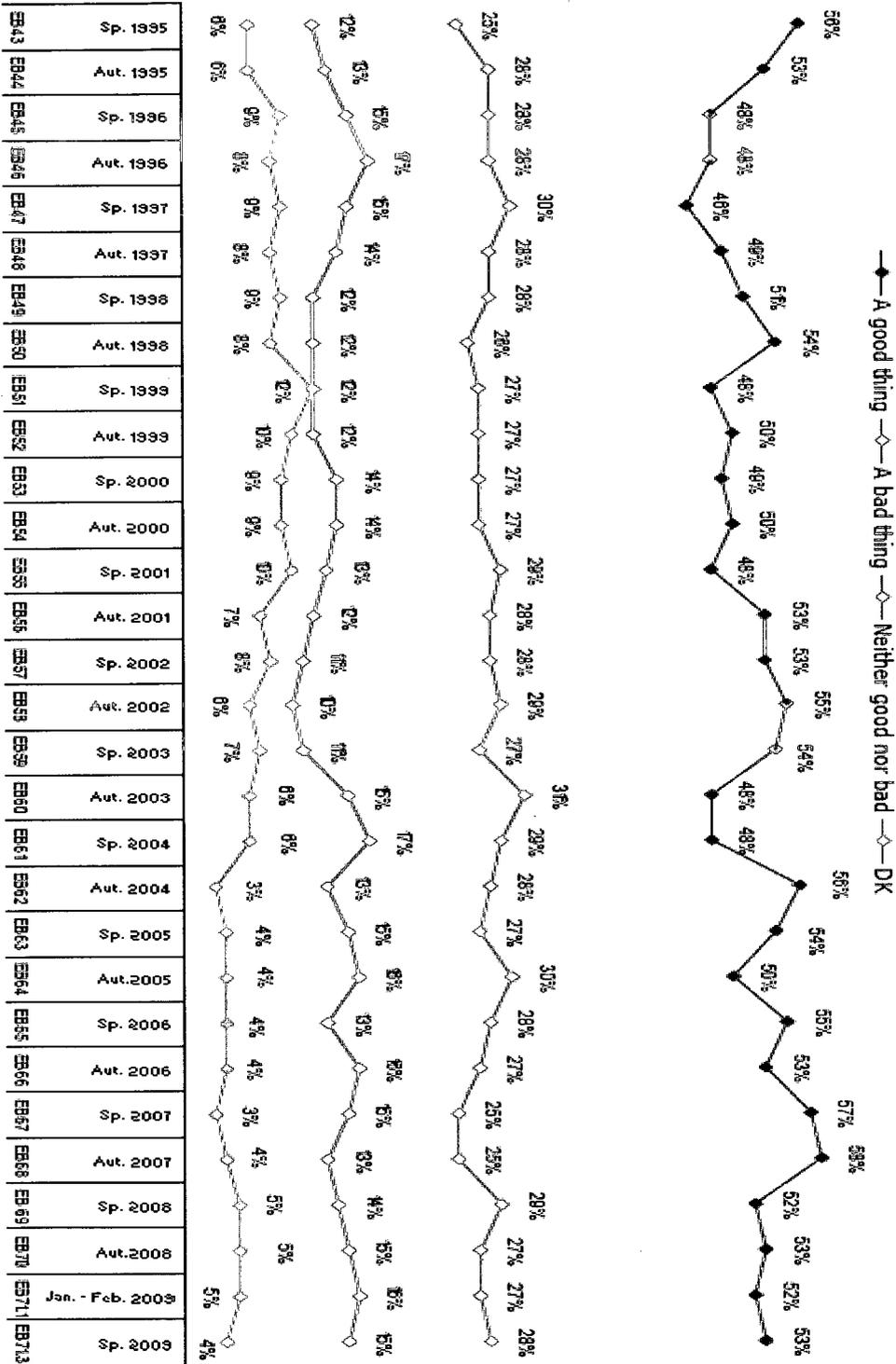


Chart 1 Support for membership in the EU

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 71*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, September 2009), 91.

The primary concern, nevertheless, making itself felt in the above discussion about support is that since the EU public might not be connecting to any appreciable

degree EU efforts with respect to social policy back to the EU, then the argument that OMC can increase citizen support and also interest in what is happening at the EU level loses its meaning. At the theoretical level, this line of argument may be seen as an oversimplification of specific support which checks the concept because of its possible subtlety in this case.⁵⁴ At the same time, it also curtails the concept of diffuse support by ignoring the potential of accumulated specific support over time. However, given the small level of support that the EU may be getting via its association with OMC, we are forced to take the more practical level into account: the lack of connection between the public's attention and the EU's efforts in social policy was initially simply negligible, and this fits well together with Wim Kok's admonition as cited in Chapter 1. Essentially, since the OMC at its initial stages did not enjoy any appreciable public attention, this deprived the process from the inherent corresponding impetus for national governments to act and the EU from any corresponding specific support. This led the Commission and the Council to act to include efforts to promote citizen involvement in the process, aiming, ultimately at gaining their support. And this leads us to our concern above and to our question of whether these efforts are working. If that is indeed the case, then they would be strengthening the weak element of support via association.

Outputs The third and last major variable is that of outputs, i.e., the authoritative values that an open political system is meant to generate and, as we have seen, whose consequences feed back into the system as specific support. Easton describes outputs as "transactions between a system and its environment" whereby the authorities in a system use them as a "mechanism through which [...to] reach out to cope with problems created

⁵⁴ The reference to "subtlety" here is based on the fact that it is the Member States that have the more 'obvious' role in setting social policy.

by external changes as they are reflected through changing demands and support”.⁵⁵ This view of outputs as ‘dynamic’ activities that show the system as goal-oriented and adaptive must be put into an OMC perspective, however. More specifically, how are these outputs, i.e., the coordination of national social policies, coping mechanisms for problems created by external changes, and how can we relate their re-entry into the EU political system as (positive or negative) support, given that the ultimate authoritative values are produced by the Member States?

For the present analysis, we see the EU is an open political system that allocates values for a society, even though this is only within limits. Two factors circumscribe this value production: a) the EU’s mandate is limited to matters which at their core deal directly with the Single Market, and b) the influence which the EU exerts on social policy is more of the regulatory, or ‘soft’, than the (re)distributive type. What this means is that social policy efforts via OMC in general are for areas with “little scope ... for [EU-level] solutions,”⁵⁶ which means in turn that OMC necessarily must involve the national and subnational⁵⁷ levels with the EU acting as a coordinator or facilitator. In this manner, the Member States’ political systems become instruments in the EU’s pursuit to deal with social policy challenges arising from the economic domain, providing outputs, that is, allocating values, that flow into neighbouring systems and produce positive or negative support. Producing positive support, that is to say, inducing “most members to accept these allocations as binding, at least some of the time”⁵⁸ is ultimately the vehicle to survival. The above, of course, only exemplifies Easton’s idea of social systems as open

⁵⁵ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 345-6.

⁵⁶ Hantrais, “Social Policy in the European Union,” 20.

⁵⁷ If only because federated Member States have their social policy areas split among the different levels of government.

⁵⁸ Easton., “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 24.

and interacting. More importantly, however, we discern that the EU takes (pro)active efforts to adapt and survive, or, put differently, react to environmental stress.

Components: Authorities, Regime, Political Community

Though the three primary variables of the open political system are demands, support and decisions, i.e., the allocation of common values, just as relevant are the three major components of the political system as proposed by Easton, that is, the authorities, the regime and the political community, since these are the components that receive the negative or positive support. In simple terms, the authorities are identified as “those who have [the] day-to-day responsibility for governing”⁵⁹ and are “recognised by most members of the system as having the responsibility for these matters”. In the case of the EU, we could speculate that these would be, primarily, the (supranational) Commission, the (intergovernmental) Council, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice. As the direct producers of outputs, the authorities are that component of the system which is the recipient of specific support.

The regime, on the other hand, is defined as the “rules and structures through the use of which demands are converted into outputs”,⁶⁰ or its “constitutional order”.⁶¹ Relating the regime to the allocation of values, we recall that for a system’s outputs to be accepted as binding, the members of the system would need to accept some basic rules, structures and procedures for the system to function. Consequently, given that the EU as a political system has managed to survive over the decades, we can assume that the constitutional order that it represents and its value allocations are largely accepted as

⁵⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 157.

⁶¹ Ibid., 190.

legitimate by the European political community, representing a level of existing diffuse support, or reservoir of good will, as discussed above, allowing for its persistence.

Lastly, it is the concept of the European political community, i.e. the European citizenry, and the cause and effect relationship with OMC outputs that is at the forefront of our analysis. As Easton's third component of the political system, the political community *per se* is the essential component around which the authorities and regime are centred and function. He defines it as "a group of members who are drawn together by the fact that they participate in a common structure and set of processes, however tight or loose the ties may be."⁶² It is readily obvious that the European Union political community is much looser than any of the national political communities, that is, it has less diffuse support than the latter, yet we realise that the former does represent a common political experience nonetheless. While we can assume that the EU authorities and regime benefit gradually from OMC outputs, what may be questioned is whether OMC outputs are affecting the EU political community, that is, whether OMC is contributing to the *sense of community* at the EU level, or, put differently, to the degree of cohesion among Europeans.

Seen from a somewhat different perspective, Easton's claim that "it is possible for a political structure to bind a group together before feelings of mutual identity have emerged",⁶³ whereby structural participation may increase solidarity under certain conditions, implies that the increased activity of the EU in the field of social policy may be taken as an attempt by the system to create a certain level or type of solidarity. It is the connection between solidarity as it binds a community together and its relationship in the form of support for the political centre that can be related to the stated goal of the

⁶² Ibid., 177.

⁶³ Easton, "A Framework for Political Analysis," 186.

Lisbon Process relevant here: the new governance instrument of OMC is to help bring about social cohesion, that is, solidarity, and, additionally, support, or loyalty, for the centre. The process of the creation of a European demos, though closely related to the question at hand, is one that requires the deliberations of *systems building* to be understood in depth and goes beyond our present undertaking. Nevertheless, considering that EU integration may be benefitting from OMC and if we accept Easton's hypothesis that a political structure can bind a group together before feelings of mutual identity have emerged, we can speculate that some type of a European demos may well be possible.

Summary

We can conclude from the above deliberations that the European Union exercises the critical property of an open political system and responds to environmental disturbances by adapting. Consequently, the OMC, as a means of response to Single Market challenges affecting the realm of social policy, can be seen as one such adaptation. It provides *common* objectives for the Member States to achieve, thus having the Member States allocate values for the political community by translating the given objectives into national initiatives. Though we assume that the significance of these values is likely limited for the EU's authorities and regime (and thus integration) in terms of support, Easton would claim that these can add to diffuse support over time. Significantly, we also witnessed that the EU took steps to correct a problem that was causing it to lose even this limited level of support: it revised its strategy to involve the EU citizens directly in the process, rather than leaving them largely unaware, thus aiming for their support for the OMC, which would translate into specific support for the EU by association.

From the foregoing argumentation we can sum up the issue as follows: the more Member States translate OMC objectives into national policies, the more support may flow towards the EU and EU integration, which can accumulate in its reservoir of diffuse support. The EU components primarily benefitting from this support can be seen to be its authorities and its regime, though similar consequences for the EU political community (i.e., an EU demos) are also conceivable. The OMC social policy, thus, as an output of the EU system has become the vehicle through which to raise support for the EU in general. The question that arises, therefore, is our central question, which resurfaces as follows: how has OMC, as an output of the EU system, evolved in its quest to become more participatory in order to resolve the problem of the need for support for the EU's efforts in social policy?

CHAPTER 3: The OMC as Output of the EU System: History and Systems Theoretical Consequences on Participation

In the previous chapter we saw the EU as an open political system adapting to environmental challenges including those that put pressure on the national social policies. The collective EU reaction with respect to social policy has been realised in the form of OMC social policy which may be described as an output produced by the EU system elites and which is typified by its non-binding, voluntary character. This account leads us to assume that the elements of public involvement in and support for this process did not initially feature as issues, though, according to Eastonian thought, even under the original, pre-reform circumstances, the OMC could have had some (limited) effect on public support for the EU, namely as a product by association. In trying to capitalise on this possibility, the process was reformed in 2006 in order to make it more participatory, which was hoped to lead to greater momentum for it. This reform does not only show a continuing adaptation of the EU political system with respect to the OMC output framework; it also leads us to the consideration that as outputs of the EU system, the OMC and its adaptations should adhere to the Eastonian conventions, including to those relating to support, in their intention to become the vehicle through which to raise support for the EU in general. As we will see, however, the OMC process may have a systemic anomaly that has remained with it even after it was re-launched and which may be thwarting the citizens' participation, thus possibly bereaving it of the possibility to develop further support. This will be shown by examining the development of the OMC and its re-launch as an output of the EU system and by considering research which claims that participation has not really materialised.

Accordingly, the OMC's beginnings can be traced back to the advent of the European Employment Strategy (EES), which was launched by the heads of state and government of the Member States at the Luxembourg Jobs Summit in November 1997 after the new title 'Employment'⁶⁴ was included in the Treaty of the EU. This particular launch was with "a view to *coordinating* national employment policies ... [aiming] to improve employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities at the level of the European labour market."⁶⁵ We can view this development as one of the links in the evolving chain of system outputs with respect to early EU social policy that was introduced in Chapter 1, and we can see it also as an output introduced from within the system itself, obviously by its elites, as an adaptation meant to allow the EU system to react and therefore persist.⁶⁶

There is, however, an additional perspective: the EES as output may be viewed as crucial in the sense that it established the way not simply for subsequent links in a chain, but for a framework in the form of a process which may be viewed not only as output but also as a sub-system of the EU (having its own inputs, processes and outputs). Specifically, the EES led the way to the Lisbon process, which was set up at the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 and aimed at making the EU area into "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable

⁶⁴ It should be noted that concerted efforts contributing to employment reach far into the past and remain the primary focus of EU social policy, as evidenced by the Lisbon strategy's primary aim.

⁶⁵ European Commission, "The Birth of the European Employment Strategy: the Luxembourg Process," under "Summaries of EU Legislation/Employment and Social Policy/Community Employment Policies," http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/community_employment_policies/c11318_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010); emphasis added.

⁶⁶ We note once more that the seed from which the Lisbon process and the OMC germinated was the focus on employment and employability.

economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion...”⁶⁷ The name ‘process’ is apt, since in open political systems theory a process internal to the system is required in order turn a demand into an output, though our focus is not specifically on the Lisbon process itself. We are concerned with the OMC, an integral component of Lisbon and established at this occasion: we can see this aspect as an output and consider it as a subsystem of the EU, since it has inputs in the form of demands (stemming from Member State and EU elites), a process to deal with them (via negotiation, sharing best practice) and outputs (in the form of objectives/indicators and Joint Reports meant for the Member States). Whether examined as an output or as a sub-system, however, either angle detects a trait which, according to Eastonian logic, would make OMC social policy peculiar: first, as an output, i.e., as an allocated value, we can recognise it as authoritative but as non-binding, or at least with significantly less binding clout than as a piece of legislation or as part of a treaty. Second, as a sub-system of the EU, it positions the Member States as the receivers of its (the EU’s) outputs, i.e., as the political community (see arrow A in Figure 1 in the previous chapter), rather than the EU citizens at large.⁶⁸ The obvious corresponding concerns here are that a) as a non-binding value, the Member States had (prior to the OMC re-launch) no incentive to collaborate reliably in the OMC process, and b) being allocated for the Member States, the OMC could only aim to gain their support, as illustrated by arrow A¹ in Figure 1, rather than the EU citizenry’s. At this point, we can sum up as follows: the original OMC, as an ongoing ‘peer review exercise’, was established as a non-binding relationship between the EU and the Member

⁶⁷ European Commission, “The Process: the Open Method of Coordination” under “Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection and Social Inclusion/Process,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010).

⁶⁸ These become the recipients of the Member States’ outputs in an additional sub-system.

State governments, without any mentionable inclusion of the citizens.⁶⁹ The systemic irregularity that we perceive, then, is the absence of citizen participation in the OMC process, which not only removed the incentive for the national governments to act with commitment, but also deprived the EU citizens, an actual political community, of a direct relationship with the EU with respect to an utterly most salient policy area.

To gauge the progress of the Lisbon process, the European Council held in Brussels in March 2004 requested of the Commission to form a High Level Group, which was to carry out an independent assessment of the Lisbon strategy as a mid-term review. The aim was to “identify measures which together form a consistent strategy for the European economies to achieve the Lisbon objectives and targets.”⁷⁰ This eventually culminated in the Wim Kok Report of November 2004, which declared that “progress ... ha[d] been inadequate, largely due to lack of commitment and political will” in the Lisbon process and asked that the “2005 Spring European Council should revitalise the Lisbon strategy”⁷¹ in order to close the perceived “implementation gap”.⁷² The Report also commented on the OMC. Noting that “the central elements of the Open Method of Coordination – peer pressure and benchmarking – are clear incentives for the Member States to deliver on their commitments by measuring and comparing their respective performance and facilitating exchange of best practice, it found that the OMC “[had]

⁶⁹ In the original stated objectives that the OMC was to achieve the set included several of these, only one of which made mention of citizens, though not as participants in the process, but rather as secondary targets of a generalised message: “To mobilise all relevant bodies... To promote dialogue and partnership between all relevant bodies, public and private, for example: ... by encouraging the social responsibility and active engagement of all citizens in the fight against social exclusion” (European Commission, *Objectives in the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion*, (Brussels: November 30, 2000), 5-6 (available under http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/approb_en.pdf).

⁷⁰ European Commission High Level Group. *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment*, 5.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷² Commission of the European Communities. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Working Together, Working Better: A New Framework for the Open Coordination of Social Protection and Inclusion Policies in the European Union, 3.

fallen far short of expectations”. As a consequence, the High Level Group proposed “a radical improvement of the process, making better use of the 14 indicators and then better communicating the results in order to ratchet up the political consequences of non-delivery.”⁷³

On the surface, we recognise an Estonian development and can view the EU as an open system learning from its mistakes and aiming to adapt its processes by considering additional outputs for the OMC framework in order to augment it. Looking more closely, however, we see a systemic attempt to bring new life to the process by attempting to involve the lacking element from the OMC equation, that is, the actual political community. Fittingly, it is here that we can establish the connection between the development of ‘better communication of the results’ of OMC, assumingly to the public, and our earlier argument that the OMC can be viewed as a realisation of the subsidiarity principle and thus make it more meaningful: If we are to take the principle at its word, i.e., “that decisions are [to be] taken as closely as possible to the citizen,”⁷⁴ then communicating to the citizens about the process would be an adaptive enhancement of it; more to the point, however, “engaging and involving the citizens in the process”, as the High Level Group ultimately suggested, would not only simply be the enhancement of the principle. It would also be a solution to the two concerns we stated earlier and which the Kok Report also sought to alleviate.⁷⁵

⁷³ European Commission. High Level Group. *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment*, 42-3; better communication of the results and the consequences of naming, fanning and shaming would, of course, also serve to publicise the EU’s efforts in social policy.

⁷⁴ European Commission, “Glossary,” http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm (accessed on February 23, 2010).

⁷⁵ European Commission. High Level Group. *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment*, 44.

Consequently, the Commission used the Wim Kok Report to underpin its proposal in February 2005 to “refocus the Lisbon Agenda”,⁷⁶ a proposal that was echoed by the European Parliament’s own resolution on the mid-term review,⁷⁷ continuing to place the emphasis on growth and employment.⁷⁸ In late 2005 the Commission issued the communication “Working together, working better: A new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the European Union”, which the European Council adopted in March 2006 as a new framework for *social protection and social inclusion*. The OMC as output and subsystem of the EU system, consequently, first became the EU’s entry vehicle into the social policy field, keeping a closed character by simply providing a non-participatory service to the Member States, and then adapted by attempting to take on a more involving trait, which was to help it achieve more support and more momentum.

The method today may be still defined as flexible and decentralized – where Member States identify and publicise best practice – a so-called ‘soft law’-method which involves

- Agreeing to common objectives which set out high-level, shared goals to underpin the entire process;
- Agreeing to a set of common indicators which show how progress towards these goals can be measured;
- Preparing national strategic reports [NSRs], in which Member States set out how they will plan policies over an agreed period to meet the common objectives;

⁷⁶ Commission of the European Communities. *Communication to the Spring European Council. Working Together for Growth and Jobs: A New Start for the Lisbon Strategy*, 12.

⁷⁷ European Parliament. *European Parliament Resolution on the mid-term Review of the Lisbon Strategy*, (2005).

⁷⁸ The Commission also took into account the replies by Member States and other actors to a questionnaire meant to evaluate the OMC in social policy. The Commission Staff Working Document which synthesised the replies portrays a less critical view. See Commission of the European Communities, *Evaluation of the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, (Brussels: 8.3.2006).

- Evaluating these strategies jointly with the European Commission and the Member States.⁷⁹

In terms more specific to our purposes, the consequence of the revision of the OMC social policy led the Commission to opt for four portfolios, one overarching and three ‘strand’ portfolios, specifically, social protection, pensions, and health and long-term care. Each of these four is supported by three sets of objectives (see Appendix B): the current overarching objectives, which provide the framework across the OMC as a whole, and three groups of objectives particular to each strand. These common objectives would lose their meaning, however, without a set of common indicators⁸⁰ “which are meant to allow Member States to compare best practices and to measure progress towards these common objectives,”⁸¹ though through Member State-specific policies.

Consequently, given the change in the OMC strategy to engage and involve the citizens in the process, the objectives now include one objective in the overarching and one under each set that relate to more engagement of and communication/transparency towards the public (though, as stated in Chapter 1, we will not be looking at the last two sets). Accordingly, objective C under the overarching objectives aims for “good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design,

⁷⁹ European Commission, *The Process: The Open Method of Coordination*, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm. As an ‘intergovernmental’ instrument, the dynamic role here is taken by the Council of Ministers and the Council of the European Union. The Commission has a monitoring role, however, the OMC “is sometimes seen as a way for the Commission to ‘put its foot in the door’ of a national policy area.” Eurofound, “Open Method of Coordination,” under “Areas of expertise/Industrial relations/European industrial relations dictionary/O,” <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/openmethodofcoordination.htm> (accessed on February 25, 2010)

⁸⁰ Split between EU-level and national indicators (as well as context information, i.e., situation-defining information such as GDP, various age indicators, etc.), national indicators allow for country-specific flexibility. A closer explanation of the indicators is available under Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG, *Portfolio of Overarching Indicators and Streamlined Social Inclusion, Pensions, and Health Portfolios*, (Brussels, 7.6.2006).

⁸¹ European Commission, “Common Indicators,” under “Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion/Process,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/common_indicators_en.htm (accessed on February 25, 2010).

implementation and monitoring of policy”, with objective F under the Social Protection and Social Inclusion strand being even more specific:

that social inclusion policies are well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty, that they are efficient and effective and mainstreamed into all relevant public policies, including economic, budgetary, education and training policies and structural fund (notably ESF) programmes⁸²

These two objectives illustrate clearly the Commission’s intended strategy to engage the European public as a means of momentum- and support-building for the OMC, which can be seen as going some way to correct the systemic irregularity of lack of public participation. Strangely, however, one cannot oversee the fact that these two objectives (much like their counterparts in the other two strands) do not have indicators attached to them, as OMC objectives generally do, and this means that there is no way of measuring their progress. As a result, we observe a reformed OMC that added objectives meant specifically to make the process more participatory, but without corresponding progress indicators which might have mitigated the still voluntary aspect of the OMC; they could have acted as additional incentive for the Member States to produce participation initiatives, which could have affected support for the EU and political action.

Admittedly, the evidence presented in the National Strategic Reports of Germany and the UK since 2006 seems to contradict the suggestive claim above. Germany’s more recent NSR (2008-2010) (See Appendix A) claims broad stakeholder participation in NSR preparation, stating clearly that such inclusion, which continues to expand, is nothing new:

⁸² European Commission. “Common Objectives,” under “European Commission/Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion/Process,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/objectives_en.pdf (accessed on February 26, 2010).

Since 2001, the Federal Government, *Länder* and local authorities as well as representatives of civil society through the “Permanent Advisory Committee for Social Integration” and scientific representatives have participated in the production of the National Action Plans.⁸³

The UK’s comparable initiatives in its own NSR, on the other hand, are more recent – coinciding with the re-launch of the Lisbon process – though just as inclusive:

To strengthen the NAP⁸⁴ process and form a stronger link between action at central government level and relevant actors across the UK the Government is working with a stakeholder group. Membership of the group consists of representatives from key government Departments the devolved administrations, local government, the voluntary and community sector and people experiencing poverty. Since 2006 the Group has worked together to bring forward a range of events and products to raise awareness of the NAP at grass roots level at the same time whilst feeding back key issues and concerns to Government Ministers and officials.⁸⁵

The two member states continue in their NSRs and provide evidence of initiatives to underpin their claims, available in Appendix A, which makes a listing of initiatives of the two States’ two most recent reports. If we were to take the foregoing evidence at face value, then, we could conclude that both Germany and the United Kingdom have been taking steps to increase citizen participation in the OMC process, with Germany showing more initiative, given its early attempts. This might function as evidence, in turn, that the anomaly of citizen non-participation mentioned earlier was being dealt with, though with the EU retaining an ‘associate’ role with commensurate, i.e., low levels, of support accruing. However, given the absence of indicators that would measure participation

⁸³ Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, (Berlin: 30 July 2008), 45; see also pg. 22.

⁸⁴ NAPs (Nation Action Plans) are the actual plans meant to promote social protection and social inclusion. They are eventually embedded into the National Strategic Reports of the OMC which are then submitted to the EU.

⁸⁵ United Kingdom, *National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, (London: 2008), 45; see also pg. 14.

progress, we have to seek other evidence as to whether the increase in initiatives has yielded concrete results, and this leads us to turn to available research by third parties.

Admittedly, literature on the topic seems to indicate that the impact on participation has been low at the general level of the EU. Jonathan Zeitlin consults a number of independent sources that have scrutinized the OMC after its reforms and finds that the

[National Reform Program] implementation process has continued to lack public visibility in most Member States, while involvement of non-state and subnational actors was often confined to formal consultation and/or information exercises, with limited opportunity to influence substantive policy direction or content. By all accounts, civil society actors, such as NGOs and voluntary associations, were much less involved in most Member States, often because of difficulties in obtaining access to consultation and co-ordination processes dominated by finance or economics ministries with whom they had little previous contact.⁸⁶

Pochet *et al* agree that “participation – another key aspect of the OMC – has generally been sidelined and had little influence,”⁸⁷ while Natali and de la Porte, in researching EES, with employment being the EU’s evident weapon to achieve social protection and social inclusion, arrive at the conclusion that the “social partners are engaged half-heartedly.”⁸⁸ Moreover, Kerber and Eckardt concur with the above: “in most OMCs the participation of social partners, local actors, civil society representatives, or even national parliaments is weak or non-existent, despite the efforts of the Commission to increase

⁸⁶ Jonathan Zeitlin, “The Open Method of Co-ordination and the Governance of the Lisbon Strategy,” *JCMS*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2008): 439-40.

⁸⁷ Pochet, Philippe, Jean-Yves Boulin and Christian Dufour. “Some Tentative Conclusions. In *transfer: European Review of Labour and Research (Lisbon: a failed Strategy or still relevant for the future?)*,” ed. Philippe Pochet, Jean-Yves Boulin and Cristian Dufour, vol. 15, no. 1 (2009): 144.

⁸⁸ Natali, David and Caroline de la Porte, “Participation through the Lisbon Strategy: Comparing the European Employment Strategy and Pensions OMC,” ed. Philippe Pochet, JeanYves Boulin and Christian Dufour, vol. 15. No.1 (2009): 86.

their influence”,⁸⁹ citing the lack “for real positive incentives for participating in policy learning” as the main problem.⁹⁰ Ultimately, judging from the evidence cited, we would naturally question whether the OMC has really become more participatory after its re-launch.

On the other hand, the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) seems to contradict the above in stating that “European social partners, especially at the interprofessional level, have clearly put a great deal of effort into contributing to implementation of the revamped Lisbon Strategy,” though ETUI refrains from assessing their impact on the process, calling it premature.⁹¹ The opinion here, however, must be received with care:⁹² ETUI places the emphasis on the more general Lisbon process and on the interprofessional social partners rather than on the OMC specifically and on broader civil society. Nevertheless, we could also consult the one place where we might expect the efforts to increase participation in OMC social policy to receive commendation: the yearly Joint Reports published by the Council (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs) on the OMC. Yet, while the supporting document to the Joint Report for 2008 points at a promising number of initiatives undertaken across the Union,⁹³ the reference to participation is subdued in the Joint Report for 2008 itself:

Several Member States have endeavoured to make the preparation of the renewed strategies a participatory exercise involving stakeholders and, to some extent, citizens at large. Local and

⁸⁹ Wolfgang Kerber and Martina Eckardt, “Policy learning in Europe: the open method of co-ordination and laboratory federalism,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 14, no. 2 (March 2007): 236.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁹¹ European Trade Union Institute, *Benchmarking Working Europe 2009*, (Brussels: ETUI aisbl, 2009), 76.

⁹² It must be noted that “ETUI is supported financially by the European Community”, see European Trade Union Institute, “European Union Institute,” <http://www.etui.org> (accessed on February 26, 2010).

⁹³ Commission of the European Communities. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Commission Staff Working Document: Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Exclusion (accompanying document to the “Proposal for the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009”), (Brussels: 13.2.2009), Section 3.6.

regional authorities are increasingly involved but this needs to be taken further. ... There are some examples of good practice in consultation activities, for example efforts to ensure an interactive two-way dialogue and provide feedback on results. Some countries make a general commitment to uphold stakeholder involvement at all policy stages and throughout the reporting cycle. The participatory bodies established at various levels could help monitor structural social reforms and thus promote opportunities, access and solidarity in the present crisis. ...⁹⁴

Moreover, the more specific country profile of Germany makes the following, almost mild statement, under the heading of Governance:

The NSR was drafted in cooperation with the regions (*Länder*), the social partners and key stake-holders. In 2001, the 'Permanent Council of Advisors for Social Integration' was set up to assist in drawing up the National Action Plans. Furthermore, the government has continued the dialogue with relevant stakeholders through a series of seminars ('Forteil')⁹⁵

The UK country profile, on the other hand, is somewhat more promising under the same heading:

The community and voluntary sector are actively engaged in social inclusion processes. In preparing the NSR the government is working together with stakeholder groups consisting of representatives from key government departments, devolved administrations, local government, the voluntary sector and people experiencing poverty. The 12 month project *Bridging the Policy Gap* aimed at increasing awareness of European action in the field of social inclusion and social protection. The first UK conference of people experiencing poverty was held in 2007 and is considered a successful contribution to the enriching experience of policy making. There is some scope for improving effective follow-up strategies of the social inclusion process.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Council of the European Union (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs), *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009*, (Brussels, 13 March 2009), 5.

⁹⁵ Commission of the European Communities, *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008: Country Profiles*, (Brussels: 24.2.2009), 54.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 323.

Our summary, thus, seems to lead us to a conflict between the quantity of initiatives started to promote participation of the citizens and their quality, as the supporting document of the latest Joint Report seems to admonish: “Insufficient attention to the quality of participation ultimately risks leading to 'consultation' or 'participation fatigue,’”⁹⁷ which may be taken to indicate that though the number of initiatives may be impressive, their ultimate impact may be inadequate.

The conclusions that we can draw, consequently, is that the systemic anomaly of citizen non-participation in the OMC’s early years became the reason for the High Level Group assessing the OMC to admonish that in order

to preserve and improve our social model we have to adapt: it is not too late to change. In any event the status quo is not an option. Engaging and involving citizens in the process has two mutually reinforcing attractions: it in effect seeks public support by giving people elements for debate and it leverages that support to put pressure on governments to pursue these goals.⁹⁸

The consequence was an attempt to repair that anomaly by ultimately implementing new objectives into the process that have sought to increase transparency and participation, though without any accompanying indicators acting as gauges of initiatives and as incentives for governments to act. This has resulted in initiatives by the two Member States in question to increase the participation of the citizens in the process, though the absence of the indicators and the at best ambiguous and at worst discouraging research results leave us with a picture where our original OMC relationship illustration (see Diagram 3.1 below) acquires an additional link: Broken line B indicates the attempt of the EU to add a relationship, that is, one between itself and the citizens in the OMC process (though without being the ultimate allocator of binding values), thus hoping for

⁹⁷ Ibid., 57.

⁹⁸ European Commission High Level Group, *Facing the Challenge*, 44.

increased visibility and ultimately support – still by association. Line B¹, on the other hand, represents the corresponding level of support. Given, however, that the extent of citizen engagement and involvement after the OMC's re-launch is open to criticism, we have to question indeed if the already weak level of support by association is being reinforced.

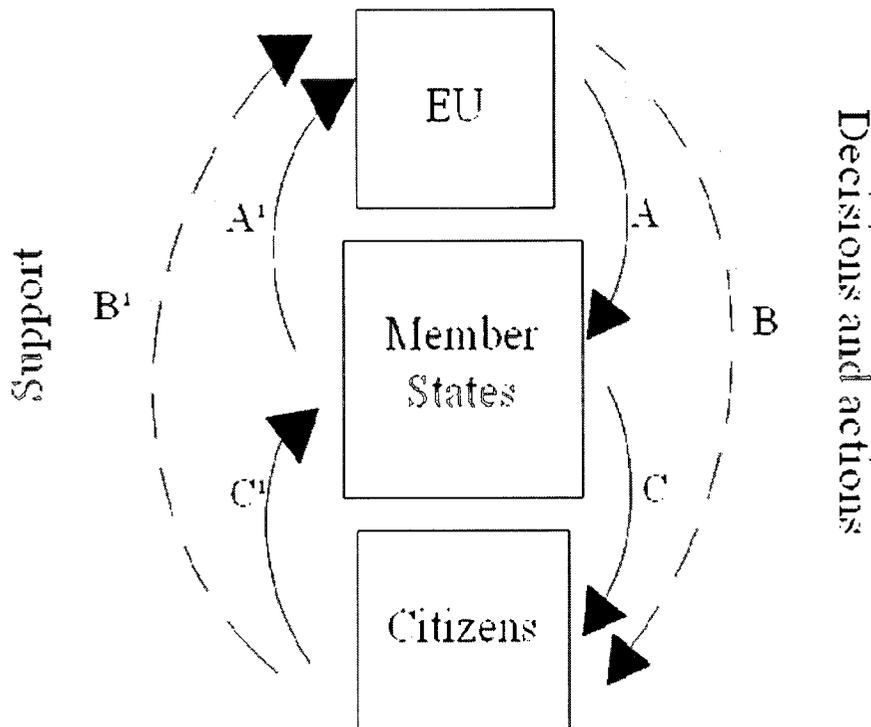


Diagram 3.1 Attempt by the EU to establish a direct relationship with the citizens with respect to OMC

CHAPTER 4: The OMC and the Member States

In our pursuit to answer our central question as to whether the new strategy of the EU to raise support by involving the citizens in the OMC process is working, the previous chapter analysed the OMC as an output of the EU system and attempted to gauge the level of participation that it has achieved after its re-launch. Our findings indicated that the new OMC and the objectives introduced specifically to promote citizen engagement and involvement have had little noticeable effect on participation, which would lead us to assume that the intended specific support for the EU as a product of association may not be materialising. Could we assume, however, that because participation in the OMC process may not be taking place that support for the EU is not being raised at all as a result of OMC social policy and its re-launch? On the surface, we might be inclined to answer this question in the affirmative, however, this might be premature. From our two-step diagram perspective, the relationships indicated by Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 are worth re-examining: while we know that arrows A and A¹ indicate an input-process-output relationship between the EU and the Member States, and arrows B and B¹ indicate a similar relationship but between each Member State and its citizens,⁹⁹ we must not overlook the actual position of the Member States themselves. Being in the middle of the two-step diagram, the Member States act as mediators for the EU's outputs, even if these ultimately take the form of Member State government initiatives. As a result, since the Member States do mediate EU OMC social policy outputs to the citizens and since this is done voluntarily, one could argue that the Member States are in fact mediating a corresponding level of support to their citizens with respect to the EU by

⁹⁹ Whereas C and C¹ represent the EU-citizen association that has remained insignificant.

doing so. This support is not tied to the outputs *per se*, but is rather a derivative of the process, being ‘reflected’ by the Member States to their publics. Furthermore, one could argue that this support may be experiencing a boost simply given the fact that the Member States have been making efforts to increase citizen participation in the OMC process.

This argument can be approached from a theoretical and a more practical perspective: the former takes into account Easton’s simplified diagram of a political system as well as our own two-step model to explain this underlying type of support. This sets the stage for our subsequent, practical review which pertains to the impact of the OMC and its objectives on Germany’s and the United Kingdom’s social policies and what this impact may mean for the type of support in question. More specifically, the practical review considers literature on general OMC influences, as well as primary sources such as National Strategic Reports which look at the more specific influences, that is, how OMC objectives has been translated into national initiatives.

In order to set the theoretical foundation of the claim that Member States may not only be mediating the EU’s OMC initiatives to their citizens but also a corresponding level of support to them for the EU, we refer once more to David Easton. He points out that

with the increasing complexity of governing, the highly technical nature of many decisions that have to be made ... and the vast volume of affairs demanding the attention of members of a system, there is little likelihood that a member will have either the time, interest or resources to follow each output as it occurs or to react in any way at all...¹⁰⁰

Declining interest and participation in political life is a phenomenon in Western societies, and this state of affairs can be easily related to the EU and the OMC as well, particularly

¹⁰⁰ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 397.

in light of the fact that the former is trying to make the latter more participatory and more transparent, seemingly with uncertain success. What takes place, consequently, if we follow Easton, is that since the members, that is, the political community of a system, are “unable to inform themselves about all or most technical and varied outputs, [they] may be driven to rely on trusted leaders and experts to act as brokers between themselves and the perception of outputs”, taking “[their] cues from such person or groups about the way in which output stimuli are to be perceived or interpreted.”¹⁰¹ Easton indicates that any group in a leadership position may “perform such services”, signifying a “kind of representation or substitution function that occurs in all kinds of large-scale systems...”¹⁰² Projecting this to the EU, we have already made reference in an earlier chapter to the complexity of issues dealt with at the EU level, leading to political community apathy, and this could be applied to the OMC without difficulty. What we can also project with relative ease to our case are the roles that Easton suggests: the EU (along with the OMC) becomes the large-scale system, whereas the Member State citizens are the members of the political community who rely on their national governments as trusted leaders to act as brokers between them and the EU, in this case to receive and interpret OMC outputs. This interpretation, in turn, does not need to relate the concrete efforts of the EU to the citizens, since these would be too complex and/or too many to take into account; these outputs (in the form of OMC objectives, for example) could simply be translated as positive or negative support for European integration and mediated as such to the citizens. In Easton’s terms, the “subsequent flow of support will be regulated not by the impact of the stimuli on the member directly but by the effects on those who have

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 398; One example Easton provides is the UN as the large-scale system with the state governments acting as the trusted leaders.

become the de facto representatives...”¹⁰³ Support, thus, becomes mediated, flowing, in this case, from the Member States to their citizens for the EU.¹⁰⁴

We can illustrate the concept of mediated support by combining Easton’s diagram of an open political system (see Diagram 2.1) with our own two-step model (see Diagram 3.1), as in Diagram 4.1 below. In this OMC scenario the EU is the overarching, ‘large-scale’ political system, just as in our two-step model diagram, with the Member States as subsystems as well as political communities for the EU’s outputs, with, finally, the citizens as the Member States’ (as well as the EU’s) political communities.

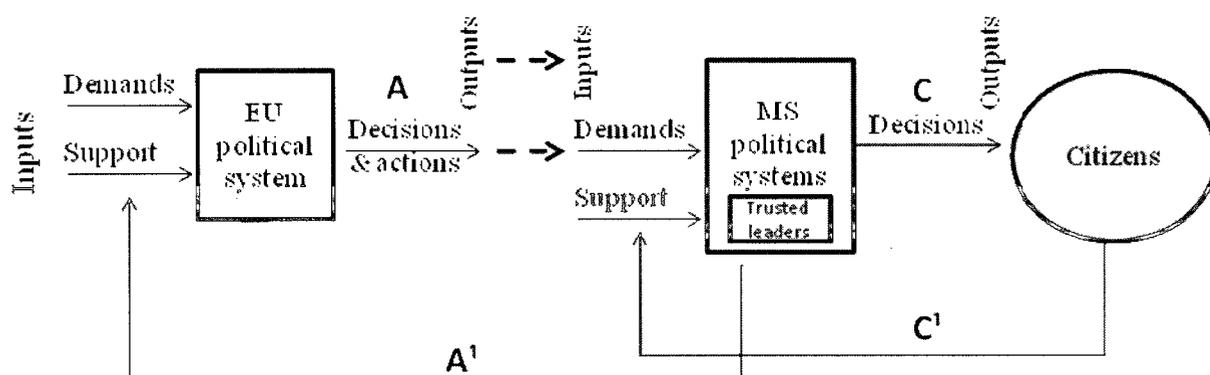


Diagram 4.1 Mediated support (via trusted leaders) as part of the OMC two-level interaction

Seen from a general perspective, the Member States (more precisely, their governments) become the political community by receiving OMC outputs from the EU (arrow A), which they have had a hand in putting together via consensus (and for which they provide the EU with, presumably, positive support, represented by arrow A¹). At the same time, the Member States are sub-systems of the EU with their governments taking the role of authorities, meaning that as subsystems they accept the outputs of the EU as

¹⁰³ Easton, “A Systems Analysis of Political Life,” 398.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 228-9 and 397-99. Consider also that transparency, good governance and subsidiarity have become integral to the stated objectives of OMC social policy since it was re-launched, which can only aid visibility of the EU in social policy matters.

their own inputs, and as authorities translate these (voluntarily) into outputs (arrow C) for their citizens (for which they receive positive or negative support – arrow C¹). In the above OMC-related scenario, then, the Member States play multiple roles voluntarily, with their national governments also assuming the role of *trusted leaders* for the uninvolved public, thus intimating to it a level of support for the EU.¹⁰⁵ This is particularly so because OMC delves into a policy area that is very salient to both the governments and their publics, allowing the former's panoply an additional mechanism with which to cope with environmental stresses. Alternatively, put in a more simpler manner, these trusted leaders input their own demands at the EU level to produce OMC outputs which will be mediated as input (demands) at the Member State level for outputs, as a result, for their citizens. As trusted leaders who take part in both EU and the Member State demand production, then, they must also thus mediate their support for such a system in both directions, that is, by showing their support to the EU (arrow A¹) and by intimating it to the citizens.¹⁰⁶

If we now combine the theoretical deliberations with a more practical analysis of the Member States 'mediating' support for the EU to their citizens, we can begin with an examination of the *general* impact of OMC on Member States as portrayed in literature starting at the EU level and search for practical benefits that might induce the mediation of support. This will help give us an idea of what the detected broader patterns are, which we can then apply directly to our diagram above. To begin, we may take one impact that may be argued to be emblematic of the EU, having been mentioned already,

¹⁰⁵ Conversely, the Member State governments, as elected, trusted leaders, intimate their citizens' support to the EU.

¹⁰⁶ What is more, we can represent the idea of mediated support by referring to the earlier argument that the EU is a project by elites: we can view the EU-level elites acting as the experts and providing a service for the elites of the Member States, also in matters of social policy via OMC. Subsequently, Member State government elites, acting as a set of 'trusted leaders', 'interpret' the EU outputs vis-à-vis OMC by translating them into national initiatives, thus allocating values to their citizens.

and which emerges from Natali's observation about the role that the Member States play in the OMC process:

given the active role of Member States in shaping the development of OMC processes, their relationship to national policy-making should be understood as a two-way interaction rather than a one-way causal impact.¹⁰⁷

The above statement is very reminiscent of our two-step model, and it may be read as containing two primary messages: first, it is a confirmation of the voluntary and beneficiary role which the Member States play with respect to the OMC processes, thus providing additional backing for the claim that the Member States find themselves in a relationship, support for which they are bound to mediate to their citizens. Secondly, we understand this relationship as cooperative, that is, we recognise that the OMC negotiation processes and the benchmarking and best-practice sharing have fostered an environment of a “*consensus* oriented process of policy-making”.¹⁰⁸ One broad impact of the OMC that we see, then, i.e., consensus,¹⁰⁹ begins at the EU level and registering it among the impacts of OMC on national social policies is necessary and significant because since the EU can produce consensus for action in the collectivisation efforts of this most salient field, then it opens the field to changes and influences that may not have been possible otherwise. What is more, however, given that the Member States reach consensus for action in this field, is a sign of its own that they have at least some support for the OMC process, meaning that this support can be mediated to their citizens as support for the EU.

¹⁰⁷ David Natali, “The Lisbon Strategy a decade on: a critical review of a multi-disciplinary literature,” *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 15 no. 1 (2009): 128.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*; emphasis added

¹⁰⁹ See also Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, Chapter 1, for a similar reading on the history of EU social policy.

In addition to consensus, another, intended, impact taking place primarily at the EU level that is readily obvious is the OMC social policy's goal of learning from best practice, that is, mutually beneficial information sharing – with the potential to amplify mediated support.¹¹⁰ At first glance, this impact can be taken to be advantageous to all concerned. Nevertheless, it may be seen to hide a further impact in that it points at a certain level of convergence of national social policies through collectivisation. This, however, may be either contradicted or its extent reined in by two factors: first, the OMC's inherent subsidiarity would arguably work against any appreciable level of convergence.¹¹¹ To this end, the research of Büchs and Hinrichs leads them to state that the German government “was very clear that the subsidiarity principle should remain intact, respecting Member State jurisdiction in the area of social policy.”¹¹² Presumably, one reason for this position would be that the “German *Länder* have regarded the [OMC] ... as a potential threat to their reserved competences,”¹¹³ showing that political actors take precautions against extensive EU encroachment on national social policy. Similarly, Le Grand *et al* portray the United Kingdom as “an ardent supporter of the OMC”, thanks in no small part to the ‘subsidiarity’ and ‘autonomy’ that it offers.¹¹⁴ Second, and as a related point, the voluntary nature of OMC is also one that would seem to contradict convergence since it allows Member States to focus on those elements that are of interest

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 19-20, 33

¹¹¹ From an Eastonian perspective, more subsidiarity can actually be seen as the EU system adapting its own self in order to fight stress.

¹¹² Milena Büchs and Karl Hinrichs, “Germany: moving towards Europe but putting national autonomy first,” in *The Europeanisation of Social Protection*, ed. Jon Kvist and Juho Saari (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2007), 31.

¹¹³ Jonathan Zeitlin, “The Open Method of Coordination and reform of national social and employment policies: Influences, mechanisms, effects,” in *Changing European Employment and Welfare Regimes*, ed. Martin Heidenreich and Jonathan Zeitlin (New York: Routledge, 2009), 223.

¹¹⁴ Julian Le Grand, Elias Mossialos and Morgan Long, “The United Kingdom: more an economic than a social European,” in *The Europeanisation of Social Protection*, ed. Jon Kvist and Juho Saari (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2007), 51.

nationally. This is precisely what is meant, in the German case, by “respecting Member State jurisdiction in the area of social policy”. The UK, likewise, has “used the flexibility of the OMC to implement those parts of EU strategies that apply to its national circumstances, while rejecting others”.¹¹⁵ As a result of the foregoing, one might be inclined to view the low level of social policy convergence as being at odds with the broader goals of the OMC. Nevertheless, coordination is also a form of collectivisation, as argued in Chapter 1, and it is also the ultimate aim of OMC social policy. This means that the Member States continue to offer their consensus to OMC because it assures them control of this sensitive policy area, while allowing them access to an additional mode of governance that enables, among other things, mutual learning. The OMC can thus be seen as an additional tool for the Member States’ repertoire of reactions to their ever-changing environment, and, as a consequence, we may see this convenience as positive for the Member States and so creating a corresponding level of support for the EU among the Member States authorities (trusted leaders), ultimately to be mediated to the citizens.

If we now shift the focus of our practical analysis of the Member States mediating support for the EU to their citizens from the general impact of OMC at the EU level to its impact on the national social policy fields, we can locate practical benefits here as well that could be producing mediated support. We may consider Jonathan Zeitlin (2005) who refers to “the most widely attested findings of recent empirical work on the European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies”¹¹⁶ and points out that the OMC (prior to its re-launch in 2005-2006) had two broad impacts: the first was that these

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁶ The European Employment Strategy (EES) and the Social Inclusion Strategy are strategies used in the OMC. (See Heidenreich and Zeitlin, *Changing European Employment and Welfare Regimes*, 3.) These two cover the two sets of objectives and their initiatives and corresponding indicators which we will be considering in subsequent sections.

processes “raised the political salience and ambitions¹¹⁷ of employment and social inclusion policies at the national as well as the EU level” and the second is that they “contributed to broad shifts in national policy orientation and thinking involving the incorporation of EU concepts and categories into domestic debates”.¹¹⁸ With minimal effort we can see how these two impacts (salience and a shift in national policy orientation and thinking) may be claimed to be the consequences at the national level of those impacts considered in the immediately prior level, namely consensus and mutual learning.

Consequently, our logical next step is to look at national social policies for broader changes that the increased salience and the changes in policy orientation and thinking might have brought about. Continuing with Zeitlin, he points at evidence that the OMC has indeed “contributed to specific changes in individual Member States’ policies”, specifically referring to the contribution of Büchs and Friedrich in the same edited volume. What is interesting, however, is that upon inspection, these two authors conclude that, for Germany, the European Employment Strategy (EES) “did not have the power to introduce policies which were not supported previously or which would not be coherent with policy developments taking place anyway.” This would mean that given that consensus is required at the EU level, only policies which already enjoyed resonance were likely to be considered. On the other hand, the same authors contend that the “EES seems to provide a cognitive framework that strengthens the position of policy actors supporting this kind of strategy, and, at the same time, limits the space for negotiation

¹¹⁷ For a similar reading see also Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 263.

¹¹⁸ Jonathan Zeitlin, “The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action: Theoretical Promise, Empirical Realities, Reform Strategy,” in *The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action: The European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies*, ed. Jonathan Zeitlin & Philippe Pochet with Lars Magnusson (Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang S.A., 2005), 450-51.

and discussion of policy alternatives.”¹¹⁹ The preceding would suggest that the authorities in Germany not only have not been constricted by the OMC, but could also be using it to their benefit to limit the field of manoeuvre of competing alternatives. The conclusion of the two authors is that the EES, having started in 1997, has had more time to mature and show impact on national policies, whereas social inclusion, having started in 2000, needs more time to develop.¹²⁰ Similarly with the United Kingdom, the conclusion by Armstrong on Social Inclusion specifically (and on OMC more generally) seems to resemble the above: he found “examples of domestic adaptation to the OMC process on inclusion” though with actual consequences for policy had been rudimentary without significant substance.¹²¹ This leaves us with the sense that though the salience of social policy may have been affected, the shifts in national policy orientation at the Member State level, that is, substantive changes at the more concrete level had yet to develop past a basic stage, reminding ourselves that this conclusion only relates to the OMC before its re-launch.

The foregoing summary makes sense from a general systems theoretical perspective and from our latest model above (Diagram 4.1). With regard to the former, we can see in the input-process-output model (see Diagram 2.1) that the creation of the

¹¹⁹ Milena Büchs and Dawid Friedrich, “Surface Integration: The National Action Plans for Employment and Social Inclusion in Germany,” in *The Open Method of Co-ordination in Action: The European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies*, ed. Jonathan Zeitlin and Philippe Pochet with Lars Magnusson. (Brussels: P.I.E. – Peter Lang S.A., 2007), 267.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 277; though it should be noted that the EU’s efforts in employment reach far into its past, the European Employment Strategy was launched by the Heads of State and Governments at the Luxembourg Jobs Summit in November 1997 after the new title ‘Employment’ was included in the Treaty of the EU. This particular launch was with “a view to coordinating national employment policies ... [aiming] to improve employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities at the level of the European labour market.” Source: European Commission, “The Birth of the European Employment Strategy: the Luxembourg Process (November 1997)”, under Europa/Summaries of EU legislation/Employment and social policy/Community employment policies,” http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/community_employment_policies/c11318_en.htm (accessed on February 27, 2010).

¹²¹ Milena Büchs and Dawid Friedrich, “Surface Integration,” 308.

OMC as an EU output alone would be sufficient to raise social policy salience and have an effect on policy orientation and thinking. At the same time, as effects accompanying the EU allocated values to the Member States, salience and changes in policy orientation and thinking may be used by the latter to bring in any measures that Member State authorities see fit. Consequently, the popularity of such measures could be claimed for the Member States themselves and alternately, whose unpopularity may be blamed on the EU. Either way, it is the EU that provides this leverage to the Member States, a benefit that they can transmit as a result as mediated support. On the other hand, if we were to consider the OMC as a subsystem with its own output production processes, then the salience and shift in policy that they imply are magnified in their detail (than when viewing the OMC as a simple output). Ultimately, one preliminary conclusion here is that there is a sense of development that is gradual, and perhaps more so in policy shift than in salience.

Similarly, as part of our model, we see that the simple act of the EU producing OMC outputs (arrow A in Diagram 4.2) for the Member States illustrates consensus and an influence on learning from one another at the EU level. These impacts, in carrying over to the Member States (who are active at the EU level), have a corresponding increase in the level of social policy salience and a change in policy orientation and learning at the Member State level. Given the foregoing and considering that the Member States' voluntary participation in OMC social policy would suggest a benefit for them as authorities (who are also trusted leaders), it stands to reason that they would reflect some of the support they have for the EU system (including the OMC) to their citizens. If that is the case, consequently, should we expect that the modifications of the re-launched OMC have magnified these impacts and, as a result, the level of this support?

Impacts: *Consensus and mutual learning* → *saliency and policy orientation* → *policies*

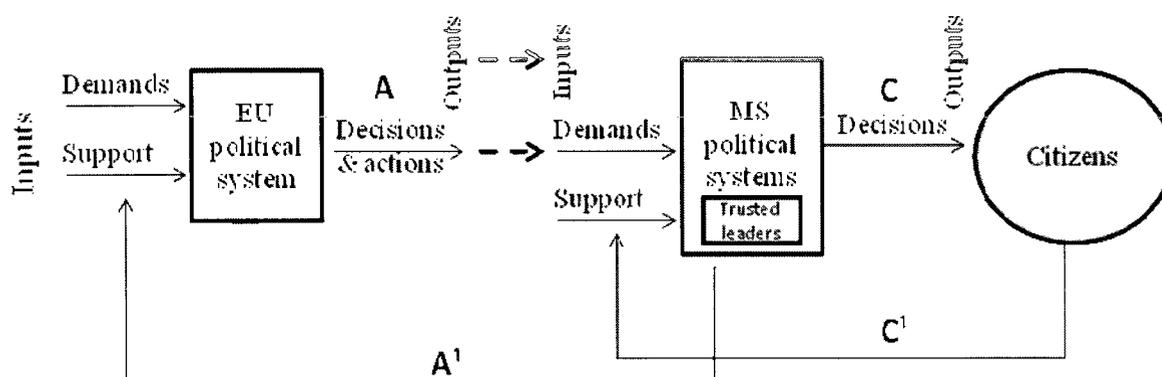


Diagram 4.2 Mediated support as part of the OMC two-level interaction with the more general impacts of the OMC over the political level where they have influence

Unfortunately, the literature is unclear on this point. We can assume that consensus with respect to OMC may well have received a boost via the process's reform simply because it is required to bring about any change in the process. On the other hand, we cannot as easily assume the same about saliency and this is reflected in the literature: Natali (2009), in summarising findings from various sources,¹²² maintains that OMC processes have helped to increase the saliency and to improve learning processes across the EU vis-à-vis social policy practices, though he does not make a clear distinction between the OMC before and after its re-launch.¹²³ This is also the case with Zeitlin (2009), who points at the changes brought about by OMC in substantive policy and procedures, but makes no reference to any effects of the re-launch.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, one could argue that because of the attempt to increase participation and visibility via the re-launch of the OMC, we can continue to look for at least a continuation in both the

¹²² He includes Zeitlin (2007b, 2008) and de la Porte *et al.* (2009).

¹²³ Natali, "The Lisbon Strategy a decade on," 128.

¹²⁴ Zeitlin, "The Open Method of Coordination and reform of national social and employment policies," 217-26

broad OMC impacts at the EU level (consensus and mutual learning) and in both broad OMC impacts at the Member State level (salience and shifts in policy orientation and thinking), particularly because this change in strategy may have been perceived by the Member States as a greater impetus to act and, perhaps more so, as an opportunity to be exploited, giving all four general impacts discussed a boost.

On the other hand, we may examine Kerber and Eckardt (2007), who focus more on policy learning and note that

So far the empirical research on the OMC shows a rather critical picture about its effectiveness in regard to the policy learning that it should bring about. Nevertheless, this need not imply that the OMC as a new form of governance will turn out to be a failure, because it might need some time to develop its full potential.¹²⁵

This is reminiscent of our earlier conclusion about shift in national policy orientation not having developed past a basic stage (a reference to the pre-launch period of the OMC), and the claim is also mirrored by Zeitlin (2008), who himself offers various examples of the development, such as workshops, and also offers his own suggestions of how to maximize the potential of mutual learning.¹²⁶ This in itself tells us that there are (still) various developmental challenges in this policy field, though with some evidence of the intended mutual learning. What may moderate this critique, however, is placing the emphasis on a concern that Kerber and Eckert point out: they claim that in the course of policy production and in sharing best practice, “there might not be a ‘best policy’ for all the jurisdictions involved ... [leading] to the notion of ‘contextualized learning.’”¹²⁷

Whether or not this is a problem can be debated, for while it is true that sharing best practice is part of OMC, one can easily claim, as we did above, that creating a blanket

¹²⁵ Wolfgang Kerber and Martina Eckardt, “Policy learning in Europe: the open method of co-ordination and laboratory federalism,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 14 (March 2007): 230.

¹²⁶ See Jonathan Zeitlin, “The Open Method of Co-ordination and the Governance of the Lisbon Strategy,” *JCMS* 46:2 (2008): 445.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 241.

policy, i.e., converging policies is not. What is part of OMC, on the other hand, are subsidiarity and the voluntary nature of the process. This means that, in principle at least, those placed in the most appropriate positions can learn and draw from best practice as needed to apply to their own circumstances as they see fit, giving the OMC process the positive quality that can be mediated to the citizens.

Interestingly, while the above authors do not make mention of salience, Büchs and Hinrichs focus more on that impact. They report that from the German government's (authorities') perspective, which "stressed that the OMC did not change consultation procedures in Germany because consulting social partners, the *Länder* governments, and other civil society actors had widely practised them already".¹²⁸ This by itself can be seen to tone down somewhat our earlier claim that the OMC has caused an increase in salience, however, that the *Bundesrat* "welcomed the OMC as an instrument for intensifying pressure for reforms aiming at growth and competitiveness" and then asking for a "more rigorous benchmarking and ranking of Member States"¹²⁹ would indicate at least some intensification of the importance of the subject area within Germany and, by the same token, perhaps in the rest of the EU. The authors continue to scrutinise the position of the German government on OMC and conclude that it is regarded as "a useful instrument for exchanging experiences and backing up policy plans for policy change".¹³⁰ While, on the one hand, this is reminiscent of a shift in learning, on the other, "backing up policy plans for policy change" seems to suggest that the German government uses the EU and the OMC as expedient leverage. Either way, the OMC becomes something that the German government uses to its advantage, with a corresponding disposition towards

¹²⁸ Kvist and Saari, *The Europeanisation of Social Protection*, 30.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-2.

the EU that can be reflected towards the citizens, though without direct reference to the process.

In the same volume, Le Grand *et al* claim that the United Kingdom's government is "an ardent supporter of the OMC,"¹³¹ placing strong emphasis on the characteristic of 'flexibility', which itself mirrors the British system's greater emphasis on its autonomy: "The UK has used the flexibility of the OMC to implement those parts of EU strategies that apply to its national circumstances, while rejecting others."¹³² What we can infer from this and the previous deliberations, is that when it comes to the consequences of the OMC on the United Kingdom's social policy, the impact on salience and perhaps also on policy orientation and thinking, though present, might cover less ground than they do in Germany, with a proportionate (i.e., lesser) amount of mediated support.

Overall, we can conclude from the above that the introduction of OMC in social policy has had four broad impacts on Member State social policy: generally, at the EU level, it has fostered further cooperation and consensus among them and has allowed them to learn from each other and best practice. At the Member State level it has raised the importance (salience) of social policy and has initiated shifts in policy orientation and thinking. Though the literature is unclear as to whether these impacts were affected by the re-launch of the OMC, we speculated that the change in strategy would likely have had an augmenting effect, which could then be reflected in the level of support for the mediated to the citizens by their trusted leaders. As regards more concrete results at the Member State level, though these are seen not to have developed to a great extent yet, the OMC is seen as allowing the Member States to press for reforms. This and the above deliberations are suggestive of a type of support that is very likely present and gradually

¹³¹ Le Grand *et al*, "The United Kingdom: more an economic than a social European," 52.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 53.

mediated but difficult to measure. What makes the gauging of this type of support even more perplexing is the fact that the comparison of the OMC's impacts on Germany and the United Kingdom has given us only a sense that a certain level of support may indeed be mediated without a clear indication of which country may be more prone to do so. In this regard, a scrutiny of the outputs produced by the Member States (arrow C in Figure 4.2) may provide more useful information.

Turning , thus, from the practical review of literature to the review of primary sources that detail the more micro-impact of the OMC, that is, in the form of initiatives on Germany's and the United Kingdom's social policies, we would want to examine those initiatives which the two States claim as their outputs related to the OMC process. In their most comprehensive form, these can be found in the National Strategic Reports, whose examination may help us in gauging the relative level of mediated support by examining preferred policy conduits¹³³ via which this support may be transmitted.¹³⁴ From the outset, we should deal with the expectation that the more OMC objectives these governments translate into national initiatives, the higher their own level of support for the EU is likely to be, and the more likely they are to mediate this support to their citizens. While there is truth in this claim, we should also consider Natali's assertion regarding the difficulty in assessing the "national influence of OMC processes" because of "their variety, complexity and relative newness" as well as the "methodological problems involved in assessing 'the independent causal impact' of an iterative policy-

¹³³ That is to say, the focal points of the initiatives,

¹³⁴ What is also interesting is what these preferred focal points may have to say about the Member States, their systems and their populations.

making process without legally binding sanctions.”¹³⁵ In addition, there is also the consideration that EU provides specific guidelines as to the length and content of the NSRs.

The above realisations, however, still leave us with the search for a connection between Member State outputs vis-a-vis the OMC and the amount of support they mediate to their citizens. What remains, then, is a scrutiny of the available information in the NSRs for the broader tendencies of the two states that may point to their level and type of mediated support. Ultimately, while we can assume that the comparative strength of this support would be of a relatively low level, it should not be completely neglected, since the process of adding to the container of diffuse support is indeed gradual and cumulative, as is the process of systemic evolution.

Examining the National Strategic Reports

National Strategic Reports (NSRs) provide a detailed inventory of self-progress, that is, the actions, strategies and plans, the Member States have taken and plan to take in their efforts to meet the OMC indicators. In this section we will undertake an examination of the German and British National Strategic Reports (NSRs) since 2006 in order to see what key issues they treat and what broader patterns the initiatives may contain, how these can be interpreted as reflecting a corresponding level of mediated support, and also speculate how the foregoing could represent a reflection of a particular predisposition to the EU

In scrutinising the NSRs (two reporting cycles following the re-launch of the OMC: 2006-2008 and 2008-2010),¹³⁶ we will follow the established reporting set-up in

¹³⁵ Le Grand *et al*, “The United Kingdom: More an Economic than a Social European,” 127; Heidenreich and Zeitlin argue along similar lines, See Martin Heidenreich and Jonathan Zeitlin, “Changing European and Employment Regimes”, 2.

these reports, which list, describe and substantiate the Member States' outputs and plans for outputs according to the objective they are primarily fulfilling. While it is true that our own objective here is to establish the two Member States' broader tendencies via their stated outputs of actions taken, i.e., the priorities under each objective and how they are addressed (perhaps at the expense of others) in accordance with national needs, our examination will be marked by an admittedly subjective quantitative impression of the outputs: on the one hand, the rendering of all strategies and initiatives by each Member State is largely a one-sided affair of deciding what to include. On the other hand, deciding for ourselves how to identify and categorise these initiatives is open to interpretation. Nevertheless, what we can gain through this exercise is perhaps better described as a quantitative 'feeling' of the direction of the initiatives rather than simply a numerical sense. Consequently, we will consider only measures concretely implemented and we will not make mention of what is planned, speculated or projected. Noting the foregoing, the following questions need to be addressed: How will we identify an output/value from a theoretical perspective? And in our pursuit of concrete initiatives should we not go beyond the NSRs?

In considering the first question, admittedly, it may not always be easy to distinguish between what is an allocated value and what is not. However, if we take Easton's view of the political system as a "set of interactions through which valued things are authoritatively allocated for a society" we can assume that any "binding decisions and actions" on the part of the authorities that produce concrete results may be considered values. As such, these can be legislative initiatives, programs, funding, etc. The point here is to generally quantify the OMC efforts of Germany and the UK under identifiable

¹³⁶ Though the re-launch of the Lisbon strategy was indeed in 2005, the NSR cycles did not begin until 2006.

focal points and not (yet) to judge whether these ultimately result in increased mediated support, although one assumes that Member State governments would aim to package each as something beneficial, which we assume is the reason for its coming into being.

As to the second question, we will remain within the bounds of the NSRs to judge outputs/values, not only because these are primarily what the Member States are judged upon,¹³⁷ but also because, with reference to Kleinman, otherwise any policy that has any influence on society can be considered part of social policy, exceeding our scope here.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, there will be a minimal number of instances where we go beyond the NSRs, but only to confirm/corroborate concretely planned but not well detailed outputs in the NSRs. In addition, we will also consider as outputs any initiatives undertaken prior to the first reporting cycle (2006-2008) since they continue to produce outputs, that is, values, as long as they are mentioned in the two cycle reports under scrutiny, but only insofar as they were implemented under the OMC from its beginning, thus since 2001. To do otherwise would rob any quantifying evaluation of its meaning.

The initiatives are listed in detail in Appendix A as they appear sequentially in the NSRs. We must note that some are repeated under the various objectives, while others are repeated in part, i.e., where one initiative is stated as program another may be a part of a program. Due care is taken not to repeat any initiatives and to indicate when a listed initiative is part of a bigger one. It is also important to remember that many of the initiatives are ongoing – care will be taken not to mention them twice, though they might be mentioned in both NSRs. Unless otherwise stated, initiatives are assumed to be

¹³⁷ The assumption is that though in theory there would be measures and initiatives that are included in the NSPs might be questioned as to their relevance, the Member States assumingly know that these will be scrutinized and open to critique and will only include initiatives that can be argued to contribute directly to the defined objectives and the chosen indicators.

¹³⁸ See Mark Kleinman, *A European Welfare State?*, Chapter 1.

continuing. Finally, one could claim that Member States may be inclined to simply get carried away by listing all sorts of initiatives in order to embellish their positions.

Although that may be true on the surface, such assumption would devalue the integrity of the Joint Reports and third-party critiques, as well as the specifications for length and content as laid out by the European Commission.¹³⁹ The same would apply to the claim that ongoing items included in one report may be omitted in the next because they have since backfired or become unsuitable.

Germany

National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (2006-2008 and 2008-2010)

Listed below are the six objectives (three overarching and three under the one strand we are considering, that is, Social Protection and Social Inclusion) and below each we outline the general nature of the initiatives taken as to the broader tendencies, priorities and highlights, as they reflect national needs. One thing we should mention from the outset is that the German NSRs can be seen to be much more detailed in their listing of concrete initiatives as opposed to the United Kingdom's, as will become evident in our subsequent analysis and as Appendix A shows.

In beginning with the overarching objectives of the OMC (A-C), we note that they read more like general strategies with understandably little concrete output, but prove to have several dimensions which they single out for action.¹⁴⁰

Objective A:

social cohesion, equality between men and women and equal opportunities for all

¹³⁹ See "Guidance Note for Preparing National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010," in Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, 2.

¹⁴⁰ The same is true with the UK reports, but to a broader extent.

*through adequate, accessible, financially sustainable, adaptable and efficient social protection systems and social inclusion policies;*¹⁴¹

When considering the concrete initiatives that are reported under Objective A by Germany (see Appendix A), our attention is immediately drawn to two traits: First, the NSR 2006-2008 exhibits only three initiatives, while NSR 2006-2010 has fourteen. The second peculiarity is in the dimensions that the initiatives touch upon: the three initiatives of NSR 2006-2008 touch on three distinct dimensions (education and training, the integration of immigrants, and the employment of women). NSR 2008-2010, on the other hand, though showing the same or similar three dimensions being emphasised, shows a flurry of new activity in pensions (six initiatives), childcare (3), healthcare (2), with an overriding concern to alleviate and reduce poverty.

On the one hand, we may interpret the numerical increase in activity as well as the increase in the dimensions covered as part of the rising importance of OMC social policy in general, as well as consequence of mutual learning. This, however, may overemphasise the impacts of the OMC while understating the role of Germany in its own social policy. On the other hand, we can also interpret the above as a growing concern with the developing challenge of the changing demographics in the EU, where an aging population is of a particular significance for the more industrially advanced countries like Germany. The clear intention, then, is to promote employment for all residents and to keep them employed longer. This will have them provide more towards their retirement, thereby avoiding old-age poverty, and reducing the anticipated burden on the younger generations. As for the initiatives in childcare, it is another method to

¹⁴¹ European Commission, "Common Objectives," http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/objectives_en.pdf (accessed on February 26, 2010).

offset the ageing population concerns: from the initiatives presented, one may speculate that if there is better national childcare provision, more people will be at work and more people may want to have children given this convenience. In sum, the emphasis seems to be placed heavily on greater and longer employment as the solution to the lingering unemployment problem and to the growing demographic challenge in order to guarantee a sustainable and equitable social protection system.

Objective B:

*effective and mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives of greater economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and with the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy;*¹⁴²

Considering the two NSRs together, of the six initiatives mentioned, only that referring to raising the age limit for drawing an old age pension from 65 to 67 by 2029 seems to be a one-off measure (and which may actually be better placed under Objective A or under the strand on pensions). The remaining five may be easily related as an attempt for the effective and mutual interaction between the Lisbon targets: they are packages of measures rather than specific ones, and two of these packages are the National Reform Programmes 2006-2008 and 2008-2010, the national responses to the re-launched Lisbon strategy. National Reform Programmes are drawn by each Member State and relate their viewpoints, areas of focus and general strategies and are less detailed than the NSRs. In addition, it is these that undergo the scrutiny of the peer reviews.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Peer reviews are available under European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, "Assessment of the 2008-2010 National Reform Programmes for Growth and Jobs from a Social Inclusion perspective: The Extent of Synergies between Growth and Jobs Policies and Social

The nature of the five initiatives made up of package measures are significant under this objective for their attempt to hold together the Lisbon objectives and it is understandable that not every single measure would be listed. What is also of significance is mention of the NRPs at the outset of each report: they are not only bundles of strategies, which suggest the measures to be taken; as published reports available to everyone and facing the scrutiny of peer reviews, they are also an impetus to act. This can be seen to assist in closing the ‘implementation gap’ which the Wim Kok Report discussed. Nevertheless, though the bundles of measures under Objective B are meant for the better interaction between the Lisbon targets, it is difficult to decipher through the six initiatives mentioned how they are meant to do that without pursuing and scrutinising each bundle individually. We can assume, however, that judging from their aims (see Appendix A under heading “Aim”) their intention is indeed to pursue economic growth, a higher employment rate and social cohesion, top issues among European according the Eurobarometer surveys,¹⁴⁴ where positive measures presumably bring about positive support. Ultimately, however, we note that there is again a good deal of emphasis on increasing employment.

Objective C:

good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy;

This section is by far the briefest of all under the objectives with the first report exhibiting more generalisations than concrete initiatives. The two reports between them count altogether three initiatives where the effort to involve a broad spectrum of actors,

Inclusion Policies,” <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2008/second-semester-2008>, (accessed on February 27, 2010).

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, European Commission, *Eurobarometer 70*. (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, September 2009), 21.

including the public, in governance is highlighted. One can easily assume that this preoccupation relates to the principle of subsidiarity, which is to be found throughout the reports, and to the need to increase visibility of the OMC (and so the EU's) efforts. The principle itself addresses the need for visibility, that is, the idea is that the more levels and groups that get involved, the more the greater the level of visibility of the EU's efforts. The inclusion of this objective since the re-launch of OMC is perhaps the defining characteristic of the new strategy, given that the Kok Report recommended increased participation of the citizens in order to give the Member States a 'greater impetus to act'. As mentioned in a previous chapter, however, what this objective lacks is a corresponding set of indicators that would keep track of its success.

The following objectives are related to the strand dealing with the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. Objectives D and E are treated together in both NSRs under question, and we will follow suit. The collective treatment in the NSRs could presumably be because the dimensions they cover are closely related.

Objective D:

access for all to the resources, rights and services needed for participation in society, preventing and addressing exclusion, and fighting all forms of discrimination leading to exclusion;

and

Objective E:

fighting poverty and exclusion;

Germany's initiatives under Objectives D and E display three primary characteristics: a great number of initiatives, a target specificity of each initiative, and the use of the European Social Fund (ESF) as a major tool for the implementation of

strategies. Moreover, the three may be seen to combine together for a considerable impact with respect to popular support. First, in sheer numbers, under objectives D and E Germany shows a total of 74 initiatives (39 in NSR 2006-2008 and 35 in NSR 2008-2010), which is slightly more than half of the total counted (146 for all 12 objectives) in both NSRs. The themes of participation and inclusion are central to these two objectives as they are to the Lisbon strategy in general, however, all are underpinned by the issue of employment. For example, even a cursory examination of these initiatives reveals that virtually all relate to promoting employment and employability. Second, in promoting employment and employability, the reach of these initiatives is wide: measures are meant to improve/promote the employment and employability of older individuals, immigrants, youth and the disabled, which may lead one to surmise that the efforts here are painstaking and inclusive. Taken together, this particular scope represents a very large part of the population, and being able to have a political impact on their lives and livelihoods can be a useful tool for garnering support. Accordingly, the third interesting characteristic here is the profuse use of the ESF. As the “main financial instrument designed to support Member States in the implementation of their strategy as set out in the National Strategy Reports” and contributing “approximately €76 billion to support 117 Operational Programmes ... across the European Union”,¹⁴⁵ it is easy to imagine the possibilities of reaching a lot of people with the message that the EU is taking an active interest in the welfare of its citizens. In total, it is easy to imagine that the promotion of employment and employability affecting a significant part of the population is an act that offers considerable visibility for the EU in the matter.

¹⁴⁵ Council of the European Union (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs), *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009*, 25.

Objective F:

to ensure that social inclusion policies are well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty, that they are efficient and effective and mainstreamed into all relevant public policies, including economic, budgetary, education and training policies and structural fund (notably ESF) programme;

The effort under Objective F, reminiscent of Objective C, is improved governance, and that is assumed to be the involvement of and cooperation between all levels of government, including civil groups.¹⁴⁶ This is in line with the principle of subsidiarity, examples of and efforts towards which abound in both reports. The aim is to “bring about a concerted process of dialogues between all stakeholders and all federal levels which extends from the production of and consultation on the National Action Plans to a series of events and platforms that strengthen dialogue between all the participants in the policy field of social integration...”¹⁴⁷

Primary examples of initiatives under Objective F are: the inclusion of all levels of government in the production of the National Plans of Action on Social Integration, strengthened cooperation with the *Länder* on initiatives, promoting information exchanges and including raising of “public awareness of the European process of social integration in an alliance of academia and NGOs and with the support of the European Commission as part of a series of events”. Though only seven initiatives are listed collectively under Objective F, they provide good examples of how the EU is aiming to

¹⁴⁶ Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008*, (Berlin: 2008), 28; and also Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, (Berlin: 30 July 2008), 45.

¹⁴⁷ Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, (Berlin: 30 July 2008), 45.

make its OMC process more inclusive, transparent and visible. Ultimately, it also makes it more obvious how the information of the EU's involvement in social policy may be trickling down to the population, although, as under Objective C, a lacking set of indicators gauging the progress here might be seen as removing from it much of the impetus to act for which it was supposed to provide.

Section Summary

In assessing Germany's two NSRs since the re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy, we note that the broader pattern is a tendency to focus on increasing the employment rate. This is identified as "the central social policy challenge in Germany" in both NSRs under question,¹⁴⁸ and a cursory look at Appendix A verifies not only this but also the second, and related challenge of the aging population. From a general Eastonian perspective, the former, may be seen as a combined consequence of the Single Market, i.e., the economic system of the EU, and the global economic system (of which the EU is a subsystem) as the environment affecting the German system. The latter, on the other hand, can be related as a characteristic of the German/EU/global social systems. Accordingly, the Open Method of Coordination becomes a combined attempt by the EU political system and the Member States' political systems to improve social protection and social inclusion by focusing, in the case of Germany at least, on the two identified environmental challenges.

If we transplant this focus into our combined model (see Diagram 4.2), we see Germany assuming the OMC objectives as stated above (arrow A) and, in order to meet them, translates them into general strategies and programs to fight

¹⁴⁸ Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008*, (Berlin: 2008), 16; and Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, (Berlin: 30 July 2008), 27.

unemployment/increase employment and meet the demographic challenge. This allows the authorities an approach oriented to Germany's focus of its stressors (unemployment and an ageing population) on the one hand and some excuse leeway on the other for unpopular measures. Considering that the issue of unemployment is relatively more important among the German public (see Table 4.1), which falls in line with statistics on unemployment (see Indicator Table 1), we see a congruence between the German public's wishes as a political community, the German authorities' translation of EU objectives and the EU as the overarching system. In this manner, the German authorities see little tension between the three and can thus mediate their support for the OMC and the EU to their population.

	EB 62	EB 63	EB 64	EB 65	EB 66
	Autumn 2004	Spring 2005	Autumn 2005	Spring 2006	Autumn 2006
EU	44	47	43	43	40
D	53	60	54	56	53
UK	15	15	14	16	19

Table 4.1 Fighting unemployment as a priority for the EU¹⁴⁹

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DE	9.1	8.2	7.5	7.6	8.4	9.3	9.8	10.7	9.8	8.4	7.3
UK	6.1	5.9	5.4	5	5.1	5	4.7	4.8	5.4	5.3	5.6

Indicator Table 1 Yearly average unemployment (total: working ages 15-64)¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ European Commission. *Eurobarometer 62, 63, 64, 65 and 66*. (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, September 2009)

¹⁵⁰ Eurostat (European Commission), "OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection)," under "Employment and social policy indicators," http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection (accessed on November 21, 2009).

United Kingdom

National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion

2006-2008 and 2008-2010

Similar to the set up for the German NSRs above, here, too, we examine the broader initiative tendencies, priorities, and highlights under each objective. Despite the Commission's specifications regarding NSR set-up, the United Kingdom's do not quite follow the set-up as does Germany, which would allow for a clearer, more quantifiable view, though we nevertheless are still offered a good picture of focus. For this reason we will examine these reports via the objective groups, i.e., we will first scrutinise the overarching objectives (A to C) as one group, and follow up with the objectives on social protection and social inclusion (D to F).

Objectives A to C: Overarching Objectives

When attempting to scrutinise the initiatives reported under objectives A to C by the United Kingdom, we discern at first a wide dimensional emphasis, generally underpinned by one characteristic: practically all initiatives touch upon the dimensions of child poverty, poverty in general, equality (women, minorities, the disabled, pensioners), employment and social exclusion more generally. A closer look, however, reveals that these initiatives are just as often, if not more so, policies with a non-redistributive component, e.g., focusing on improving or offering government services, or offering incentives for people to seek employment, as they are of a redistributive nature. Furthermore, Public Service Agreements (PSAs) are a recurring theme: detailing the aims and objectives of UK government departments (currently 30) for a three-year period, much is made about them and their targets. Introduced in 1998, these have "played a vital role in galvanising public service delivery and driving major improvements in

outcomes.”¹⁵¹ What is interesting about these agreements is that integral to them are transparency, accountability and public involvement.¹⁵² Even in this case, however, the government seems to be focusing on re-constituting its policy-making packages and expanding services, as emphasised by HM Treasury: “A Government-wide commitment to build *services* around the needs of citizens and businesses will be integral to the achievement of each of the PSA outcomes”.¹⁵³

Given that each Member State can make its own initiatives unhindered in progressing towards the indicators and objectives of OMC, we see the United Kingdom putting its focus with its initiatives relating to the overarching objectives on combating poverty rather than unemployment (as is the case with Germany). This, however, is only half of the picture: given its lower unemployment and higher poverty rate (compare Table 4.2 and Indicator Table 2 below) perhaps it is not surprising that the focal point of the UK would be on poverty. In addition, what our scrutiny of the NSRs makes us notice just as much is that the general strategy seems to lean quite strongly on delivering reforms and on improving government services for individuals and organizations in order to alleviate concerns, giving redistribution a much lesser presence. This is of significance because it suggests a different predisposition on the part of the United Kingdom in dealing with social policy areas from Germany, an indication of divergent social models (See Chapter 5 for further details).

¹⁵¹ United Kingdom Government Cabinet Office, “Public Service Agreements” under “CO Home, About the Cabinet Office,” http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about_the_cabinet_office/publicserviceagreements.aspx (accessed on February 27, 2010).

¹⁵² Ibid, see also United Kingdom, *National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, (London: 2008), 14.

¹⁵³ United Kingdom HM Treasury, “Pre-Budget Report,” under “2007 Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review/Public Service Agreements,” http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr07_psaindex.htm (accessed on February 27, 2010); emphasis added.

Objectives D to F: the Eradication of Poverty and Social Exclusion

Under objectives D to F we observe that virtually all the initiatives mentioned are connected with the dimensions of employment and equality in employment (minorities, the disabled, women, older workers), poverty and social exclusion (See Appendix A). Moreover, and perhaps also telling of the predisposition of the United Kingdom towards poverty and service improvement are a number of unique initiatives such as those aimed at eliminating fuel poverty, and those attempting to end exclusion from the banking system and the digital world. In addition, we find here some more emphasis than in the previous set of objectives on the elderly, on transparency and on effort visibility, where the Public Service Agreements and initiatives beneath them figure prominently once more. Furthermore, in analysing objectives D to F for their content more deeply, we note that though there is a wide variety of dimensions being approached, a closer inspection reveals that what has changed here is a shift of some of the focus from poverty to employment, while the general strategy remains the same: the emphasis is still on reforms and on the improvement of government services as well as incentives to individuals and businesses, rather than more direct funding.

Section Summary

In our assessment of the United Kingdom's National Strategic Reports of 2006-2008 and 2008-2010, the broader tendencies that come through are a focus on improving public services, primarily through Public Service Agreements, as a way to meet the needs of citizens and reduce poverty. This is not to say that the fight against unemployment is neglected; on the contrary, the improvement of services seems to be the primary method of confronting it. If we briefly view the foregoing in Easton's terms, we see that though the UK, as a political system, faces similar environmental challenges to Germany's and

receives the identical OMC inputs from the EU, the characteristics of its outputs are demonstrably different. Consequently, if we bring this focus into our combined model (see Diagram 4.1), we see the UK accepting the OMC objectives as stated above (arrow A) and, in order to meet them, presents them ultimately as efforts whose primary emphasis is to adjust the UK system in order to alleviate the identified stressor, poverty (see below). Notable in the UK's NSRs, moreover, is the relatively minimal mention of the European Social Fund and its use in meeting OMC objectives.¹⁵⁴

	EB 62	EB 63	EB 64	EB 65	EB 66
	Autumn 2004	Spring 2005	Autumn 2005	Spring 2006	Autumn 2006
EU	40	44	44	43	43
D	35	41	42	44	41
UK	26	33	34	31	33

Table 4.2 Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion as a priority for the EU¹⁵⁵

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
D	11	11	10	11	:	:	:	12	13	15	15
UK	19	19	19	18	18	18	:	19	19	19	19

Indicator Table 2 At risk of poverty rate (cut-off point: 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers)¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ For example, the United Kingdom's *National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010* mentions the ESF's links to the OMC in a small section on page 32 of the report, whereas the corresponding report issued by Germany mentions the ESF's links to the OMC numerous times throughout the document (see Germany, *National Strategy Report: Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010*, pages 5, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, among many others). The UK's previous National Strategy Report (2006-2008) is only somewhat better than the current one.

¹⁵⁵ European Commission. *Eurobarometer 62, 63, 64, 65 and 66*. (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, September 2009)

¹⁵⁶ Eurostat (European Commission), "OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection)," under "Employment and social policy indicators," http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection (accessed on November 21, 2009).

Chapter Summary

In the earlier part of the Chapter we concluded that OMC has had four broad impacts on Member State social policy: it has fostered consensus and mutual learning at the EU level and has increased social policy salience and policy orientation and thinking at the Member State level. In this light, and taking OMC's voluntary nature into account and the fact that it is ultimately a process achieved via intergovernmental negotiations, we can assume that the Member State authorities, as trusted intermediaries between their citizens and the EU, mediate a certain level of support to their publics for the OMC. Our question of whether these impacts were somehow augmented by the OMC's revision after the Kok Report remained largely unanswered, given the lack of emphasis on this point in secondary literature. Nonetheless, given that the re-launch of the OMC was achieved via consensus, we could assume some change in this impact as well as in salience, since the argument that simply the concerted effort to raise visibility and participation in the public might act as an impetus and thus promote salience can be made. A similar argument of OMC impact augmentation can be made for mutual learning and policy shifts. Consequently, the foregoing could, in theory, lead to some more mediated support for the EU as direct results of the OMC re-launch, though, as noted this would be difficult to measure and gradual. In addition, what also came through via the scrutiny of the general impacts of the OMC was that it did not reveal any perceptible difference in the possible levels of this support being transmitted in each of the two countries in question. What remained, thus, was to see whether the way the two

Member States translate the OMC objectives into national initiatives could provide an indication of such a difference.

Consequently, our attempted scrutiny of the National Strategic Reports of Germany and the United Kingdom revealed that though the two countries face similar environmental challenges and accept the same OMC objectives as inputs, their translation into national initiatives varies: While Germany focuses more on resolving the issues of unemployment and the demographic challenge via new strategies, programs and funding, the United Kingdom's emphasis is more on fighting poverty and social exclusion via improved services. Moreover, the focus of each country here seems to reflect Eurobarometer surveys in terms of which issues the political community of each sees as important for the EU to tackle. Though on the one hand we can attribute the approach of each country's authorities to OMC and their political communities' predisposition towards what issues are important to the general social welfare model of each country (see Chapter 5), we can also view these through our two step-model (see Diagram 4.1): both Germany and the UK, as Member States of the EU, have an equal hand in inputting their demands and support in the EU, which then produces common outputs for all Member States to assume (arrow A). As the processing and translation of these into outputs (arrow C) varies between Germany and the United Kingdom, we underline the fundamental difference: where the first emphasises employment as the solution to the problem of poverty, the emphasis of its OMC outputs is on bringing people to employment, whereas the latter emphasises the problem of poverty and focuses its outputs on improving the system.

The conclusion here, then, may be formulated as follows: Germany, by emphasising employment, may be seen to be more 'in tune' with the Lisbon Process'

ultimate goal, that is, to make the EU “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion...”¹⁵⁷ This emphasis also aligns well with the EES as the primary, oldest and most developed OMC process (actually pre-dating the OMC). On the other hand, the UK’s emphasis is on eliminating poverty via system-altering measures, showing a better congruence with the ultimate goal of the OMC, that is, to fight poverty and make a decisive impact on its elimination by 2010. Moreover, Germany’s NSR’s make frequent mention of how ESF funds are used to support OMC initiatives, whereas this is much less the case with the United Kingdom. From the above one could surmise that though both countries are proponents of the OMC, Germany’s authorities as trusted leaders may well be transmitting more mediated support for the EU to their citizens. What remains consequently is to search for evidence that may suggest that any support for the EU has developed among its general public and more specifically among Germans and British, particularly after the OMC was revised.

¹⁵⁷ European Commission, “Social Protection Committee Policy Topics,” under “Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/spc_policy_topics_en.htm (accessed on February 27, 2010).

CHAPTER 5: The OMC and the Citizen's Support

The pursuit of our question to see how the new strategy of the EU to raise support for itself among its citizens by involving them in the OMC social policy process is working out led us to the conclusion, on the one hand, that citizen involvement in the OMC process has not occurred after its re-launch. This could lead one to expect that a corresponding level of support has not come about. On the other hand, though, the case was made that OMC social policy does have the potential to generate mediated support – transmitted by the Member States to their citizens – possibly at a higher level after the revision of the OMC was carried out. Moreover, our analysis this far has led us to suppose that Germany may be producing somewhat more mediated support than the United Kingdom, likely as a result of its closer alignment to the Lisbon process ultimate goal and its traditionally higher preponderance to show support and reliance on the EU. Recalling the intention of the Kok Report,¹⁵⁸ however, can we say that the re-launched OMC has indeed led to an identifiable rise in public support at all, directly or indirectly, despite the fact that it has not raised the public's participation in the process?

Although there is arguably merit to the idea that mediated support could be affecting the level of support for the EU, one could claim that so could a possible increase in visibility of the OMC process as a consequence of its re-launch, which, given the failure to raise participation levels in the OMC, could be just as subtle as the mediated type. While keeping in mind this subtle nature of both these types of support, and also

¹⁵⁸ “Engaging and involving citizens in the process has two mutually reinforcing attractions: it in effect seeks public support by giving people elements for debate and it leverages that support to put pressure on governments to pursue these goals.” European Commission High Level Group, *Facing the Challenge*, 44,

the likelihood that they would be virtually indistinguishable on the surface, what we could pursue is the scrutiny of primary data to confirm or disconfirm that the new strategy has brought about any change in support at all. The palpable critique that could be raised here is the question of the necessity of this pursuit, given the subtlety and, admittedly, the small amount of this support. The answer here relates back to our earlier deliberations about systems adaptation: both the evolution of a political system and the collection of diffuse support are gradual processes where change usually comes in small amounts. We cannot expect something different for the EU as a political system.

Empirical Examination

Our aim here, then, is a) to search for evidence that may suggest any change in support for the EU over the period of the OMC, specifically among the German and the British, that can, subsequently, b) substantiate the idea that at least some of this support may be due to increased visibility, that is, not only as a product of mediation, thereby leading us to assume that the Kok Report's aim to increase support may have been achieved more directly than the 'round about' way that mediated support represents. An ultimate aim of the above will also be to seek to relate any changes in support to the OMC and its re-launch.

More specifically, our initial search will consider Eurobarometer questions that relate data of support for the EU over the years at the EU level and at the national levels of Germany and the UK. After that we will look for an accompanying change in the way the citizens perceive the EU and its role in social policy since the OMC's revision, which could indicate that though there was no increase in participation after the OMC process was revised, there was in the perception of Europeans about the EU's role in social policy, contributing, possibly, to a change in specific support. Adding to this

confirmation would be an examination of OMC indicators to see how the changes they represent in general living conditions may have been affecting these perceptions and thereby support levels. If we are able to verify the foregoing suppositions, we can then speculate on the likelihood that changes in support levels have been caused by the OMC.

Changes in Public Opinion Support Levels and the OMC: Specific vs Mediated Support

We can begin to consider the changes in support levels for the EU in general and for Germany and the UK as measured by two Eurobarometer questions clearly intended to measure such a disposition, having been asked over a number of years: the first one is related as “Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY’S membership in the European Union is ... a good thing?”, and through it we make the following observations, as represented on Chart 1 below. We note that upon the introduction of the Lisbon process and OMC social policy by the Lisbon European Council in 2000 support rose by some points from 50% in the Autumn of 2000 and 48% in the Spring of 2001 to 53% in the following half year and seems to have remained at a fairly constant level until it dipped temporarily to 43% for the two Eurobarometer surveys Autumn 2003 and Spring 2004 (Eurobarometer 60 and 61 respectively).¹⁵⁹ These changes in the level of support, however, cannot be said to constitute a convincing indication that there was a pan-EU increase; the rise in comparison to the pre-OMC period is not only not sustained, but the

¹⁵⁹ This temporary decrease can be persuasively explained by a relatively high level of disapproval among the then EU 15 citizens regarding the enlargement of May 2004, which brought in 10 new member states, most of them former Eastern Bloc countries and relatively poor. In fact, Eurobarometer 61 (Spring 2004) found “the Germans (28%) and the British (31%) ... the least enthusiastic” when responding to the question: “Please tell me whether you are for or against it: the enlargement of the European Union to include ten new countries this May.” The overall disapproval at the EU15 level was 39% against enlargement, 42% for it, and 19% responding “Don’t know”. Source: European Commission, Eurobarometer 61, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, July 2004), B93.

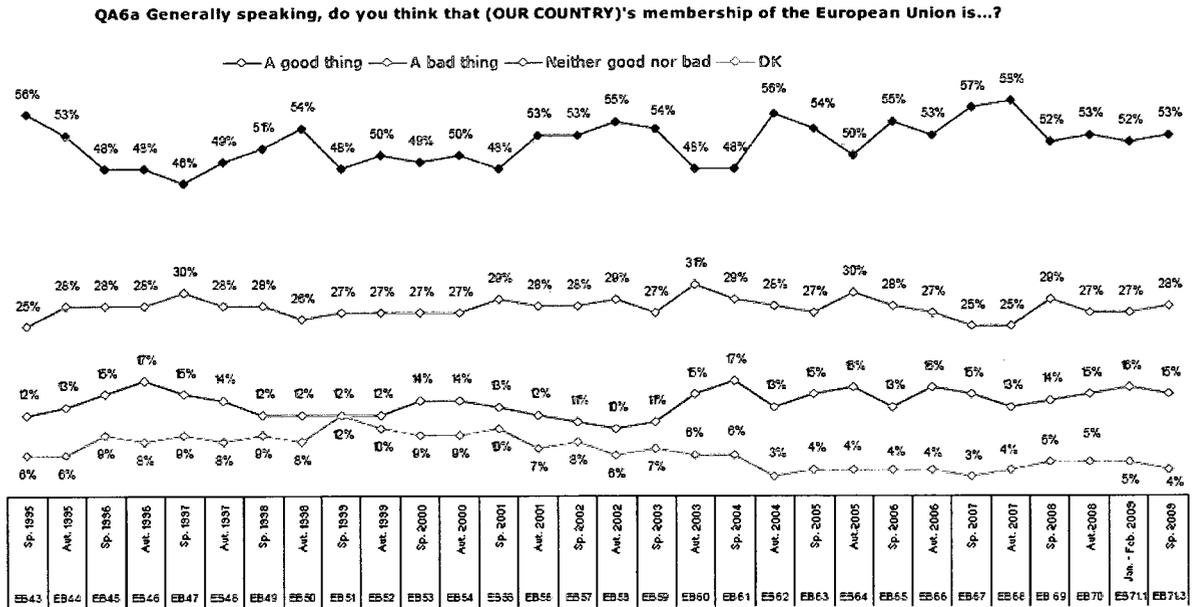


Chart 1 Support for membership in the EU

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 71*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, September 2009), 91.

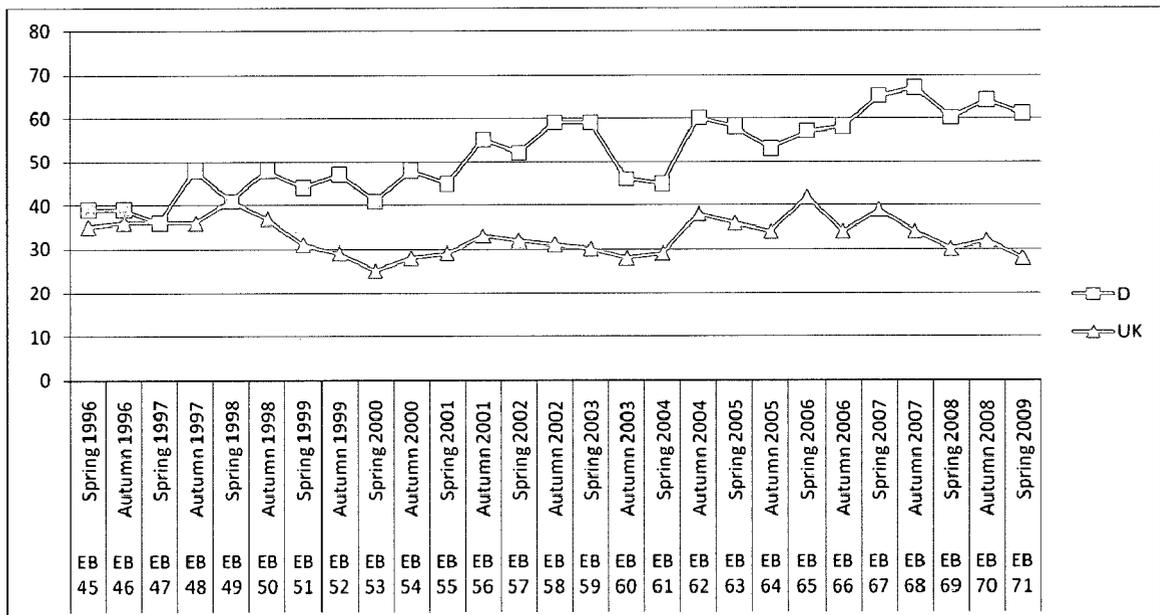


Chart 2 Support for membership in the EU – Germany and the UK

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 45-Eurobarometer 71*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities).

Chart 2 Support for membership in the EU – Germany and the UK

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 45-Eurobarometer71*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities).

The levels of support with respect to the two countries in question, on the other hand, may be viewed as somewhat more definitive when we examine their specific results. The line on Chart 2 representing Germany shows an apparent rise in inclination of Germans' support for their country's membership in the EU following the arrival of the Lisbon process and the OMC, which holds steady until the temporary drop, which would represent the discontent around the time of the enlargement to the East. Furthermore, this support for membership continues an ascent upon the revision of OMC, but this portion of the ascent cannot be clearly distinguished from the one prior the revision, which means that we cannot claim the new strategy as a (main) causal factor. On the other hand, when considering the same periods for the United Kingdom we are struck by two observations: first by the relative stability of (unchanged) support for membership following the introduction of the OMC and a level of volatility thereafter. In this case, then, we cannot claim to have any evidence of a sustained change in support for membership in the United Kingdom, neither before the OMC's revision, nor after its re-launch. What is very clear, however, is that, the levels of support between the two countries have had a tendency to grow apart over time, with the United Kingdom consistently showing lower levels than Germany.

Additional corroboration for the above may also be found in the second Eurobarometer question that arguably also measures support for the EU over time, i.e., "Taking everything into account, would you say that (OUR COUNTRY) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?" If we consider the corresponding chart (Chart 3), we see a pattern reminiscent of the one on Chart 2: prior

to the introduction of the Lisbon process and the OMC, the general perception of Europeans regarding the questions of the EU's benefit to their country remained within the mid to low 40% with the exception of two spikes in the Autumn of 1994 and in the Autumn of 1998 (48% and 49% respectively).¹⁶⁰ Upon the introduction of Lisbon/OMC and for the several years thereafter we see a gradual but fairly volatile rise in support (from 45% to 52%) without a clear signal of a sustained change commencing at the time of the Lisbon and OMC revision.

Mirroring the first question we considered above (membership of our country a good thing?) and its results at the national level, the patterns repeat themselves with Germany and the United Kingdom. Chart 4 shows a pattern for Germany where we can identify a rising level of support, though perhaps somewhat less convincingly than in the 'membership-a-good-thing' question, and without a clear indication that this rise changed after the change in the OMC strategy. Similarly, in the case of the United Kingdom, the level of support does not indicate a rise, but a somewhat volatile path. What is more, we note that though the view in the UK that benefits derived from membership was higher than Germany's at one time, the last ten years have reflected a level lying consistently below that of Germany, emulating Chart 2.

The obvious critique that we should consider in pointing out that support levels in Germany are suggestive of a rise over the time of the OMC is the probability that this elevation in support after the introduction of OMC and even after its re-launch was caused by other or additional factors. One way of approaching this question is to establish what the Lisbon process and in particular the OMC are: a venture in an area

¹⁶⁰ A feasible explanation for the 1995 spike may be the settling of the after affects of the EU Treaty coupled with the imminent entry of Austria, Finland and Sweden into the Union on January 1, 2005. The sudden increase in Autumn 2008 could be explained by the fast-approaching Treaty of Amsterdam on May 1, 2009, which, incidentally, was the treaty in which the title of 'Employment' was introduced.

initiatives and indicators persist over time – and it is this persistence that can be reconciled, to a degree, to survey results of specific support. Other factors such as treaties and enlargements not only do not meet these criteria fully; as we have seen from the deliberations above, such large undertakings usually show up as temporary changes in survey results over time, indicating rising or dropping levels of specific support. Therefore, though we cannot claim the Lisbon process and the OMC as the sole factors affecting the levels of support, they may be considered to have some explanatory power with respect to the levels of support for the EU over time.

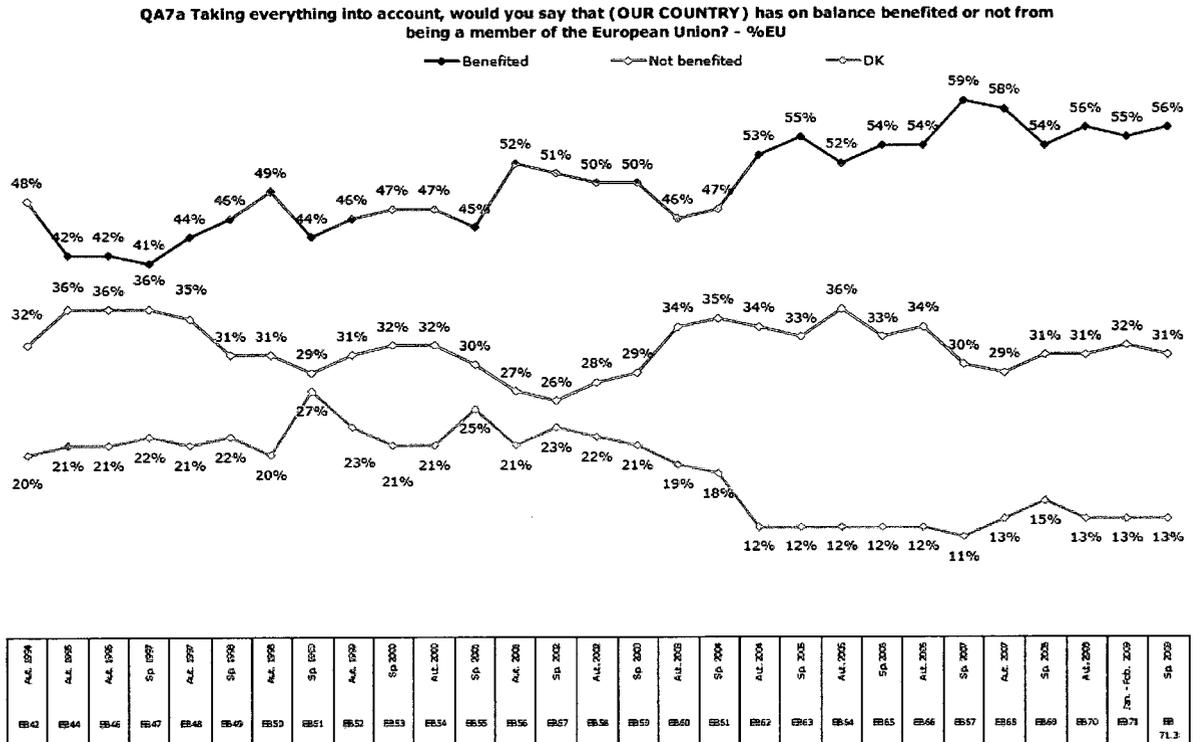


Chart 3 Perceived benefits of membership in the EU

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 45-Eurobarometer71*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities).

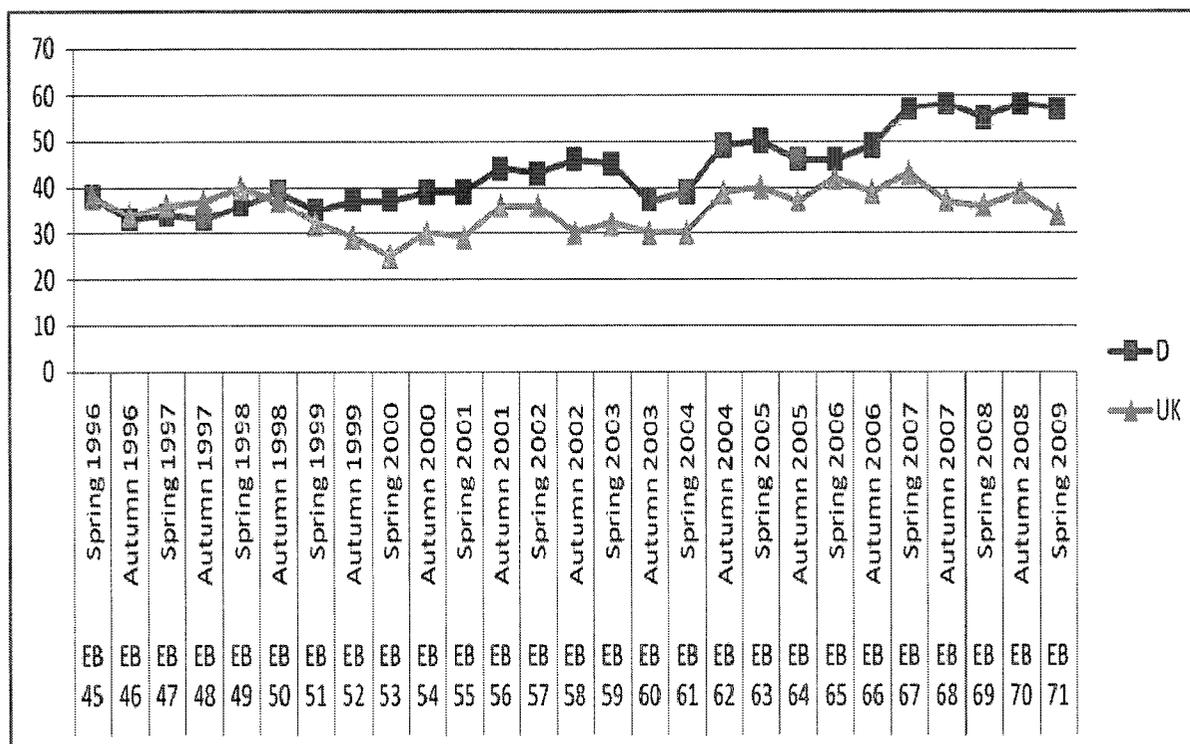


Chart 4 Perceived benefits of membership in the EU – Germany and the UK

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 45-Eurobarometer71*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities).

Section Summary

What we have tried to do this far is to establish whether there is a discernable pattern that can be detected in Eurobarometer survey results indicating a change in support for the European Union in Germany and the United Kingdom. In considering the results of two survey questions, that is, support for membership and perceived benefits for one's own country through membership, we saw that such a relationship cannot be detected at the EU level nor at that of the United Kingdom. The data for Germany, on the other hand, does suggest an upward trend. In addition, our examination shows that of the

two countries Germany shows almost consistently higher levels of support than the United Kingdom, which could be taken to be indicative of the predisposition of each country towards the European Union, that is, how they perceive it and its functions.

The first of the above two realisations brings us to the question as to the cause of the apparent rise in support in Germany, if some of it can be claimed as a consequence of the OMC, while the levels in the United Kingdom remain insignificantly affected. Given that there is no discernable change in the rising German support levels for the EU before and after the new OMC strategy was launched, and since we have already shown that the participation levels that this new strategy intended did not materialise, we might be inclined to assume that the increasing support in Germany, should it be OMC-related, may be attributed solely or virtually wholly only to mediated support. This, however, would relegate the Kok Report intention to raise visibility of the OMC as ineffective, which could lead us to a hypothesis stemming from the second realisation, that is, that the level of support being mediated so far with respect to OMC depends to a wide degree on the Eurofriendliness or Euroskepticism of each Member State, and not the actual EU efforts in social policy. If, on the other hand, we assume that some of the assumed rise in support in Germany is due to OMC visibility,¹⁶¹ then we can claim some success for the Kok intention and speculate about a possible connection between raising visibility of the OMC and influencing public opinion. In this scenario mediated support would continue, but each Member State would have an additional tool, namely its control over visibility, to influence its public. Here we require evidence of not necessarily actual quantifiable efforts by the EU and Member State efforts to promote visibility, but a scrutiny of people's perceptions of the EU's role in social policy affairs to see if they show any

¹⁶¹ Recalling that we cannot definitively distinguish between mediated and specific support changes, we have to look for other indications that one, the other or both are at play.

change over time and if such changes may be related to the OMC, particularly after it was revised.

Public Perceptions of EU Involvement in Employment and Social Affairs

Having touched on the idea of public participation and visibility a number of times previously we could follow two avenues to answer the question of public perception levels of EU involvement in social policy affairs: the first is to consider evidence from the EU regime's perspective as reasoning for the necessity of publicity. This would prove the lack, or insignificant amount, thereof until 2005, suggesting that prior to revision OMC-related support would have been only of the mediated kind. Next, we can look at the empirical evidence as derived from Eurobarometer surveys to see if it offers an indication of the European citizens', i.e., the political community's, feelings towards the 'European' policies on employment and social affairs over time. This latter in itself could provide evidence for the possibility that despite the lack of the intended increase in the public's participation in the OMC process, the inherent impetus that came about via the new strategy has indeed increased visibility and perhaps also specific support.¹⁶²

To begin, both the Wim Kok Report and the subsequent European Commission Communication offer attestation of the need for publicity. The Kok Report states in its conclusion that

the challenges facing Europe, why policies are developing as they are and the importance of acting together, need to be understood much better by the European public. Understanding requires clear and vigorous communication. The importance of this for the success of the Lisbon project cannot be underestimated. All

¹⁶² It is also easily conceivable that this impetus to act also has an influence on mediated support.

involved, including European and national politicians, have an important role to play in delivering the message.¹⁶³

This would indicate that the level of communication regarding these efforts was at most insufficient, or at least rudimentary, prior to the OMC revision and re-launch in 2005-06, offering further confirmation that most support was mediated during the period prior to the OMC's re-launch, and that raising awareness about it (originally planned via increased participation, which was hoped to raise specific support) necessary. We may speculate here that what was also insufficient may not have necessarily been the level of support for the EU *per se* at this point. Rather, it could have been the lack of a sufficient level of support for one of its new elements, i.e., OMC social policy, or, better yet, EU social policy, which, in order to persist and survive, needed to receive its own recognition, and so support, which would enable its evolution, thus bolstering integration.

The need, that is to say, a trigger for additional support, which would be necessary for evolving into further integration, was shared by the Commission, the more supranational element of the EU, which called for “enhancing the visibility of the OMC”, thereby echoing the Kok Report, emphasising the need for it as follows:

Greater visibility for the OMC would achieve several objectives. It would inform citizens of the EU's supportive interest in social protection and inclusion policies. The common objectives and the policy exchanges taking place under the OMC could contribute positively to the policy debates taking place in all Member States.¹⁶⁴

On the basis of the Commission's Communication cited above, the European Council “adopted in March 2006 a new framework for the social protection and social inclusion

¹⁶³ European Commission High Level Group, *Facing the Challenge*, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Commission of the European Communities. *Communication to the Spring European Council. Working Together for Growth and Jobs: A New Start for the Lisbon Strategy*, 9.

process.”¹⁶⁵ This framework emphasised under one of its three general objectives (Objective C) “good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy” bringing the European political community in closer proximity to OMC social policy. Indeed, the first Joint Report (2007) after the revision of the OMC indicates that civil society and social partners increasingly got involved at national and European levels with respect to the Open Method of Coordination.¹⁶⁶

There is an additional point to be made here, however. The European Council is the most intergovernmental element of the European Union and also the most powerful. Consequently, if we consider that this representation of Member States (trusted leaders) puts its efforts and endorsement behind a renewed OMC process, then we could assume that these trusted leaders reflected a corresponding level of mediated support for the EU, as well as the process, to their citizenry. This is not to say that this support would necessarily be wholly positive; given that OMC social policy remains a voluntary process, the trusted leaders could have mediated a level of support (presumably) with the same intensity that they pursue OMC objectives. And this intensity could be tied in easily with the inclination of each Member State towards the EU, a factor that has repeatedly come up and which will be dealt with later on in the present chapter.

What evidence, however, does the more empirical level offer that communication was scant with respect to OMC social policy at the EU level prior to the revision, confirming additionally that support stemming from the OMC for the EU was of the

¹⁶⁵ European Commission, “Common Objectives,” under “European Commission/Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion/Process,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/objectives_en.pdf (accessed on February 26, 2010).

¹⁶⁶ European Commission, *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2007*, 6-7.

mediated kind prior to the OMC's re-launch? In addition, what evidence is there that perception of social policy efforts at the same level has improved since revision, most likely due to increased communication and visibility? And what would this suggest for the hypothesis that the OMC does have the potential to influence citizens' feelings towards support for the EU? Attempting to get a quantitative idea of the increase in communication efforts and their effects regarding OMC in general at the EU level would go beyond our capacity here. The same would apply in trying to carry out any similar research of the two countries under review. What would be more practicable, however, would be to gauge for a maintained change in public opinion at the EU level and at the level of Germany and the United Kingdom regarding the EU as it relates to social policy issues. A clear indicator could be a maintained change in European public opinion levels when compared to an obviously different level prior to revision. To this end, we can examine Eurobarometer questions over time pertaining to social policy areas with respect to the EU to see whether they reflect a change for the EU as a whole, and to see whether perhaps there is a perceptible difference in these opinions not only in but also between the two countries in question. Any evidence of such differences between the periods of before and after revision could corroborate the claim that active communication has indeed occurred after revision, which might suggest something about the levels of specific support and mediated support and hint at the possibility to influence public opinion about the EU and its role in social policy affairs. More importantly, however, any such difference may be an indication that the Kok intent to raise specific support is working, even if not quite in the way planned, that is, by increasing participation in the OMC process.

Unfortunately, a specific, consistent Eurobarometer question that has been posed over time and which would indicate an increased level of information from the EU and Member States regarding the EU's efforts in social policy areas is not available.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, we may consider questions that give an indication of the changes in perception of Europeans about social policy areas over time as pointing to a sustained change in the level of information regarding the same areas. One such question is the following: "For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the (NATIONALITY) government or made jointly with the European Union?"¹⁶⁸ Though this is not an indication of the level of information regarding social policy over the years, it may be argued to be acceptable for the results over time provide some evidence that there is a change occurring in the public's opinion about social policy issues, which suggests that people's awareness is changing, itself an indication that particular factors are shaping it. One of these factors can be argued to be the increased transparency and communication with respect to OMC, perhaps all the more so given that the change we see over time in 'the fight against unemployment' begins subsequent to the Lisbon process' revision (See Chart 5)

¹⁶⁷ The question "In general, would you say that what you see, read or hear about what the European Union does in the area of employment and social affairs is very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative?" would have been ideal. However, it has not been asked for a sufficient number of times (3 in total) to yield usable results over time. See European Commission Eurobarometer 202, 261 and 316.

¹⁶⁸ National or joint EU decision-making (15 policy areas named, remaining constant until Eurobarometer 61); This question has been the best one found to deal with something happening in the areas of social protection. All others were incomplete or too recent.; Eurobarometer 48 and 49 do not mention the fight against poverty and the fight against social exclusion. Not mentioned in list; eb 55, 61, 63, 65 question not posed; If the nature of the question remains the same, then the number of areas shouldn't really matter that much; EU finds the replies over the years in this question comparable, see for ex, EB 70, pg 50, EB 67 pg 140.

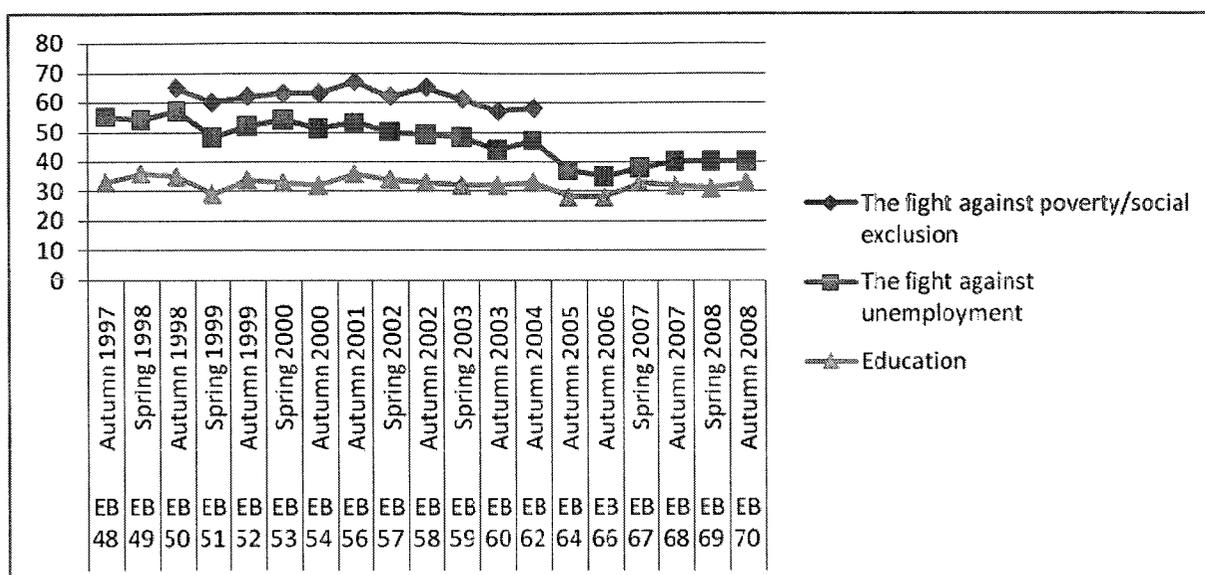


Chart 5 The EU as the level best suited to deal with the given social policy areas

Eurobarometer question: “For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the (NATIONALITY) government or made jointly with the European Union?”

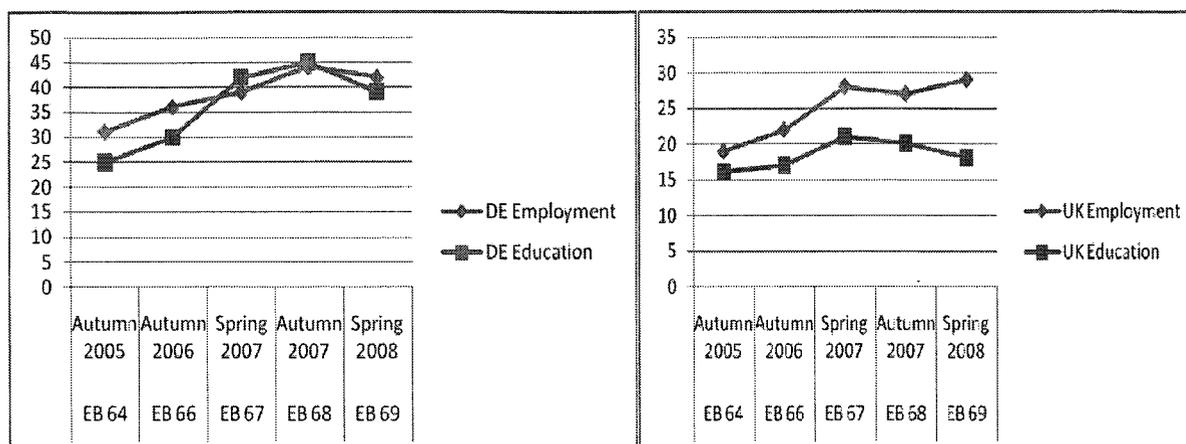
Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 48-Eurobarometer70* (not included: *Eurobarometer 55, 61, 63, 65*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, various publication dates).

At first sight we would not be surprised to see from the available data that the chart does not show much change in opinion in the period before OMC revision (fight against poverty and social exclusion, fight against unemployment, education).¹⁶⁹ The seemingly surprising fact after revision, where the best available data (fight against unemployment) shows a drop that has been maintained. This period corresponds to the period where more communication should be taking place with respect to EU level social policy efforts, and the lower level of favour for more joint efforts may be interpreted as a reaction of national sentiment against the encroachment of ‘outside’ forces on very ‘national’ policy areas. Nevertheless, we still perceive this as a change that begins with and corresponds to our post-revision period, which suggests a correlation between the call for more transparency and publicity that would have been adopted within the new

¹⁶⁹ Though Education is a policy area under the control of the Member States, the EU does exert some influence over it, provided that this influence can be related back to employment and employability. See Appendix A for examples.

framework on the OMC by the Council in 2006. Consequently, having relatively stable data before 2006 and a stable change thereafter on the issue of employment may be taken to suggest that either the efforts of OMC promotion or the perception of the publics are slanted towards the issue of employment. This should not be all too surprising since the European Employment Strategy is the oldest and arguably the best known process under the OMC social policy. The data also suggests a possibility of communication and of some increased OMC visibility at the EU level subsequent to 2005-2006.

We can seek additional corroboration of increased, and perhaps increasing, visibility by considering the same question and corresponding figures for the two Member States under scrutiny. Though Eurobarometer survey data for the same question prior to Autumn 2005 are not available for the two countries, what we see in Charts 6 and 7 from those figures that do exist is that there is a general tendency of public opinion to rise over the five Eurobarometer intervals measured, and this could correspond to a cumulative effect of communicating ongoing efforts regarding the EU and its role in OMC and social policy. At the same time what is just as interesting is the discrepancy in the level of support between Germany and the United Kingdom, where we see that the former clearly shows a higher level of affinity towards the EU by wanting to have the represented issue areas looked after at the level of the EU.



Charts 6 and 7 The EU as the level best suited to deal with the given social policy areas
Eurobarometer question: “For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the (NATIONALITY) government or made jointly with the European Union?”
Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 64,66,67,68,69* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, various publication dates).

In addition to the above, Table 5.1 (see below), though providing a smaller amount of data than the preceding, is useful in that it gives us an overview of the question which measures the extent to which the public views the Union’s current (at the time of asking) actions as priorities.¹⁷⁰ While it is true that we cannot use the scant data to verify changes in opinion in the two countries, we do note primarily two things: that on the two issues Germany clearly favours the idea that the EU prioritises fighting unemployment and also fighting poverty and social exclusion in comparison to the United Kingdom and that, comparably, Germany places more emphasis on the issue of fighting unemployment, whereas the United Kingdom places it on fighting poverty and social exclusion. What is also worth noting is that in this survey question Germany consistently outperforms the UK in that for its citizens poverty and social exclusion and unemployment are

¹⁷⁰ Question: “I am going to read out a list of actions that the European Union could undertake. For each one, please tell me, if in your opinion, it should be a priority, or not?” Unfortunately, the wording of the question changed for the post-revision period, thus not allowing for a direct comparison with the period prior. One additional benefit of using the results of this question here is that most Europeans consistently believe that these social affairs areas should be action priorities for the EU. See Eurobarometer 66, pg. 167.

consistently in the top three priorities mentioned, whereas the UK citizens prefer to see issues such as security and fighting crime at the EU level as priorities.¹⁷¹

Fighting Unemployment					
	EB 62	EB 63	EB 64	EB 65	EB 66
	Autumn 2004	Spring 2005	Autumn 2005	Spring 2006	Autumn 2006
EU	44	47	43	43	40
D	53	60	54	56	53
UK	15	15	14	16	19

Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion					
	EB 62	EB 63	EB 64	EB 65	EB 66
	Autumn 2004	Spring 2005	Autumn 2005	Spring 2006	Autumn 2006
EU	40	44	44	43	43
D	35	41	42	44	41
UK	26	33	34	31	33

Table 5.1 Prioritisation of actions that the EU should undertake

Question: "I am going to read out a list of actions that the European Union could undertake. For each one, please tell me, in your opinion, it should be a priority, or not?"

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 62-66* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, various publication dates).

The above is not simply evidence that the two countries have different views on what is a priority in the area of social policy. It also makes more evident that Germany's views seem to be more in line with those of the EU: Consider that the general Lisbon process stated goal is to make the EU area into "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion..."¹⁷² Consider also that the European Employment Strategy is the oldest and best developed policy process that is part of (and even predates) OMC. Consequently, given as we saw that Germany tends to focus more

¹⁷¹ See, for example, Eurobarometer 53, 56, 58, 60.

¹⁷² European Commission, "The Process: the Open Method of Coordination" under "Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection and Social Inclusion/Process," http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm (accessed on February 28, 2010).

on employment and employability in its own OMC efforts, one might expect that communication efforts to increase visibility of the OMC would be higher in Germany, as they would arguably have more efforts to bring across to the populace.

To supplement the missing data, what we can also take as an indication of changing opinion regarding the importance of employment and social policy in the eyes of the citizens is Eurbarometer's own words. In late 2006 it indicated that "[over] the past few years, the importance of employment and social policy has increased considerably in the eyes of the citizens"¹⁷³ which would point towards a change in public opinion taking place between the time of the Kok evaluation (2004) and the Lisbon revision (2006). Furthermore, we must also take into account the Commission's own ongoing efforts have the EU's efforts in social policy publicised: it continues to call for the setting of "quantified targets ... based on social indicators" via which "the OMC will be better able to evaluate the results of the [reformed strategy] and to make them more visible" by using the Lisbon methodology.¹⁷⁴ Ultimately, the above may be taken as indication that the public responds not only to the information efforts about OMC social policy, but also to the wave or waves of information about the subject that would have been taken up by the media considering the significance of the Kok Report (December 2004), the subsequent Commission communication (December 2005) and the Council Decision in March 2006 that followed it.

¹⁷³ European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 261: European Employment and Social Policy (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, October 2006) 1.

¹⁷⁴ European Commission, "Reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion," under "EUROPA /Summaries of EU legislation /Employment and social policy /Social inclusion and the fight against poverty," http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/social_inclusion_fight_against_poverty/em0011_en.htm (accessed on February 28, 2010).

Section Summary

In this section we attempted to establish whether the people's perceptions of the EU's role in social policy affairs show any change over time and if such changes may be related to the revision of the OMC. This would be in accordance with the Commission's advice and the Council's decision following the Kok Report (December 2004) that communication about, and thereby visibility of, the OMC should be increased. We concluded that at the EU level the sparse communication prior to process's revision made mediated support for the EU likely the only type that this process brought about. We also found that the data on perception of social policy efforts at the EU level suggests a change after the revision of OMC social policy, primarily in matters regarding employment, though it is unclear whether this change can be compellingly attributed only or for the most part to any increase in communication regarding the OMC. At the level of Germany and the United Kingdom, on the other hand, that data does hint some more at a general tendency of a rising affinity for the EU in matters of social affairs, though the more striking finding, consistent with earlier observations, is that the German public maintains a much closer attachment towards the European Union than does the British public. Furthermore, the priorities of each populace are reflective of earlier conclusions: the Germans view the fight against unemployment as a priority, whereas the British see the fights against poverty as more important.

In sum, while there is some preliminary indication that active communication about the OMC has indeed occurred after revision,¹⁷⁵ likely influencing visibility, we cannot conclude that the possibility to influence public opinion about the EU via its role

¹⁷⁵ If we were to take the use of the European Social Fund and the mentioning thereof as an example, we could say that, in Germany at least, the ESF is used to promote employment and to promote the fact that the EU is behind it, as we saw from the frequency of mention in the German and the UK NSRs.

in social policy affairs has been high; despite changes in perception in both countries, we have only seen a continued change in support in Germany, whereas the level of support in the United Kingdom has not followed a distinguishable path. Thus, the differences in perception between the two countries in question coupled with their level of support for the EU may be suggestive of the following: where we could argue that Germany has produced both specific and mediated support towards the EU after revision, the UK, in not showing any change, leaves us with a question: if there is indeed increased visibility of the OMC, how could the OMC's concrete results be influencing the levels of specific support for both countries? To answer this question we could look for evidence of positive or negative changes that took place in the two countries in social affairs since the OMC was introduced and later revised as reflected in the process's common indicators.

Examining Indicators

Under the OMC process, actual changes occurring in the social dimension are measured via common indicators that allow one to “compare best practices and to measure progress towards (the commonly set) objectives.”¹⁷⁶ Accordingly, though on the one hand, these commonly agreed indicators are meant for the practical purpose of monitoring progress towards objectives, we may make use of them and the ‘progress’ they may point at in order to find a connection between OMC and the change in EU popularity in Germany as a result of specific support, on the one hand. On the other, we can do the same for the UK, speculating ahead of time that the non-changes in the UK's support for the EU may be tied to unimpressive results in these indicators.

¹⁷⁶ European Commission, “Common Indicators,” under “Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion/Process,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/common_indicators_en.htm (accessed on February 25, 2010).

Though the revision of the OMC process in 2005-2006 also brought with it the adoption of a revised set of common indicators for the social protection and social inclusion process, data for these is available retroactively. This means that we can use the two time intervals (pre-revision and post-revision) to search for evidence that some impetus to act has been achieved by the OMC's re-launch, which would have consequences in the indicator numbers in general. Given the large number of indicators,¹⁷⁷ we will limit our scrutiny to those indicator sets which would affect a larger segment of the population and which would be more relevant for publicity and for public opinion: those relating to unemployment and to poverty. These are judged as more relevant for several reasons: the elimination of poverty is a main objective of the Lisbon process and OMC, and employment is seen as the main way to fight poverty and social exclusion. Another reason is not only the prevalence of these across all strands, as shared indicators, but also the fact that the topics of employment and poverty make up the bulk of the indicator sets.¹⁷⁸ In addition, the fight against unemployment and poverty, as already seen, figures prominently in the priority wishes of EU citizens.

The first indicator we may observe is the Employment Rate of Older Workers¹⁷⁹ from 1995 to 2008 (see below). This indicator is covered by objectives a) and b),¹⁸⁰ and may be considered more representative than many others. This is because of the persistently high unemployment rate among older workers and the growing demographic challenge this age-group represents, as was shown in our analysis in our earlier section

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. (These indicators consist of 14 overarching indicators, plus 11 context indicators, "meant to reflect the newly adopted overarching objectives (a) 'social cohesion' and (b) 'interaction with the Lisbon strategy growth and jobs objectives'; and of the three strand portfolios for social inclusion, pensions, and health and long-term care.")

¹⁷⁸ See Appendix B for a complete list of Objectives.

¹⁷⁹ Definition: Persons in employment in age groups 55 - 59 and 60 - 64 as a proportion of total population in the same age group. A longer description is available under Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/web/table/description.jsp>

¹⁸⁰ See Appendix B.

when examining National Strategic Reports, which portrays a preoccupation with raising the employment level in general and among older workers in particular (at least for Germany). If we compare the two Member States, we note that though there is a suggestion that the rise in Germany coincides with the revision of the OMC, we cannot completely attribute this rise solely to the revision. In addition, we also note two characteristics: that this employment rate in the UK has remained better than Germany's throughout the years and that the change for Germany has been more significant than the United Kingdom's.¹⁸¹ The former may go some way in explaining the UK's predisposition towards poverty with respect to OMC rather than employment (which is the opposite in Germany), whereas the latter may be telling of the effectiveness of the EES for Germany, which could be used to bolster specific support for the EU.

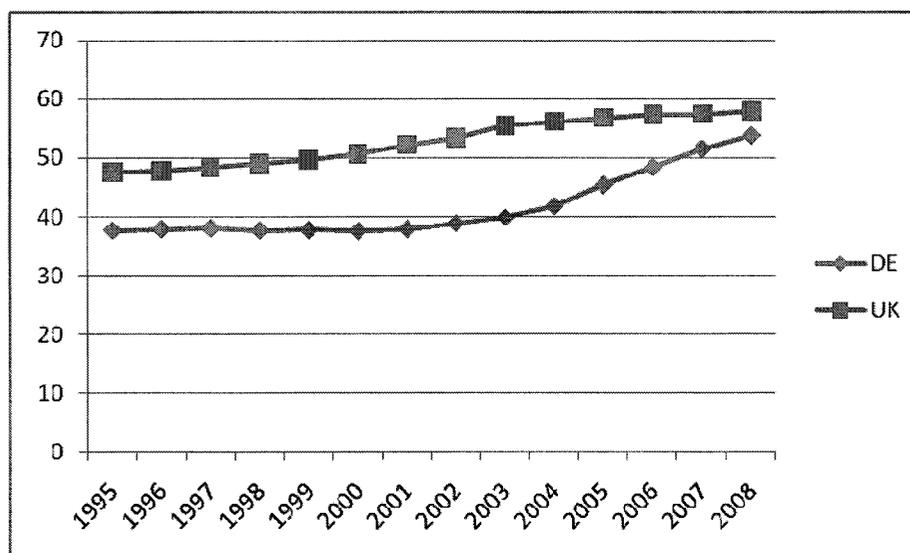


Chart 8 Employment rate of older workers (over 55)

¹⁸¹ Appropriate would have been data regarding the opinion patterns of individuals 55 and above by country with respect to their country's membership in the EU and their perception of the level of benefits. Unfortunately, Eurobarometer surveys only rarely offer such breakdown, which is insufficient to establish a trend over time.

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DE	37.7	37.9	38.1	37.7	37.8	37.6	37.9	38.9	39.9	41.8	45.4	48.4	51.5	53.8
UK	47.5	47.7	48.3	49	49.6	50.7	52.2	53.4	55.4	56.2	56.8	57.3	57.4	58

Indicator Table 3 Employment rate of older workers (over 55)

Source: European Commission Eurostat, "Overarching Indicators," under "Employment and social policy indicators/OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection),"

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection/overarching (accessed on February 28, 2010).

The second indicator we can consider is that regarding general unemployment,¹⁸² which is referenced to Objectives a) and b) and is appropriate for scrutiny since this issue does not only constitute an integral part of social policy of any country, but it is also an issue that has beleaguered Germany and the United Kingdom for decades, and where much of the focus of the OMC is, as the analysis of the National Strategic Reports has shown. If we now take into account the data for the total population and briefly compare the two countries, we see that changes in the unemployment rate for the UK have remained insignificant and cannot be reconciled with the timeline of the OMC. The analysis of the unemployment rate in Germany, on the other hand, though not showing a relationship with the Germans' feelings towards EU membership, does show a clear change, i.e., an intense and continuous drop in the rate upon the re-launch of the OMC. Once more, though this cannot be attributed solely to the effects of the re-launch, it seems that we have two patterns developing: a) the favourable changes in the German unemployment rate come in after the OMC's revision and can thus be argued to have the possibility to contribute to specific support, and b) the unemployment rate has been more favourable in the UK over the years.

¹⁸² Defined as "Share of unemployed people in total population of working age 15-64"

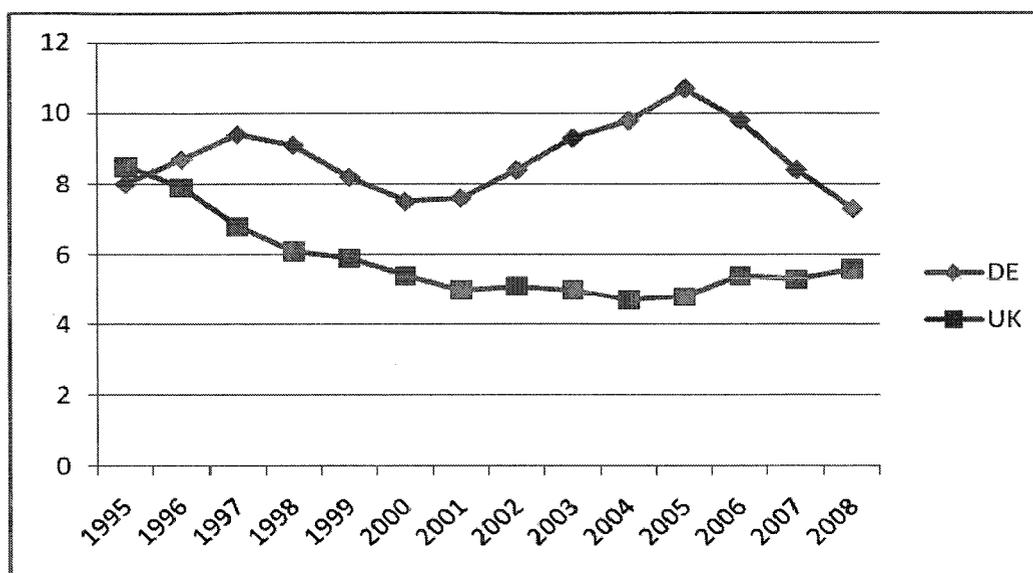


Chart 9 Yearly average unemployment (total: working ages 15-64)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DE	8	8.7	9.4	9.1	8.2	7.5	7.6	8.4	9.3	9.8	10.7	9.8	8.4	7.3
UK	8.5	7.9	6.8	6.1	5.9	5.4	5	5.1	5	4.7	4.8	5.4	5.3	5.6

Indicator Table 4 Yearly average unemployment (total: working ages 15-64)

Source: European Commission Eurostat, "Overarching Indicators," under "Employment and social policy indicators/OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection),"

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection/overarching (accessed on February 28, 2010).

The explanation for the discrepancy which the two countries seem to represent in their unemployment rates, especially with reference to OMC and their inclination towards membership could be bolstered by the data of indicators on long-term unemployment.¹⁸³

A look at Chart 10 and Indicator Table 5 shows a similar development as the one just considered, where the numbers show, once again, a telling pattern in the situation in Germany but not for that in the UK.

¹⁸³ Defined as the "Total long-term unemployed population (≥ 12 months' unemployment; ILO definition) as a proportion of total active population aged 15 years or more." From European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/indicators_en.pdf

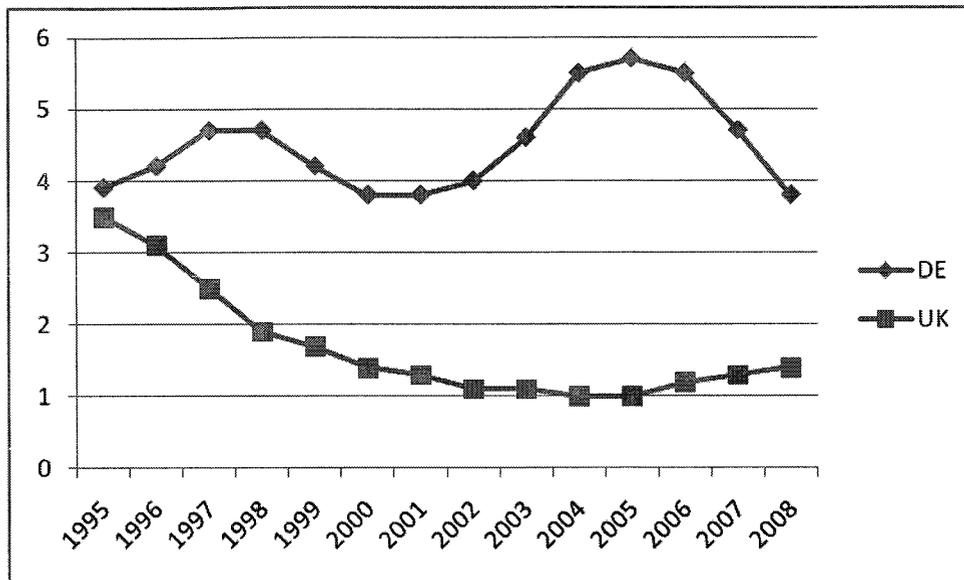


Chart 10 Long-term unemployment as %

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DE	3.9	4.2	4.7	4.7	4.2	3.8	3.8	4	4.6	5.5	5.7	5.5	4.7	3.8
UK	3.5	3.1	2.5	1.9	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.4

Indicator Table 5 Social Inclusion Portfolio (primary Indicator) Long-term unemployment as %
 Source: European Commission Eurostat, “Overarching Indicators,” under “Employment and social policy indicators/OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection),”
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection/overarching (accessed on February 28, 2010).

Considering the foregoing, note should be taken of the Eurobarometer results for the two countries for the following question: “I am going to read out a list of actions that the European Union could undertake. For each one, please tell me, if in your opinion, it should be a priority, or not?” The widely divergent results in intensity for the action “Fighting Unemployment” under the preceding backdrop of indicators show more clearly why the national priorities lie where they do.

	EB 62	EB 63	EB 64	EB 65	EB 66
	Autumn 2004	Spring 2005	Autumn 2005	Spring 2006	Autumn 2006
EU	44	47	43	43	40
D	53	60	54	56	53
UK	15	15	14	16	19

Table 5.2 Fighting unemployment as a national priority

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 62-66* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, various publication dates).

Switching direction at this point, the next indicator that we may consider in an attempt to support the above implication that the OMC indicator results to date have tended to be more favourable for Germany is the at-risk-of-poverty rate. Poverty is, after all, one of the issues that the OMC is intended to confront and even eliminate by 2010, and it is one area that citizens view as one of the top priorities of the EU.

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DE	15	14	12	11	11	10	11				12	13	15	15
UK	20	18	18	19	19	19	18	18	18		19	19	19	

Indicator Table 6 At risk of poverty rate

Source: European Commission Eurostat, "Overarching Indicators," under "Employment and social policy indicators/OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection)," http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection/overarching (accessed on February 28, 2010).

What we see in Indicator Table 6, despite the fragmentary data, is that the risk of poverty has been consistently higher in the UK, where it has remained quite uniform. Considering that the UK puts its emphasis in OMC on reducing poverty, as we saw in our examination of the NSRs, the indicator results above would presumably not be considered in a favourable light by the British, which, on the one hand, could be used to explain the absent changes in support for the EU after the OMC's revision, and which could arguably also add to their euroskepticism. On the other hand, since Germany puts its emphasis on employment, the favourable changes in that area could be used as public opinion bolsters rather than the rather ineffective showing in the chart above. If we

consider a related indicator from the pensions strand, the at-risk-of-poverty rate of elderly people (Indicator Table 7), we soon come to the same conclusion as above.

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DE	15	17	12	12	11	10	12				14	13	17	15
UK	32	28	25	25	21	24	27	26	24		26	28	30	

Indicator Table 7 At-risk-of-poverty rate of elderly people (65 and over)

Source: European Commission Eurostat, "Overarching Indicators," under "Employment and social policy indicators/OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection),"

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection/overarching (accessed on February 28, 2010).

Analysing the poverty indicators, whose values do not reconcile with positive public opinion towards membership, however, may be considered insufficient. We can thus seek corroboration for the at-risk-of-poverty rate analysis by scrutinising an additional indicator, which provides a somewhat altered perspective as it measures something different and more easily 'tangible' than poverty risk: income inequality.

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DE	4.6	4	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6				3.8	4.1	5	4.8
UK	5.2	5	4.7	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.5	5.3		5.8	5.4	5.5	

Indicator Table 8 Income Inequality: Ratio of total income received by the 20% of the country's population with the highest income (top quintile) to that received by the 20% of the country's population with the lowest income (lowest quintile). Income must be understood as equalised disposable income.

Source: European Commission Eurostat, "Overarching Indicators," under "Employment and social policy indicators/OMC (Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection),"

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection/overarching (accessed on February 28, 2010).

Despite some missing data even here, we soon become aware of a pattern reminiscent of that of the at-risk-of-poverty rate: the German values are consistently better than those of the United Kingdom's, indicating that the UK has a greater problem with poverty, hence its government's focus. The conclusion here could be similar to the one we made in the case of poverty risk: the figures for Germany are irreconcilable with that country's citizen's views towards membership, yet better than the UK's, which leads one to seek an answer in other indicators whose results may be (considered) better, such

as (un)employment (a priority among Germans and at a higher level than poverty). The figures for the United Kingdom, on the other hand, relate no improvement in the income inequality situation and this can be detrimental to support for the EU among a population that sees poverty as a higher priority than unemployment.

Section Summary

We began this section with the intention of locating evidence as to the possibility that OMC social policy may have contributed to changes in the social situations of Germany and the United Kingdom, which could have resulted in (positive or negative) specific support in each via the increased visibility that the OMC's re-launch was supposed to bring about. This led us to the scrutiny and analysis of commonly agreed indicators, which are meant to monitor progress towards the OMC's commonly set objectives, and which also proved useful in indeed finding a 'guarded' connection between what may be considered 'concrete' OMC results (as reflected in the indicators) and the changes in EU popularity in Germany and also to some speculation about the non-changes in this popularity in the United Kingdom.

In our analysis we focused on what we justified as more relevant indicators, choosing from those related to unemployment and poverty and eliciting from these the following two realisations: a) that in the indicators relating to (un)employment, the United Kingdom has the better position, though without any appreciable changes over time, and where Germany has shown improvement since the re-launch of the OMC, and b) that in indicators relating to poverty, Germany has (usually) the better position, but with neither country showing much improvement that could be used towards raising specific support. This leads us to believe that poverty, though a declared target for

elimination in the Lisbon process, and also one of the top priorities for the EU in the citizens' minds, is not only not diminishing, but its maintained steadiness is seemingly not perceived by the German public to such a degree that might cause a discernable change in public opinion towards membership. On the other hand, the persistence in the poverty levels in the United Kingdom, a higher priority for its government and the population than is the case in Germany, seems to be reflective of persistence in the British citizens' support levels regarding the EU.

Consequently, with respect to specific support, we may speculate that Germany may have had reason to produce more of it: its government's predisposition towards unemployment is more closely aligned with OMC goals and the older EES process, being aided by the better showing in the indicators reflecting (un)employment, which is the higher priority for the German people. Thus, any higher visibility resulting from the change in OMC strategy in 2005-2006 would presumably produce a corresponding level of specific support. On the other hand, the United Kingdom's predisposition towards poverty is less closely aligned with OMC goals and cannot be said to be helped by the flat showing in the indicators which reflect poverty, which is the higher priority for the citizens than unemployment. In addition, the Lisbon process's intention "to make a decisive impact on eradicating poverty by 2010",¹⁸⁴ the attainment of which can be disputed given the indicators above, can also be casting a negative shadow. Thus, any visibility of the OMC social policy, or at least the EU's efforts in social policy, resulting from its strategy's re-launch would likely not result in an improvement in specific support by the British towards the European Union.

¹⁸⁴ European Commission, "Social Inclusion," under "Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion/Social inclusion," http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/poverty_social_exclusion_en.htm (accessed on February 28, 2010).

Ultimately, given the conclusion in Chapter 4 that mediated support can be claimed to be present in both countries with respect to OMC social policy and given the conclusions above, we can say that our analysis for Germany does not contradict the specific Kok Report intention of raising support, while our analysis for the United Kingdom shows that that this intention has not worked out there. Nevertheless, we have to incorporate into this conclusion the underlying pattern that has repeatedly resurfaced in our analysis and our deliberations: the stark differences between Germany and the United Kingdom in their attitudes towards the EU, their attitudes towards social policy issues, reflective of their national social models, and what role these may play in mediated support and specific support stemming from OMC social policy.

The Influence of National Attitudes and National Social Models

National Attitudes It is common knowledge that national public opinion in the United Kingdom has maintained a doubting streak towards the EU, while that of the Germans has tended to be more inclined to support it. Furthermore, as we have seen, prior to the re-launch of the OMC, virtually any influence on public opinion regarding the EU stemming from the OMC would have been of the mediated type in both countries, arguably higher in Germany, which would have presumably continued after the re-launch. What we have to consider, then, is the following: how could general national attitudes have borne an influence on the support levels for the EU in the two countries going on to produce, or continue to produce, a similar outcome after the OMC became more visible?

At this point we can situate the Kok hypothesis as follows: we know that it was meant to raise participation of the citizens in the OMC in order to give the process more

momentum, both of which were to result in more support for the EU, and we saw that the ready solution that offered itself was higher levels of subsidiarity, i.e., more extensive involvement of sub-national and non-governmental actors, resulting in more visibility. The missing but integral component, that is, the political community, was thus drawn into the OMC social policy picture: attempting to at least partially collectivise the policy field closest to the hearts of the people and thereby get their interest and support for it could not be done by excluding them from the process.¹⁸⁵ Given, however, that social policy is a very salient issue not only to governments, but also to national publics, it stands to reason that the collective attitudes of the national political communities would be all the more responsive to EU involvement in it, even if participation did not materialise.¹⁸⁶ Consequently, since the focus of the OMC, as of the Lisbon process itself, was and continues to be on (increasing and safeguarding) employment, it has aligned better with German views and needs as we saw above, whereas it did less so with the views and needs of the British public. The possible higher visibility of the OMC, then, may have enticed a reaction from national attitudes that led the German public to show an indication of not contradicting the Kok expectation (while not fully being able to confirm that the method has worked), while producing no detectable reaction in the United Kingdom. Moreover, a similar argument can be made about mediated support: national German views and needs align better with the OMC's primary aims, providing a more suitable environment for favourable mediated support.

¹⁸⁵ Even if this process may be said to be of a complex nature that requires centralisation and expert treatment, the social policy field is, practicably, too important to both national governments and to their publics to be collectivised without the latter's involvement.

¹⁸⁶ This may be explained by the fact that much of what goes on at the EU level is of a complex nature, thus not drawing the full interest of the public.

National Social Models It is conceivable that national attitudes regarding social policy are as much a product as they are a contributor to national social models. Similarly as with national attitudes, then, our aim here is to see how the national social models, may have had an influence on public opinion regarding the EU stemming from OMC after the re-launch. We can start by recalling one of our earlier findings, that is, that Germany has a tendency to favour more direct intervention, along with initiatives that include more funding, to fight *unemployment*, whereas the UK sides more for the promotion of reforms and improved services to fight *poverty*. We see here that each country not only perceives a different stressor to its environment, but it also chooses a different approach from the other to fight it. This variance in perception and approach may better be understood as a reflection of each country's social welfare model, which, when projected to the nation at large and its character may explain a number of things about each nationality, its view of the EU and the latter's involvement in social affairs. Put differently, if we try to ascribe a welfare state typology to each country, we may get a clearer idea of the source of the enthusiasm and scepticism each displays towards the EU and how the characteristics of each colour perceptions and attitudes, and ultimately levels of support.

More specifically, in his discussion of and comparison of welfare state typologies, Kleinman makes reference to Abrahamson (1992, 1999) and Leibfried (1993), who identify four categories of welfare state in the European Union, two of which we can readily make use of: in addition to the Scandinavian and the Latin models, the two authors mention the Bismarckian and Anglo-Saxon models, where the former "have institutional welfare regimes in which the welfare state is compensator of first resort" and where the latter have "residual welfare regimes, with the welfare state as compensator of

last resort”.¹⁸⁷ Kleinman juxtaposes these two models to correspond to another typology (by Titmuss) where he identifies Germany’s as a model where “social needs are met on the basis of merit, work performance and productivity” (the Industrial Achievement-Performance model),¹⁸⁸ based on the concept of the social market economy, and the UK as the Residual Welfare model, in which “needs are met by the state only when the private market and family have clearly failed, and then only temporarily”¹⁸⁹ based on the concept that all markets are free.¹⁹⁰ These typologies of what in effect are institutionalised welfare models explain well the focus of Germany, as an example of the former, on employment and employability, and the focus of the UK, as representative of the latter, on poverty and systemic reforms to combat it.

If we now search for concrete national manifestations of the above as products of the OMC process, we can refer to Preunkert and Zirra, who resonate the above claims in their own analysis of the impact of the OMC (EES and OMC/Inclusion) on Germany. They state that while “labour market policies ... have aimed to protect existing jobs, the dominant goal of the welfare regime was to protect employees’ living standards” where poverty “was considered to be a phenomenon that was defeated by a guaranteed minimum income.”¹⁹¹ Moreover, they found that the EES has brought about “paradigmatic change” (though with institutionally determined limitations) in the labour market in Germany, whereas the OMC/Inclusion “has been regarded as a marginal

¹⁸⁷ Mark Kleinman, *A European Welfare State?*, 32-3.

¹⁸⁸ see also Milena Büchs and Karl Hinrichs, “Germany: moving towards Europe but putting national autonomy first,” 22-25.

¹⁸⁹ See Mark Kleinman, *A European Welfare State?*, Chapter 2.

¹⁹⁰ Compare Julian Le Grand, Elias Mossialos and Morgan Long, “The United Kingdom: more an economic than a social European,” 43.

¹⁹¹ Jenny Preunkert and Sascha Zirra, “Europeanisation of Domestic Employment and Welfare Regimes: The German, French, and Italian Experiences,” in *Changing European Employment and Welfare Regimes*, ed. Martin Heidenreich and Jonathan Zeitlin (New York: Routledge, 2009), 193.

process within the federal government and local authorities.”¹⁹² This conclusion rhymes well not only with our finding that the focus of Germany has been on employment and employment derived benefits. It also lends itself easily to the Bismarckian/Achievement-Performance model outlined above.

With reference to the United Kingdom, on the other hand, van Gerven and Beckers find that since the OMC was introduced the process of learning through open coordination has brought about shifts where, for example, “the role of unemployment insurance has shifted from replacing lost income to merely a minimum provision, with strict conditions for claimants”¹⁹³ suggesting, on the one hand, a disincentive for people to stay unemployed, and on the other, that the state will only provide as a means of fighting poverty, much in line with their model where the emphasis that defines to role of government is on the “autonomy of the individual, the need to protect and assist the vulnerable, and a focus on economic growth to provide opportunity for all.”¹⁹⁴ In a similar vein, Le Grand *et al* found that the UK government “believes that welfare-to-work measures to promote employment are the best way to reduce poverty, and that little would be gained – indeed, much would be lost – by adopting regulatory ESMS [European Social Model] of social policy.”¹⁹⁵ Once again, these conclusions reflect not only our own deliberations of poverty as the focal point of the UK and its pre-occupation with systemic changes to fight it, but also more broadly the principles of the typology of the Anglo-Saxon Residual Welfare model.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Minna van Gerven and Mieke Beckers, “Unemployment Protection Reform in Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, and the UK: Policy Learning through Open Coordination?,” in *Changing European Employment and Welfare Regimes*, ed. Martin Heidenreich and Jonathan Zeitlin (New York: Routledge, 2009), 67.

¹⁹⁴ Julian Le Grand *et al*, “The United Kingdom: more an economic than a social European,” 41.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 58.

Ultimately, we can hypothesise on the presence of a serialised alignment:

Though both countries through their individual social models rely on employment as a way to promote welfare, Germany, the euroenthusiast, having an established model that allows the people to rely on the state for their welfare needs, including employment, might see its political community and its authorities as more accepting and supportive of EU social policy efforts when they appear, particularly if they can be related to improvement in employment. On the other hand, the generally eurosceptic UK has a social model culture where the people are conditioned to rely much less on the state for their welfare needs, which may make their support of the EU more volatile when it appears in the social policy field – particularly when poverty indicators do not improve or show signs of some worsening. Considering the above, then, we can claim to have some evidence that specific support and mediated support may be flowing more within Germany with respect to OMC social policy simply because the German social model, and the national attitudes that relate to it, seem to be, ultimately, more in line with the European Social Model.

This congruency can be substantiated further in literature: though many welfare models can be detailed in Europe, Le Grand *et al* point at “many ... commentators and opinion formers in the UK” and their “perception that only one kind of ESM exists.” Generalised, it is readily comparable to the Bismarckian (Continental) model where the state “bears most of the responsibility for the factors that affect individuals’ welfare”, where “all markets are heavily regulated”, and where redistribution is targeted at the unemployed, though it is viewed as having a “detrimental effect on economic growth and on incentives to work and to find employment.” This is not only a re-iteration of the characteristics of this model as detailed above; it also bears a hint of social solidarity,

which Büchs and Hinrichs make more present in their own interpretation of Germany's social model, while suggesting a reversed role of influence: "Germany's traditional social insurance-oriented welfare state is now more in line with the Europe version conceptualised by the EU as a third way approach, reconciling efficiency and competitiveness with social solidarity, high social standards and a focus on employability and activation..."¹⁹⁶ Though it can be argued as to what extent it is Germany that is following the EU model, and not the EU pursuing a more current Bismarckian/Continental reproduction, we note that, in the end, this serialised alignment is one that is deeply rooted and includes the element of solidarity, which is more prevalent in the German social model, and which transfers more easily from the German to the European context. In contrast, this alignment does not exist for the United Kingdom, where the social model focuses more on autonomy and less on solidarity, giving the government and the people reason to be more critical of EU efforts in social policy.

¹⁹⁶ Milena Büchs and Karl Hinrichs, "Germany: moving towards Europe but putting national autonomy first," 2.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

If we now re-consider the Kok thesis, we note not only simply the origin of the narrower question which we have been following throughout this work; we also note that the admonition that prompted the new OMC strategy and its re-launch was done for the express purpose of sustaining the European Social Model via adaptation:

to *preserve* and *improve* our social model we have to *adapt*: it is not too late to change. In any event the status quo is not an option. Engaging and involving citizens in the process has two mutually reinforcing attractions: it in effect seeks public support by giving people elements for debate and it leverages that support to put pressure on governments to pursue these goals.¹⁹⁷

The European Social Model and the new strategy of engaging and involving the citizens in the OMC have been thus interlinked from the outset with the latter as the wick feeding into the grander issue of preserving and improving the former.

Summing up, however, we may get the sense that the ‘fire’ that would preserve and improve the ESM was not really ignited: we concluded in Chapter 3 that the re-launched OMC did not really provide an incentive for the Member States to promote participation of the citizens in the OMC, evidenced by the absence of indicators that would measure such progress. Not surprisingly, we also found no substantial evidence of citizen engagement and involvement in the OMC process subsequent to its re-launch in 2005-2006, leading us to question whether there was any reinforcement of support, as it had been hoped. In Chapter 4 we found that the more general impacts of the OMC (consensus, mutual learning, salience, shifts in national policy) may well lead the Member States’ authorities, as trusted figures, to ‘mediate’ support to their publics for the

¹⁹⁷ European Commission. High Level Group. *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment*, 44; emphasis added.

OMC, perhaps even more after its consensual re-launch. A scrutiny of the National Strategic Reports showed that since Germany's outputs stemming from the OMC are more in tune with the general objectives of the Lisbon process, it may be benefitting more from the mediated support that consensus, mutual learning, salience and shift in national policy might be bringing about. Consequently, seeking specific indications for a change in support for the EU became the challenge in Chapter 5, which we tried to tie to the OMC, particularly because of the ongoing finding that Germany was somehow more in line with what the EU was doing in social policy. Here we found that there is indeed some evidence that support for the EU in Germany may have been experiencing an increase over the years of the OMC, though drawing a direct relationship between the two should be cautious: on the one hand, there is the lack of the intended increase in participation in the OMC via the new strategy which was to lead to an increase in support; on the other, though there is some evidence of an increase in OMC visibility in Germany and the UK after the OMC re-launch, which could have consequences on support, it is tentative. Nonetheless, in considering the OMC indicators over the years, particularly after the re-launch, we found that they are, in general, more favourable for Germany, which could have been leading to increased support for the EU. This would be especially significant if it can be substantiated further that visibility of the OMC has experienced an increase since it was revised, even if participation in the process did not; it would mean that there is a possibility to influence the public via the EU's efforts in social policy.

Should the failure to realise participation in the OMC and a corresponding level of support, however, lead us to the conclusion that the intended impetus to act, that is, putting "pressure on governments to pursue [the] goals" of preserving and improving the

ESM is not working out either? This question brings us up back to the grander issue of the preservation and improvement of the ESM, and on the surface it does not seem to bode well for its survival. Nevertheless, while it is true that the leverage that participation and support would have provided in getting the Member State governments to act did not come about, we should recall the situation from the open system perspective: we note that the OMC evaluation in 2004 was initiated by the (supranational) Commission: the subsequent conclusions and recommendations of the High Level Group that assessed the Lisbon process and the OMC were accepted by the Commission and given over to the (intergovernmental) Council to act on. A renegotiated and re-launched OMC became, consequently, a consensual act of the Council (the Member States), producing new objectives and indicators as decisions which served as demands for the Member State political systems. Therefore, simply by initiating social policy measures at the EU level is an indication that the EU, as an overarching political system, is able to put some pressure on the Member States' systems to undertake reforms. These reforms, ultimately, are meant to fight system stress on the behalf of both the EU and the Member States.

The same argument can be made about virtually all measures in EU social policy, from granting 'employment' treaty status in 1997 to the more recent addition of health and pensions in the OMC process. They are EU outputs through which it can at least initiate the pressure for reforms. Still, what is lacking is a common and clear incentive for the Member State systems to pursue OMC strategies/goals: the process is still voluntary and it still lacks indicators for those aspects which the re-launch was supposed to provide, that is, the engagement and involvement of the citizens. Therefore, one could claim that there is at least the possibility for the impetus to have taken a boost through the

new OMC, however, just like support as discussed earlier, its effects would be gradual or intermittent under the current conditions, to an extensive degree likely dependent on the social model of each Member State and its existing affinity to the ESM.

In conclusion, though the two predictions of the Kok thesis (increase in support, which would allow for the EU to press for reforms via the OMC) cannot be claimed to have taken place as envisioned, the Eastonian perspective would not consider them a failure necessarily. On the contrary, the case can be made that EU integration may be deriving some benefit from OMC social policy. Even if we claim that the adaptations made following the Kok Report have not led to the desired outcomes, Easton might argue that the social policy process at the EU level as a whole is undergoing its own evolution, which can be interpreted as the EU system attempting to find the best way to evolve and survive the stresses of its environment and this is a gradual, hit-and-miss process. If we took the residual (low-level) development of support for the EU and the initiatory pressure that it exercises as insignificant, this would be a rendering from the Realist perspective. Systems Theory, on the other hand, would portray the EU as simply a political system which adapts to survive, attempting to create just enough support and change to that end. This gradualism works well not only because it is a basic trait of systemic evolution; practically, it is also good for the EU because it is unlikely that the Member State citizens would tolerate drastic changes to their social policies and models.¹⁹⁸

Finally, though Easton's systems theory as it applies to open political systems has lost popularity since its inauguration in the 1950's, its strengths make it a useful tool. At

¹⁹⁸ This is perhaps why the EU had no other option but to go for the OMC; it is based on consensus and is voluntary while being a form of collectivisation at the same time, with only broad objectives to pursue and offering the conditions to learn from best practice.

a general level it offers us a holistic approach to understanding any political system, and this allowed us to conceptualise the EU as an evolving political system with an own dynamic and characteristics, manifesting themselves in various types of political structuring, with OMC being one of them. At a more specific level, Easton's theory provides a thorough analysis and break-down of the concept of support. This not only allowed us to consider the various types of support, their interplay with each other, and the significance of each. This multifaceted concept also helped to point at and to magnify the various factors that were at play in the realm of our question such as environmental stressors, the minimal connection between the EU and its political community vis-a-vis OMC, and the social model of each country.

Admittedly, the theory does have its limitations. A major one relates to the concept of mediated support and the lack of a thorough description thereof. In the preceding work, this would have allowed not only for a better understanding of the notion itself and its role in OMC social policy. It could have also provided the foundations for some preliminary research and analysis of the ways it manifests itself, giving us a better idea of how deep its impact might be. Nevertheless, systems theory's uses may be viewed to outweigh its limits. Ultimately, using this theory to understand the question posed in this work has shown not simply that a re-launched OMC has failed in its attempt to garner citizen support. It has also provided conceptual tools to pursue the reasons behind the failure and so understand and contribute to the EU system's future attempts at adaptation.

Appendix A: Initiatives by Germany and the United Kingdom

Extracted from the National Strategic Reports (NSR) 2006-2008 and 2008-2010.

Source: European Commission, "National Strategic Reports," under European Commission/Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion/Process (accessed on February 28, 2010).

Germany

Objective A: Social cohesion, equality and equal opportunities for all			
NSR: 2006-2008			
Initiative ¹⁹⁹	Aim ²⁰⁰	Dimension(s) ²⁰¹	Page in relevant report
Further Training Innovation Circle (<i>Innovationskreis berufliche Bildung</i>)	"to identify the primary challenges with respect to innovation in the vocational training system and to develop concrete options for action for the structural improvement of professional education" ²⁰²	education and training	7
The National Integration Plan	In it, the German Government, together with the federal <i>Länder</i> and local authorities, associations of migrants and numerous other non-government players, has adopted more than 400 measures and voluntary commitments relating to integration. ²⁰³	immigrants' integration	7
"Parental benefit for the early phase of parenthood for children	Improving participation of women in employment	employment of women	7

¹⁹⁹ Initiative name is given as stated in the relevant NSR. In cases where no succinct names are provided, direct quotations from the NSRs are used.

²⁰⁰ The aim of each initiative is either quoted directly from the NSR or provided in paraphrase.

²⁰¹ The dimensions are identified by the area(s) on which the initiatives touch upon.

²⁰² Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, "Innovationskreis Berufliche Bildung," under "Hightech-Strategie/Bildung/Ausbildung," <http://www.bmbf.de/de/6190.php> (accessed on February 28, 2010).

²⁰³ Die Bundesregierung, "The National Integration Plan," under "Homepage/Issues/Integration," http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_245708/Content/EN/StatischeSeiten/Schwerpunkte/Integration/kastenI-der-nationale-integrationsplan.html (accessed on February 28, 2010).

born from 2007 onwards and improved ways of offsetting childcare costs against tax.”			
NSR: 2008-2010			
“Advancement through Education”	to open “new avenues for vocational training and obtaining qualifications ... to reduce existing barriers to access to the education system.”	education and training	14
Increased childcare availability	“By 2013, high-quality care places will be made available for a national average of 35 % of children under three years of age in order to facilitate the parents’ return to work after an interruption in employment. From 2013 onwards, there will be a legal entitlement to a childcare place for one- to three-year-olds”	childcare, employment	15
Childcare allowance (as of 2005) ²⁰⁴	“to offset reduced income and protects parents against loss of income in the first year of the child’s life.”	childcare, employment	15
Supplementary child allowance since 2005	targeted assistance of economically active parents in need	childcare, employment	15
The National Integration Plan of July 2007	The Plan “places the integration measures of the Federal Government, <i>Länder</i> and local authorities and of major participants in civil society on a common footing. Under the plan, all government and non-government agents undertake to adopt suitable measures to improve integration in their respective areas of responsibility.”	immigrants’ integration	15
Socio-cultural Subsistence Minimum	“covers the amount needed to physically survive but also the	poverty, social inclusion	16

²⁰⁴ Elterngeld, <http://www.elterngeld.net> (accessed on February 28, 2010).

	amount needed for a civilised person to participate in social life. It is also designed to afford disadvantaged and low-income groups adequate opportunities to have access to cultural, social and political activities.”		
Pension law countering lower pension entitlements of women	increase retirement income of women	women, pensions, poverty	16
Pension laws regarding migrants	“social security agreements concluded with the States of recruitment are helping to ensure that workers are not disadvantaged by migration”	migrants, pensions, poverty	16
Law to promote occupational pension schemes	“social insurance freedom to convert salary into pension contributions”	pensions	16
Expansion of the ‘ <i>Riesterpension</i> ’	a form of private provision for old age	pensions	16
The socio-cultural subsistence minimum	to provide basic security benefits in old age and in cases of reduced earning capacity	pensions, poverty	17
Statutory pension and accident insurance integration assistance	“achieve high level of employment”, particularly of older workers, “medical rehabilitation and integration into working life”	pensions, employment, older workers	17
2007 health reform (includes solidarity principle in statutory health insurance)	to allow those in need “to obtain affordable and reliable insurance protection”	health insurance, poverty	17
Social long-term care insurance	“long-term care insurance protection irrespective of age or income... help those needing care to be cared for at home and to bear the financial costs connected with care needs.”	health insurance, poverty	18
Objective B:			
Interaction between the Lisbon targets			
NSR 2006-2008			

National Reform Programme 2006-2008	national responses to re-launched Lisbon strategy	all	12
Package to promote growth, employment and innovation	“to overcome the continuing investment weakness in Germany and to support the continuation of the reforms of recent years.”	employment, economic growth	7
Raising the age limit for drawing an old age pension from 65 to 67 by 2029	longer working life to counteract current demographic trends	pensions, employment	8
Initiative 50 Plus (a package of complementary measures)	“the Federal Government is promoting the actual use of the skills of those aged 50 and over.”	employment	9
NSR 2008-2010			
National Reform Programme 2008-2010	national responses to re-launched Lisbon strategy	all	
2008 reform of the corporation tax	“fewer incentives to transfer profits abroad”	taxation	
Law to further strengthen the voluntary sector	to improve “the regulatory framework for charitable activities retroactively from 1 January 2007.”	taxation	
Objective C: Improving governance			
NSR 2006-2008			
Reporting publically (by including ‘broad expert public’ in evaluations) or in a more targeted manner on social security and integration, benefit entitlements, health system.	improved information flow and governance	governance	9
Incorporation of “social partners and other relevant representatives in the preparation of draft legislation and in many initiatives and round tables”	inclusive governance	governance	9
NSR 2008-2010			
National Strategy Report (“outcome of intensive debate with the Federal Government	to provide “an overview of social protection policies in Germany”	governance (relates to OMC: same reporting cycle)	

and between the Federal Government and the <i>Länder</i> .” Includes other stakeholder as well.	Includes numerous complementary reports		
The following objectives apply to the different strands of work:			
A decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by ensuring:			
Objectives D and E: Access and inclusion of all			
NSR 2006-2008			
Basic security benefit for jobseekers (part of labour market reform)	to support jobseekers (and later also their dependents)	poverty	13
The Start-up Grant	“instruments to promote self-employment as a way out of unemployment”	employment	13
Complete realignment of the contents and organisation of labour market policy (in first half of decade)	reduce unemployment	employment	15
Extension of labour market instruments (3) for older people by one or two years	reduce unemployment of those over 50	employment of older people	17
Further labour market programs (one example given)	reduce long-term unemployment of those over 58	employment of older people	17
Federal programme: Perspective 50 plus – Employment Pacts for Older People in the Regions (62 programmes funded across the country – over a period of two years with a volume of E 250 million) (2005)	reintegrate the long-term unemployed over 50 into the labour market	employment of older people	17
Further for Poorly Qualified and Employed Older People in Companies	“knock on financing for further training”	employment of older people	17
Package of measures for the training and employment opportunities of young people (nearly 7 billion Euros in 2005)	to increase employability of young people	employment of the young	17
Counselling and information network for immigrants created in 2005 and co-	further developing the potential and skills of immigrants for the labour	employment of immigrants	17

financed by EU initiative EQUAL (financed through ESF funds) ²⁰⁵	market		
Federal programme “Local Capital for Social Purposes”, with corresponding programs at <i>Land</i> level, financed through ESF funds	to improve work and social integration of people with particular disadvantages on the labour market”	employment of people with particular disadvantages	18
<i>Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz</i> (2005) (mentioned in 2008-2010)	Expansion of childcare offer for children under three (by 230 000 places by 2010) via 1.5 billion Euros from the government.	childcare, employment	19
Various programs and initiatives by the <i>Länder</i> aimed at preschoolers	to “strengthen educational obligations of childcare” (ex. pre-school language encouragement programs)	childcare, education	19-20
“Future, Education and Care” program at the Federal level (mentioned in 2008-2010)	4 billion euros available to the <i>Länder</i> for the “demand-based consolidation and expansion of all-day schools”	childcare, education	20
Promoting Skills – Vocational Training for Target Groups with a Special Need of Support	increasing apprenticeship offers for young people	Youth employment	20
National Pact for Training and the Next Generation of Skilled Workers (with the support of business)	Providing additional apprenticeship offers for young people	youth employment	21
Special Programme for the Basic Qualification of Young People (EQJ Programme)	Providing additional apprenticeship offers for young people in special situations	youth employment	21
Structural program “ <i>Jobstarter</i> ” (2005)	“structural strengthening of company offers in the regions” (primarily SMEs)	employment	21
“Second Chance for Truants” (mid-2006 to end of 2007) (ESF funded)	reintegration of truants in schools and support beyond school leaving	education, employment	22

²⁰⁵ European Commission, “What is EQUAL,” under “Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities,” http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm (accessed on February 14, 2010).

	(integration in work)		
“Lifelong Learning” (funded partially through ESF)	Lifelong learning	employment, education and training	22
Strategy for Lifelong Learning in the Federal Republic of Germany (in conjunction with the <i>Länder</i>)	Promote lifelong learning via a budget-neutral finance instrument	employment, education and training	22
Child bonus (2005) -- <i>Kinderzuschlag</i>	“to protect families with low incomes against financial risks	employment, poverty	23
Project: Early Support for Parents and Children/Social Early Warning Systems	“to support children in fragile situations”	children/upbringing	24
Various <i>Länder</i> -created programmes to encourage families and eradicate child poverty	as above	family support, poverty	24
“Expertise Agencies” (15 of 16 of these agencies continued after expiry of model program)	social and work integration of particularly disadvantaged young people	education and training, employment, social integration	24
Trial model agencies for work integration of young people in <i>Land</i> Mecklenburg Vorpommern (funded through ESF funds); includes workshop “Get Involved”	work integration of young people	youth employment	24
Bavarian promotion program “Youth Social Work in Schools”	Social and work integration of your people	youth employment, social integration	24
Neighbourhoods with a Special Need for Development – the Social City (supported via ESF) (started in 1999 and continues to today) ²⁰⁶	urban development of neighbourhoods where “social and building problems are concentrated”	social integration	25
Immigration Act of 2005	to create “the framework of allowing a comprehensive, equal participation in social, political and economic life for immigrants...”	immigrants, social integration	25
As part of foregoing Act:	to make immigrants	immigrants, social	25

²⁰⁶ Bund-Länder-Programm ‘Soziale Stadt’, “Soziale Stadt Bundestransferstelle”

<http://www.sozialestadt.de/programm> (accessed on February 14, 2010); various subprograms have been initiated in the meanwhile.

Integration courses (Federal government provided 140 million towards these in the 2006 budget)	aware of German legal system, culture and history as well as the German language.	integration	
As part of foregoing Act: Migration-specific counselling (Federal government provided 26.6 million euros towards these in the 2006 budget)	focus lies on demand-based case management	immigrants, social integration	26
Restructuring of the nationwide 360 youth migration services (JMD)	youth social work offering “individual, youth-specific integration support to young new immigrants who are too old for school.”	immigrant youth, work integration	26
Realignment/commencement of additional integration advice programmes by some <i>Länder</i>	offering advice to immigrants	immigrants, social integration	26
As part of foregoing Act: Special measures (seminars, talk groups on specific subjects, workshops) for immigrant women and girls (2 million Euros from the Federal Budget of 2006)	“to encourage the integration of women, strengthen their self-confidence and resources ...” Dimension: immigrant women		26
The Act to Combat Unemployment among Severely Disabled Persons, the Act to Improve Training and Employment for the Severely Disabled, Social Code Book IX – Rehabilitation and Participation – and the Disability Equality Act	“pioneering steps for decisively improving the participation of disabled people in work and society.”	integration of the disabled	27
as part of preceding Social Code Book IX: Statutory principle of “Rehabilitation before Pension”	to attempt rehabilitation of those incapacitated	integration of the disabled	27
General Equality Act (AGG) - transposition of four European anti-discrimination directives into national law.	to protect the disabled against discrimination under employment law and civil law	integration of the disabled	27
as part of the preceding Disability Equality Act: a	to reduce accessibility barriers	integration of the disabled	27

number of agreements with industries and associations			
Personal Budgets (organising own benefits)	“to strengthen the self-determination and responsibility for disabled people...”	integration of the disabled	27
“Job – Jobs without Barriers” (developed with involvement of various actors from government, industry, unions and organisations) (partially funded through ESF)	disabled people should be “given the opportunity to earn their livings on the general labour market outside workshops for disabled people.”	social integration of the disabled	27
NSR 2008-2010			
Disability managers (introduced by statutory accident insurance)	“assist undertakings with integration management and help members of staff to return to work as soon as possible after a long illness or accident.”	work integration of disabled	23
A residence permit with the prospect of permanence	to make easier for foreigners in Germany the access to the employment market	integration of immigrants	23
Comprehensive research by Federal Government in consultation with the <i>Länder</i> since 2005 using ESF resources vis-à-vis Future, Education and Care investment programme (mentioned in 2006-2008 report)	to insure best use is made of the investment	childcare, education	24
“School refusal – the 2 nd chance” (ESF programme) (74 local projects in Germany)	to reintegrate “children refusing school from <i>Hauptschulen</i> in particular into the regular school system...”	education and training	24
National Agreement on Training and Skills for the Younger Generation (agreed in 2004; currently extended till 2010) ²⁰⁷	Agreement between German Federal Government and central association of industry in Germany to create additional training places	education and training	25
Legal provision adopted in	“improving the	education and	25

²⁰⁷ Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, “Ausbildungsstellenmarkt”, under “Hightechstrategie” <http://www.bmbf.de/de/2295.php> (accessed on February 14, 2010).

the fourth law amending the SGB III	qualifications and employment opportunities of younger people experiencing difficulties in gaining employment”	training	
Adjustment of 22 nd Law amending the Law on Federal Training Assistance	fewer restrictions for trainees with a migrant background in obtaining “vocational training assistance or educational assistance”	immigrants, education and training, youth	25
Training Programme for the East	regional assistance to make training places available	education and training	25
Federal Government’s ESF Program for skills agencies (since autumn 2006)	“extending specific provision for the vocational and social integration of young people at particular risk”	education and training	25
“Identity and Integration Plus” (part of Germany’s Integration Policy/Law)	“integration provision ... for repatriated individuals of German ancestry”	immigrant (of German ancestry) integration	27
Law on Integration (2004)	Law requiring Federal government to develop an integration program from immigrants (language support, vocational and social integration, and education)	immigrant integration	29
Modular Qualifications in Parental Time program of <i>Land</i> Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	offering parents, and mothers in particular, “the possibility of availing themselves of a set of measures involving obtaining qualifications, counselling and childcare geared to making family and career compatible...”	employment, childcare	30
Changes to the education assistance provided for foreigners under the <i>Bafög</i> and SGB III	“to provide educational opportunities for all irrespective of social origin”	immigrants, education and training	31
Job Prospect (labour market policy instrument) (2007)	in particular, to create “opportunities for people with multiple placement	employment	32

	obstacles”		
<i>Kommunal Kombi</i> Federal programme (co-financed by the ESF, federal, <i>Länder</i> and local governments)	“to combat long-term unemployment in disadvantaged regions”	employment	32
Regional budgets (ESF co-funding involved)	“to stimulate local initiatives and take account of regional requirements”	employment	32
Four new benefits to improve the qualification and employment prospects of younger people: two employer subsidies for younger workers under 25 who have been unemployed for at least six months, the training grant and the integration subsidy.	“to counteract the risk of social exclusion resulting from young people being unemployed”	youth employment, education and training	32
Extension and expansion of Federal pregame “Perspective 50 plus – employment agreements for older people in the regions” in the 2008-2010 period (contribution of 275 million euros by Federal government)	contribute to aim to “increase the employment rate of older people to 55% by 2010”	employment of older people	33
Extension of entitlement to unemployment benefit for workers aged 50 and over as of 1 January 2008	to assist the unemployed over 50	social integration of older people	33
Integration certificate guaranteeing “an employer a wage cost subsidy of 30% to 50% of wages costs for twelve months”	to increase employment opportunities of older people	employment of older people	33
Various ESF-funded measures adopted by the <i>Länder</i>	“to improve the integration into the employment market of the long-term unemployed”	employment of long-term unemployed	34
Job4000 employment market programme (implemented jointly by the Federal Employment Agency and the <i>Länder</i> and until 2013)	“better vocational integration of especially affected severely disabled people”	employment of the severely disabled	34
Various vocational	vocational integration of	employment of the	34

integration of disabled people services at Land level, e.g. "Action 1000" programme in Baden-Württemberg – co-financed through the ESF	disabled people	disabled	
Qualifications initiative (incorporates measures that open the way to further education and qualifications)	to promote educational and qualifications	education and training	35
"Perspective Vocational Qualifications" programme (ESF co-financed)	to assist disadvantaged young people in education and training	education and training	36
Federal Training Assistance Law regulations (as of beginning of 2008)	"improve equality of opportunity in education ... for trainees with ... children and foreign trainees"	education and training	37
Daytime childcare measures have spawned various measures at the <i>Länder</i> level	increase childcare places and quality	childcare	39
Action programme to prevent children from being neglected and abused (Federal level, 10 million euros available over 5 years; run at the <i>Länder</i> level)	prevention of neglect and abuse of children	social inclusion, childcare	40
Strategy to promote child health (May 2008)	child health promotion	child health	40
Integration policy authorities established at the <i>Länder</i> level, in many <i>Länder</i>	integration of immigrants	integration of immigrants	41
as updated (2008) part of the Law on Integration (2004), the integration course of the plan receives €155 million per year)	language support, vocational and social integration, and education for immigrants	immigrant integration	42
Programme to provide employment market assistance for those with leave to remain and refugees with access the employment market (35 networks nationwide implemented as a separate programme within the XENOS "Integration and Diversity" programme)	to assist migrants and refugees in finding work	migrant and refugee integration	42

(partially funded through the ESF)			
study supplements for program (AQUA) by a foundation (Otto Benecke Foundation) targeting native and immigrant academics paid in part by the Federal government and in part via ESF funds.	program “prepares participants for (re-)entry into working life”	employment of academics	43
improved Federal training assistance for immigrants as of January 2008 (under the Federal Educational Assistance Law); some <i>Länder</i> running own in conjunction with federal assistance	“to increase the prospects for children of immigrants”	integration of immigrants	43
Federal community and residential environment projects	“helping to promote the social integration of immigrants at the local level”	integration of immigrants	44
Objective F: Improved Governance			
NSR 2006-2008			
Inclusion of all levels of government and a “Permanent Group of Advisers for Social Integration” ²⁰⁸ in the production of the National Plans of Action on Social Integration at several stages since 2001. ²⁰⁹ Process runs parallel with the Federal Government’s poverty and wealth reporting.	improved governance	governance	28-9
Cooperation with the <i>Länder</i> and in the <i>Länder</i> has been strengthened (a number of examples listed)	improved governance/inclusive governance	governance	29
Information exchange	information exchange to	improved	29

²⁰⁸ Made up of 25 associations (the German version of the report states 35) that include NGOs, employers, trade unions, churches, *Länder* and local authorities. NSR 208-2010 lists it as the “Permanent advisory Committee for Social Integration”. Pg. 45.

²⁰⁹ Known as such until 2005. Since then, they are referred to as National Strategy Reports.

“Participation and Social Integration” by Federal Government. Includes series of events FORTEIL (a forum for participation and social integration) since 2005 and until 2008, workshops on each social integration theme, and NAPsens (National Awareness-Raising Measures on the subject of Social Integration)	make better use of initiatives; raising of “public awareness of the European process of social integration in an alliance of academia and NGOs and with the support of the European Commission as part of a series of events.”	governance, publicity	
NSR 2008-2010			
Use of EU-SILC ²¹⁰ results and Laeken indicators ²¹¹ in the Federal Government’s recent Poverty and Wealth Report initiated		governance, transparency	45
EU Progress programme – Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity ²¹² (launched with a FORTEIL workshop)	“established to support financially the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, as set out in the Social Agenda.”	all	45
Germany Presidency of the EU Council held the 6 th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty in May 2007	Review of progress made since the beginning of the process in 2001 and future steps	poverty, social inclusion	46
“Help for Children in Need” round table established in North Rhine-Westphalia	generally, “creating new opportunities especially for children who are growing up in two-income families.”	children, poverty	46

²¹⁰ “EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) is the main source for the compilation of comparable indicators on social cohesion used for policy monitoring at EU level in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination.” Eurostat, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/living_conditions_and_social_protection/introduction/income_social_inclusion_living_conditions (accessed on February 15, 2010).

²¹¹ The set of common European statistical indicators on poverty and social exclusion

²¹² European Commission, “Progress Programme,” under (Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities,” <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en> (accessed on February 21, 2010).

United Kingdom

Objective A:			
Social cohesion, equality and equal opportunities for all			
NSR: 2006-2008			
Initiative	Aim	Dimension(s)	Page in relevant report
Skills Strategy	“to [ensure] individuals have the skills needed to be employable and personally fulfilled and employers have the skills needed to support the success of their businesses.”	education and training	8
Public Service Agreement	among others, to combat child poverty	child poverty	9, 11
Increases in Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit	To combat child poverty	child poverty	23
New policy and delivery arrangements for the child support system	Simplifies system	child poverty and care	23
An additional £120 million	“to help stabilise and improve the performance of the Child Support Agency”	child poverty and care	23
Doubling of annual spending on all Sure Start group programmes by 2007/2008	to improve/increase childcare places	child poverty and care	23
New target set in tackling child poverty	to help in combating child poverty	child poverty	25
New Employability Framework from the Scottish Executive	“to increase the chances of sustained employment for people from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.”	employment, poverty	26
Skills Strategy (including the New Deal for Skills)	to provide free training to low-skilled adults and is also aimed at helping women	employment, poverty, women	27
Working Tax Credit	to provide “financial support on top of earnings for households with low incomes”	poverty	27
Simplification of Housing Benefit with	“A simpler and more transparent system will help to	poverty, housing	27

Local Housing Allowance introduced in some areas	speed up administration and provide greater certainty about what help is available, as well as offering tenants more choice when deciding where to live and the type of property to rent.”		
Employment Retention and Advancement project	“to determine what [services] are effective in helping people retain and advance in work.”	employment	27-8
Pathways to Work (as part of the New Deal for Disabled People)	“providing people with financial support while facilitating their return to independence and the ability to earn the means to live by addressing a number of the health-related, personal and external barriers to returning to work.”	employment of the disabled	28
Closing the Opportunity Gap (introduced by Scottish Executive)	“to tackle economic inactivity and unemployment ...[including] people on incapacity payments...”	employment of the disabled	28
Extension of Pathways to Work program to cover all of Britain by 2008	“providing people with financial support while facilitating their return to independence and the ability to earn the means to live by addressing a number of the health-related, personal and external barriers to returning to work.”	employment of the disabled	28
City Strategy pilot	“to test whether a local consortium or partnership of agencies, coming together with the shared aim of improving employment rates, can provide the drive and focus for cross-agency efforts to help jobless people.”	employment	28
Age discrimination legislation (effective as of 1 October 2006)	“prohibit unjustified direct and indirect age discrimination in employment and training, and all harassment and victimisation on grounds of age”	age discrimination	29
The Age Partnership	“developed in conjunction	employment of	29

Group's Be Ready campaign	with leading business organisations, aims to encourage age diversity in employment and provide employers with practical help and information in order to prepare for the legislation”	older workers, age discrimination	
Age Positive campaign	“promote the business benefits of employing older people as part of a mixed-age workforce”	employment of older workers	29
Rural Strategy	“to break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage”	rural employment	29
Job Centre Plus in strategy to work closely with Probation and Prison Services	“offers new opportunities for helping offenders become resettled in society”	offender employment	32
Offender Learning and Skills Service	Similar as above	offender employment	32
Equal Programme UK	EU level program offering projects on offender employment, among others (ESF funded)	offender employment	32
UK as head of Inclusion, a network across the EU on offender issues		offender employment	32
Pension Credit	“tool in tackling pensioner poverty”	pensioner poverty	32-33
Pension Service network	Providing a range of services tailored to customers' needs	pensioner services	33
LinkAge Plus pilot	offers “wide range of services ... as part of a seamless service for older people”	pensioner services	33
Investing more in social housing	To raise the number of social homes by 50% by 2008 and to prevent homelessness	poverty/homelessness	33
Northern Ireland Housing Executive programme: Traveller accommodation programme	“to provide group housing and upgrade existing serviced sites”	poverty/homelessness	33
Welsh National Homelessness Strategy	“tackling homelessness in Wales”	poverty/homelessness	33
Local authorities' progress reports regarding transport	to improve transportation for various groups	pensioners/disabled /young/rural communities	34

Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative funding (England)	“to deliver improvements across ... deprived communities” in order to reduce high child pedestrian casualty rates in disadvantaged districts	children/poverty/social inclusion	34
Initiatives to tackle fuel poverty	Tackling fuel poverty	poverty	34-5
Cross-government over-indebtedness strategy	“to minimise the number of people becoming over-indebted and improve the support process for those already in debt”	poverty	35
Improving access to mainstream financial services	Improve access to banking, access to affordable credit and access to face-to-face money advice	poverty/financial exclusion	35
Connecting the UK: the Digital Strategy	One aim is to “develop the potential of digital technologies to benefit the socially excluded”	social exclusion	36
Community@One (Welsh Assembly Government’s initiative)	“to enable communities to use information communication technology ... to enhance their quality of life...”	social exclusion	36
Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit report (with various initiatives attached to it)	“to promote the social inclusion of disabled people”	the disabled	37
Government-sponsored Disability Rights Commission	“to eliminate discrimination against, and to promote equal opportunities for disabled people”	the disabled	39
Race Equality Scheme (Wales); Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland; One Scotland Many Cultures campaign	“to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote race equality and promote good race relations” and similar	minorities	39
Integration Agenda for GB (Commission for Racial Equality)	to promote equality, participation and interaction	minorities	39
UK government race equality and community cohesion strategy with tailored initiatives	“to meet the needs of particularly disadvantaged communities”	minorities	40
Minister for Social		social exclusion	41

Exclusion and supporting Social Exclusion Taskforce			
Social Exclusion Action Plan	to tackle “the social exclusion of vulnerable groups on a number of levels”	social exclusion	41
Comprehensive Spending Review		social exclusion	41
National Action Plan (various initiatives to get different actors and communities involved in drawing it)		social exclusion/visibility/subsidiarity	42-44
DWP/LA Strategic Forum	“opportunity for senior officials to meet ...”	social exclusion/visibility/subsidiarity	42-3
NSR: 2008-2010			
Welfare to Work agenda	To promote employment	employment	9
Employment and Support Allowance (replaced Incapacity Benefit)	To promote employment	employment of disabled and those with health conditions	10
Initiative to bring lone parents back to work	“will be expected to look for work when their child reaches 12 from November 2008”	employment of single parents	10
The Working Neighbourhoods Fund for England	“to renew...most deprived areas”	social inclusion	11
£1.7 billion worth of investments in 2008 budget, with additional funds over the next years slated thereto	“to help lift up 250,000 more children out of poverty”	child poverty	12
Objective B:			
Interaction between the Lisbon targets			
NSR 2006-2008			
None listed			
NSR 2008-2010			
Public Service Agreements	Part of these are so set to promote good governance and transparency	governance, transparency	
Consultations regarding Welfare Reform Green Paper with actors and public via		social exclusion, poverty	

forums, Internet, correspondence			
Objective C: Improving governance			
NSR 2006-2008			
PSA	“The PSA structure ensures that Government objectives are transparent and that Ministers and their Departments can be held to account for delivering to the public. Departments consult stakeholders to develop a stronger shared agenda to achieve the outcomes expressed in PSAs as well as reduce the risk of selecting the wrong priorities or creating unintended distortions to service delivery.”	visibility and subsidiarity	14
Analytical activities (monitoring and reporting of performance against government targets, administrative statistics, surveys, economic and stats analysis, operational research, economic and social research)	“to [provide] the evidence base and [ensure] good governance”	good governance	14
NSR 2008-2010			
None listed			
Objectives D and E: Access and inclusion of all			
NSR 2006-2008			
None listed			
NSR 2008-2010			
New Deal	Initiative to help people into work	employment	19
Job Centre Plus	Initiative: welfare to work	employment	20
National minimum wage, tax credits, extra childcare space, Sure Start Children’s Centres	“to help and incentivise parents to find and stay in work”	employment/childcare	20

Programme of activity between National Offender Management Service, Jobcentre Plus, the Learning & Skills Council, prisons and probation	“to get offenders into employment”	employment, offenders	21
Over £1 billion available	to help improve non-decent housing	poverty/social exclusion	22
Plans to invest £ 8 billion in affordable housing 2008-2011 and provide 70,000 new affordable homes	to increase number of affordable homes	poverty/social exclusion	22
Free off-peak travel for those over 60 and eligible disabled people in England on all local buses in England		elderly, disabled/social exclusion	23
Various investments in 4 countries to tackle fuel poverty		fuel poverty	23
Government/bank shared goal (2004)	To bring people into banking	social exclusion	24
Growth Fund	“to increase access to affordable credit for those at risk of financial exclusion”	financial exclusion	24
“now let’s talk money” campaign as of 2007	To help people get money and credit advice	financial exclusion/poverty	24
Digital Strategy “Connecting the UK”	“to drive forward to use of technologies to better meet the needs of ... local community and individual citizens”	digital inclusion	24
Social Exclusion Task Force (undertakes numerous pilot projects)	“to focus more closely on the problems of severe deprivation...”	social exclusion	25
Socially Excluded Public Service Agreement	“aimed at tackling the multiple issues facing the most excluded adults”	social exclusion	25-6
The Families at Risk Review	“analyses ways in which families with multiple and complex problems are currently supported and examines the potential for services and systems reform to better meet the needs of the most excluded.”	social exclusion	25

Multi-systemic therapy	“for young people with complex clinical, social and educational problems”	social exclusion of young people	26
Gender Equality Duty	“requires public sector bodies to pro-actively promote gender equality of opportunity”	gender equality	27
UK Advisory Network for Disability Equality	“to advice Government on the issues affecting disable people...”	equality of disabled people	27
Age discrimination legislation		older citizens	27
flexible New Deal	To increase labour market participation	employment	29
Employment and Support Allowance	Income and employment finding support for those incapacitated	employment, disabled	29
Increased employment support for disabled people	“personalised advice and support” regarding employment	employment, disabled	29
range of specialist disability programs	to help disabled people lead fulfilling working lives	employment, disabled	29
Age Positive initiative	“to encourage employers ... to change ageist practices...”	employment, older workers	31
City Strategy	to tackle unemployment in the “most disadvantage communities across Great Britain”	employment, social exclusion	31
Local Employment Partnerships	“to help 250,000 long-term jobseekers move into employment by 2010”	employment	31
Social Firms UK	“creating employment opportunities for severely disadvantaged people”	employment, social exclusion	31
Better off in Work Credit	“to ensure that all long-term claimants see a significant rise in their incomes when they take a job”	employment	31
Better support for families with disabled children		disabled children	34
Mini Sure Start	“to provide services for children living in small	children	35

	communities”		
Pilot model of individual budgets	“to enable people needing social care and associated services to design that support and decide the nature of the services they need”	social exclusion	35
Children’s Plan	“to equalise educational outcomes”	education	36
New Housing Agenda for Northern Ireland	“to tackle the growing housing crisis in Northern Ireland”	housing/poverty	37
Funding to reduce homelessness		poverty/homelessn ess	37
World Class Skills (2007) and expansion of Work Skills (2008)	To improve services to those out of work	employment	38
Improving transport accessibility		transport	38-9
Energy Efficiency Commitment	“requires energy companies to achieve 40% of their energy savings by helping vulnerable customers increase the energy efficiency of their homes”	poverty	39
Additional assistance to those in difficulty of paying their fuel bills		poverty	39
Various funds and initiatives vis-à-vis financial inclusion	“to improve awareness of, and confidence in, basic financial services”	financial inclusion	40
Opportunity Age – meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21 st century (includes all levels of government)		elderly	41
Public Service Agreement regarding Ageing		elderly	41
Various initiatives regarding Equality: Gender, Disability, Race Ethnic Minority Employment		equality	43
Objective F: Improved Governance			
NSR 2006-2008			
New Deal 50 Plus	“employment programme	employment of	48

	to help older workers”	older workers	
Default retirement age of 65		employment of older workers	48
Tax simplification for pensions		retirees	49
Pension Protection Fund and Financial Assistance Scheme	Occupational pension provision	pensions	49
National Pensions Debate		pensions/transparency/visibility	49
NSR 2008-2010			
Broad involvement in developing the National Action Plan		transparency, involvement, visibility	45
Broad involvement of young people from deprived areas to influence government’s child strategy		poverty, visibility, involvement	45
Examining current arrangements for engagement of older people	“to ensure the future engagement with older people at national, regional and local government levels”	older individuals, involvement	46
Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force		minority employment	46
Creation of Expert Task Force on Equality		equality	46
UK Commission for Employment and Skills (employer focused)		employment	47
Local Employment Partnerships	to bring back to work long-term jobseekers	employment	47
Local Strategic Partnerships	“to create a shared vision and priorities for a local area”	social inclusion, involvement	47
Public Service Agreements with numerous initiatives thereunder given as examples	“meeting clearly defined targets”	all	48-9

Appendix B: Common Objectives

Extracted in whole from European Commission, "Common Objectives," under European Commission/Employment and Social Affairs/Social Protection Social Inclusion/Process (accessed on February 28, 2010).

The overarching objectives of the OMC for social protection and social inclusion are to promote:

- (a) social cohesion, equality between men and women and equal opportunities for all through adequate, accessible, financially sustainable, adaptable and efficient social protection systems and social inclusion policies;
- (b) effective and mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives of greater economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and with the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy;
- (c) good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy.

The following objectives apply to the different strands of work:

A decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by ensuring:

- (d) access for all to the resources, rights and services needed for participation in society, preventing and addressing exclusion, and fighting all forms of discrimination leading to exclusion;
- (e) the active social inclusion of all, both by promoting participation in the labour market and by fighting poverty and exclusion;
- (f) that social inclusion policies are well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty, that they are efficient and effective and mainstreamed into all relevant public policies, including economic, budgetary, education and training policies and structural fund (notably ESF) programmes.

Adequate and sustainable pensions by ensuring:

- (g) adequate retirement incomes for all and access to pensions which allow people to maintain, to a reasonable degree, their living standard after retirement, in the spirit of solidarity and fairness between and within generations;
- (h) the financial sustainability of public and private pension schemes, bearing in mind pressures on public finances and the ageing of populations, and in the context of the three-pronged strategy for tackling the budgetary implications of ageing, notably by: supporting longer working lives and active ageing; by balancing contributions and benefits in an appropriate and socially fair manner; and by promoting the affordability and the security of funded and private schemes;
- (i) that pension systems are transparent, well adapted to the needs and aspirations of women and men and the requirements of modern societies, demographic ageing and structural change; that people receive the information they need to plan their retirement and that reforms are conducted on the basis of the broadest possible consensus.

Accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care by ensuring:

(j) access for all to adequate health and long-term care and that the need for care does not lead to poverty and financial dependency; and that inequities in access to care and in health outcomes are addressed;

(k) quality in health and long-term care and by adapting care, including developing preventive care, to the changing needs and preferences of society and individuals, notably by developing quality standards reflecting best international practice and by strengthening the responsibility of health professionals and of patients and care recipients;

(l) that adequate and high quality health and long-term care remains affordable and financially sustainable by promoting a rational use of resources, notably through appropriate incentives for users and providers, good governance and coordination between care systems and public and private institutions. Long-term sustainability and quality require the promotion of healthy and active life styles and good human resources for the care sector.

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