Europejski model społeczny – między kryzysem a adaptacyjnością systemu

Streszczenie

Jako cel badawczy Autorka artykułu postawiła sobie diagnozę roli czynnika ideologicznego i obiektywnych uwarunkowań strukturalnych w ewolucji regulowanego kapitalizmu na kontynencie europejskim. W tekście dokonano charakterystyki europejskiego modelu społecznego, przeanalizowano wpływ globalizacji na europejski kapitalizm regulowany, omówiono wyzwania jakie demografia stwarza dla struktur społecznych, rynku pracy oraz systemu zabezpieczenia społecznego w Europie. Autorka prześledziła zmiany w sferze pracy, które zachodzą od lat 80. XX wieku na europejskim rynku pracy w obszarze rozwiązań instytucjonalnych, pozycji pracownika, instrumentów polityki rynku pracy. Analizie poddane zostały procesy konwergencji i dywergencji w rozwoju europejskiej polityki społecznej oraz rola instytucji unijnych w zarządzaniu problemami społecznymi współczesnej Europy. Ostatnim elementem analizy był wpływ kryzysu ekonomicznego w strefie euro na unijną politykę społeczną. W operacjonalizacji prowadzonych badań wykorzystano metodę historyczną, porównawczą, analizę instytucjonalną i analizę wskaźników społecznych.

Słowa kluczowe: *Europejski model społeczny, welfare state, globalizacja, starzenie się społeczeństwa, neoliberalizm, trzecia droga, aktywna polityka społeczna, kryzys gospodarczy 2008+*

Abstract

The Author of the article sets as a research goal the diagnosis of the role of the ideological factor and objective structural conditions in the evolution of regulated capitalism on the European continent. In the text the European social model was characterized, the influence of globalisation on the regulated European capitalism was analyzed, the challenges of demography which are posed for the social structures, the job market and social security in Europe were discussed. The Author analysed the changes happening on the European job market since the 1980s in the field of institutional solutions, position of the employee, policy tools for the job market. The convergence and divergence dynamic in the development of the European social policy and the role of the EU institutions in managing the problems of modern Europe were analysed. Finally the influence of the Eurozone's economic crisis on the EU social policy was diagnosed. In order to operationalise the research, historical and comparative methods will be used as well as institutional analysis and social index analysis.

Key words: *European social model, welfare state, globalisation, ageing of the society, neoliberalism, third way, active social policy, economic crisis 2008+*

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The European social model – between crisis and system's adaptability[1]

Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century, Europeans have created a model of society that is unique worldwide, combining economic effectiveness and social solidarity – a real reason for pride and envy for inhabitants of other parts of the globe. It has ensured an unprecedented high level of social inclusion. It has also been perceived as model to follow, the 'European Dream' (Rifkin 2005). In spite of Europe's wide entanglement in the 2008 economic crisis, the Old Continent's strongly socially-rooted version of capitalism is constantly attracting thousands of migrants, as best exemplified by the 2015 migration crisis.

The European social model (ESM) is based on a unique consensus of values, which emanate in the developed structures of European welfare state: solidarity, equality, justice, partnership, self-governance. While unquestionable differences between Europe's regions (Continental Europe, Scandinavia, Mediterranean Europe, Anglo-Saxon and Central-Eastern) do exist in terms of institutional appliances, in the end the traits common to European nations make them stand out in the socio-economic context of other parts of the world: the United States of America (USA), Latin America or Asia.

The subject of this paper is to show the particularities of the European social model

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and analyse the transformations it is undergoing because of changes in the environment, both economic (globalisation) and social (ageing population). The redevelopment of social and economic structure as well as the job market which can be observed in Europe since the 1980s constitute a serious challenge in creating a social security for those who live on the continent. Classic building blocks of social security – insurance and extensive protection of employment, have been created to amend the social risks of the industrial society. However, the economic conditions and thus the rules of participation of the worker in the service society job market have changed significantly since then. Accordingly, European welfare capitalism is constantly evolving, which resulted in the trails for a new social contract relevant to the postindustrial era which have been undertaken as the millennium reached its end.

Importantly, in the last decades' actions aimed at reforming the welfare state one can see a significant retreat from the idea of 'equalising towards progress' (Rymsza, 2013: p. 43). This idea used to be understood as the expansion of individual autonomy when set against the market forces through constant institutionalising of social policy (i.e. constant subjective and objective growth of provisions and social services). On the verge of 21st century we observe a hold to this process, which can be perceived as a sign of crisis, a deviation from social values. The neoliberal narrative has been victorious. Such a stance is typical amongst researchers who analyse the systemic reforms in social welfare of the past three decades from an ideological perspective. The curbing of universal redistribution programmes, which guaranteed social security to all citizens in a move towards increasing responsibility and providence, introducing competition into public programmes through creating the so-called internal markets, commercialisation of social service, stimulating policy of job market, etc. is being interpreted as a triumph of neoliberal solutions. And it is the convergence theory which was, until 1980s, the dominant theoretical attitude in explaining the rise and development of the welfare state. Has the theory become irrelevant?

Marek Rymsza suggests a different interpretation. He accurately concludes that both the period of the European welfare state's birth and that of its current reconstruction share many structural similarities (Rymsza, 2013: p. 27–45). Rymsza suggests that we view the current reconstruction of the welfare state as a historical process conditioned by structural, not ideological factors. Taking such a perspective allows to extract two distinct dimensions of convergence in the development of the welfare state in Europe. These similarities can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. The convergence processes in the development and evolution of welfare state in Europe.

convergence dimension	construction of the welfare state	reconstruction of the welfare state
period	late 19th / early 20th century	late 20th / early 21st century
structural determinants	industrial revolution	globalisation
driving force	industrialisation, urbanisation	global competition, deindustrialisation, IT revolution, demographic processes (ageing of the population)
effects	workers issue = functional need for public compensation programmes	structural unemployment, lack of financial stability in social security systems, precariat = functional need to convert the socio-economic systems
systemic answer of the government	backing away from the "night-watchman" state towards building the foundations of the welfare state (development of social security systems and regulating the job market)	backing away from protective capitalism towards activation paradigm in social policy (deregulation of the job market, introducing measures based on individual providence to collective systems of social security, commercialisation of services, activation of the benefit claimants)
area of reform implementation	process independent from the reformers' ideological affiliations, i.e. seen in European countries ruled by conservatives, liberals, social democrats	process independent from the reformers' ideological affiliations, i.e. seen in Anglo-Saxon countries (liberal model), continental Europe (conservative-corporate model) and Scandinavia (social democratic model)

Source: author's work based on Rymsza, 2013: p. 44-45.

In the following paper the author will attempt to diagnose the role of the ideological factor and objective structural conditions in the evolution of regulated capitalism on the European continent. Predominantly, she will try to answer several questions: What are the distinctive traits of the European social model? What is the influence of globalisation on the regulated European capitalism? What challenges does demography pose for the social structures, the job market and social security in Europe? What are the changes happening on the European job market (institutional solutions, position of the employee, policy tools for the job market, etc.). What is the convergence and divergence dynamic in the development of the European social policy? What role do the EU institutions play in managing the problems of modern Europe? What influence does the Eurozone's economic crisis have on the EU social policy? In order to operationalise the research, historical and comparative methods will be used as well as institutional analysis and social index analysis.

The European social model – characteristic features

The social model present on the Old Continent (which can be defined as welfare capitalism, regulated capitalism or protective capitalism) is one of the key elements of the European identity. One could even agree with Anthony Giddens that it is a "crown jewel" of Europe's liberal democracy (Giddens 2006: p. 14), a trademark due to which Europe is perceived outside as an oasis of prosperity.

Through a universal social security system, social solidarity and attempts to eliminate social exclusion, Europe ensures its citizens a high quality of living – unattainable to such extent in other regions of the world (Africa, Asia, Latin America) or paid with much greater individual effort (the USA, Australia, Canada).

Although there are institutional differences between individual EU countries in the scope of specific solutions in social policy, there is a general belief among Europeans that social inclusion and economic growth can come hand in hand. Economic policy aimed at promoting social cohesion is not regarded as a cost factor. On the contrary, economic success and ensuring social equality are presented as mutually correlated aims. Policy conducted in such a way favours the development of egalitarian welfare society. This, in turn, diminishes social tensions characteristic of countries with strong social stratification, so it ensures a lack of social unrest and stabilises a political system – it constitutes added value. This epitomises the real practical aspect of the mode of development applied in Europe (Alber 2010: p. 103; Witte 2004: p. 1; Księżopolski 2005: p. 9–15; Duszczyk 2012: p. 222).

On the basis of the above short introduction, it is possible to propose the first thesis that ESM is a normative project – based on the community of values shared by all Europeans. However, does the normative dimension fully exhaust the semantic potential of this term? The answer is no.

Literature on the subject includes definitions of the notion of the European social model from different perspectives. For example, Hartmut Kaelble distinguishes three plains. In the first broadest sense, ESM is considered a peculiar way leading to modernity taken by European societies, where the social component played a key part since the end of the 19th century. According to the scholar, ESM covers the whole of the peculiarities of European societies: family model, consumption, working style, system of values, the welfare state infrastructure, management culture, strong urbanisation, widespread education. In a more narrow sense, European social model is defined by this German social historian as a concern for creating new workplaces, social security, redistribution of income, that is conducting policy with an objective to ensure social justice. Here, the scholar classifies activities carried out at the national and European level (though the latter only since the 1990s when the EU gained broader competence in the social field). In its narrowest sense, ESM is interpreted by the author as a specific feature of the European welfare state, which has created social insurance systems that protect from the risk of unemployment, old age, illness, disability, develops social housing and ensures wide access to education and healthcare (Kaelble 2004: p. 31–32).

In turn, Andreas Aust, Sigrid Leitner and Stephan Lessenich (Aust et al. 2002) examine ESM in two dimensions – on the one hand, it is institutionalising social diversity, which is uniquely European, and on the other hand, it is institutionalising social equality. The first dimension consists of: coordinated market economy, centralised and pluralistic corporatism, majority and consensus democracy and subsidiarity. The second one consists of adding social rights to civil liberties and political rights – a uniquely European product which could be set as an example. This dimension includes:

- universal social security system with a high level of decommodification,
- highly controlled labour market, where working conditions and pay are determined by legal regulations or as part of tariff agreements between social partners,

- redistribution of income carried out on the basis of provisions of labour law and regulations concerning social policy,
- institutionalised social solidarity (Aust et al. 2002: p. 276–280).

According to the authors, ESM covers the whole of structural similarities between European societies, although they stress that this is not a clear picture. The above pattern can be observed in individual EU member states with various degrees of intensity. Central and Northern European countries surely constitute the core and the gravitational centre of ESM, which is also asserted by Gøsta Esping-Andersen's classic typology (Esping-Andersen 2010b), the South and the remaining areas show peculiar divergence (Aust et al. 2002: p. 284).

In order to present the specificity of the European attitude towards the social sphere, researchers often juxtapose the continental version of capitalism with its American counterpart. It seems justifiable to perceive ESM in opposition to the American liberal economic model. Frank Pfetsch (2007) defines these differences shortly, contrasting "social Europe" with "entrepreneurial America". In Europe, the achievements of the world of organised labour such as the co-management of personnel in private companies, protection from sudden lay-offs, social security from unemployment are clearly visible. In the American laissez-faire system, there are no appropriate counterparts. In the scholar's view, a private welfare state was created there. Old-age pensions and healthcare services are provided mainly by private companies in the USA. In Europe, these benefits are provided by the state and they encompass the whole society. In addition, every European citizen has *de jure* or *de facto* right to assets and resources that guarantee minimum existence (Pfetsch 2007: p. 72). In turn, many benefits in the USA have time constraints, and only certain people with insufficient income can apply for long-term benefits: elderly people and single mothers (Hermann, Mahnkopf 2010: p. 4–5). Christoph Hermann points to the fact that the basic characteristic feature of Western European countries that distinguished them from the USA in the post-war period was widespread state ownership (Hermann 2009: p. 77).

It should be stressed that the European social model, apart from the *welfare state* perspective, is also the subject of in-depth analysis from the perspective of actions taken in the social sphere within the European Union (Aust, Leitner, Lessenich 2002: p. 273).

The term ESM has been widely used since the 1990s by the heads of European governments and the European Commission, and it was coined by the President of the European Commision, Jacques Delors. Creating a vision of social Europe, Delors wished to build an alternative to free market capitalism that dominated Great Britain and the USA in the 1980s, and then began to gain a widespread support among political elites of the Old Continent. He believed that the EU must offer its citizens something more than just a uniform market and economic-monetary Union, as "it is difficult to fall in love with the single market" (Hermann 2009: p. 77–78).

In 1994, the European Commission published the White Paper on Social Policy. ESM was defined as a set of common values such as democracy and individual rights, free collective bargaining, the market economy, equality of opportunity for all, and social welfare and solidarity (Hermann 2009: p. 79).

Leading Polish scholars, interpreting ESM as a project for Union's integration, also stress that its groundwork is based on:

- justice and social solidarity (guaranteeing an individual the right to receive help from the society in a situation when severe social risks appear),
- a consensus concerning the need of linking complimentary protective social measures with the economic policy (in order to reach competitiveness and fighting social inequality),
- social dialogue between social partners (Duszczyk 2012: p. 222; Księżopolski 2005: p. 9).

Because European social policy is dependent on creating an internal market, the solutions began from harmonising labour laws, banning discrimination and regulating the free movement of workers (1960s and 1970s). In the 1990s, after more than a dozen years of neglect, the social dimension of integration once again took off and became an important area of the EU's politics. The years 1995–2005 are even acknowledged as the EU's social period, with the creation of new tools and strategies such as the European Employment Strategy, the Lisbon Agenda, and the Treaty of Amsterdam. Labour unions received more prerogatives after being given licenses via the European social dialogue (e.g. the power to coordinate tariff agreements). On the other hand, issues related to individual protection against social risks still remain under the competence of nation states (Oppeln 2007: p. 6–11; Hacker 2013: p. 10).

Since the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, EU's social policy has been reduced to the employment policy and the success of ESM is equalled with high employment levels. Indeed, social justice appears in official documents, but it plays a secondary role in the list of policy objectives to be reached, which seems a serious negligence in the view of social stratification in Europe, progressing since the beginning of the 21st century (Hermann 2009: p. 81).

Development of the European social model

Development of the European social model in the post-war period – as stated before – may be equalled with the development of a modern welfare state. And this view is shared by the author of this paper. The formation of this model was a result of a favourable coincidence of a couple of factors connected with: a) economic environment, b) demographic structure, c) labour market structure, d) family model, e) political sphere.

Until mid-1970s, European social model developed in perfect conditions created by uninterrupted economic growth and favourable demographic structure. The economy was dominated by industrial production, which created a large demand for unskilled labour force. The post-war economic growth assured stable employment. A full-time employment contract for an indefinite period was a dominant form of employment. Professional biography was stable and included a short period of education, and long-lasting employment (the rule was a life-long employment in trained profession, most often with the same employer for about 40–45 years of your professional career), as well as a short retirement period – approximately 7 years. Because of the high increase in work output, there was a sharp rise in salaries. As a result, an independent factory worker was able to support his family and ensure them a standard of living previously attainable only by the elites (purchase and furnishing of a flat or a house, purchase of a car, children education, and family holiday in the country or abroad). This allowed working class families to adopt a lifestyle similar to upper classes. The post-war generation of worker's wives stayed at home, doing housework and bringing up children.

"The economic boom" of the 1950s and 1960s enabled an effective elimination of the market's influence on the individual. Growing budget revenues from taxes allowed the governments to interfere in areas that reach far beyond the "night-watchman state" model which had earlier been practiced in this part of the world. Apart from the social security system (social insurance) subsequent branches of social policy were developed: family policy, labour market policy, education policy, housing policy (social housing in Sweden, Federal Republic of Germany, France), public healthcare. In consequence, a major structural change in liberal capitalist economy was successfully accomplished. A system of institutions that provide a decent life to European employees was created, institutions tailored to their needs and abilities to participate in the labour market.

At the same time, men's domination on the labour market resulted in the design of social security system around male breadwinners (Scandinavian countries were an exception) and entitlement to benefits stemmed from secure and permanent employment. Wives and children received entitlements to benefits connected with social insurance contributions paid by the head of the family (Esping-Andersen 2010a: 25–94; Kaelbe 2010: p. 57).

In relation to the economic environment, it should be emphasised that enterprises operated within the real economy framework at the time, that is they gained income from running business activities (production and sale of goods and services). It ensured a balanced relation between financial capital and manufacturing capital – the former was dependent on the latter. Unemployment was kept at the level of only about 2% (Schulmeister 2007: p. 100–101; Sapir 2006: p. 372). On the one hand, it was related to economic prosperity and a steady rise in workplaces in production. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the number of age groups entering the job market in the 1960s was not large due to a limited population growth in post-war years. Moreover, women from working class families withdrew from the labour market. Demographic factors combined with a thriving economy enabled a mild transition of post-war Europe through the deruralisation process and absorption of all farmers migrating to cities (Esping-Andersen 2010a: p. 38).

To create a "post-totalitarian consensus for welfare" in Europe (Offe 1995: p. 227) political circumstances were also of great significance. Development of social Europe was a part of political rivalry between the USA and the USSR. A bipolar world order that shaped after 1945 was based on rivalry for ideological world domination between both empires, promoting opposing solutions in the field of social and economic system. In opposition to "worker and peasant paradise" developed in the East – a classless society with state-owned means of production and extensive system of state social services – the Western world had to reform 19th century laissez-faire capitalism. All the more so, because communist influence in European liberal democracy states in the 1950s was substantial (communist parties constituted a major political power in Greece, France and Italy). Fear of the revival of a fascist totalitarian system, which had previously emerged on the surge of social frustration caused by the great depression of 1929–1933, was an additional factor, which induced the postwar governments in the western part of the European continent towards stronger intervention in the economic processes. The fear of totalitarianisms coming back to life in addition to already formed foundations of social security (Bismarck's conservative social reforms), the social teaching of the Church (papal letters), the strong tradition of labour movement as well as strong Christian democracy and social democracy parties in the governments of major part of Western Europe resulted in the formation a singular form of regulated capitalism on the continent.

As a result, a consensus was reached on the grounds that growing material prosperity should be accompanied by increase in the state's role in fulfilling social needs of its citizens. It was expressed in Beveridge's plan, German ordoliberalism, and actions of Scandinavian social democrats. That is how European democratic welfare capitalism was created. This social contract from mid-century singled out European industrial societies from other parts of the world.

Theoretical framework for state interventionism was created by Keynesianism – a macroeconomic theory assuming that all activities aimed at increasing and stabilising demand are profitable to economy, as they are the driving force for investment, and are favourable for rise in employment. That is why Keynes advocated for developing public tender systems and redistribution of income, that is subsidising lower social classes through various allowances (family allowance, housing allowance, and so forth) in order to increase consumption capabilities of the society (Janik 2013: p. 44–46).

The period of economic prosperity came to an end in Europe in the 1970s along with the oil crisis, which evoked an economic recession that lasted for a few years. Looking back, the period of the oil crisis can be regarded as an important turning point that closed the industrial era in Europe and initiated a transformation process of European societies towards societies of services. Economic recession and changes in the structure of economy coincided with post-war "baby boom" age groups entering the job market and with increasing professional activity of women. New workplaces created by service economy were not able to absorb the entire labour supply on the market. It caused the emergence of the phenomenon of mass unemployment in Europe.

Low economic growth connected with inflation and high unemployment rates that took on a long-lasting structural character constituted a major problem for welfare state. Other disturbing phenomena began to emerge: low fertility rates, increasing post-production age population, individualisation of attitudes and growing competition with industrial countries outside Europe, where a welfare state doctrine was unknown. Keynesian consensus for welfare suffered a breakdown. (Schulmeister 2007: p. 100–101; Heise, Lierse 2011: p. 202).

Mass unemployment that shook Europe after the oil crisis initiated a change in economic strategies implemented by European countries. "Keynesian belief in the state was substituted for Friedman's cult of the market" (Smoczyński 2011: p. 22). It was acknowledged that it is necessary to relieve European economy from overgrown regulations and companies from high tax burdens. Europe entered a deregulation phase. Economic growth became the main goal of governments. Neoliberal politicians pressed for limiting state interventionism, privatising economy (at the time, state ownership in coal, steel, motor and transport industries was common in Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy). Abolishing protectionism and opening European economy to the world were advocated.

Globalisation and the European social model

In the 1980s, a widespread neoliberal criticism of the welfare state began. It was pointed out that welfare state curbs economic efficiency and innovation. This attitude was represented by a large proportion of the public and many European governments (Kaelble 2004: p. 36). This wave of criticism was followed by privatisation processes and the reduction of the European welfare state (Margaret Thatcher's reforms), and a wider economic opening of Europe and the USA to the world.

As a result, Europe entered the era of deindustrialisation and non-material economy. Both processes have greatly influenced the European social model. After the fall of real socialism and turn of Asian markets towards capitalism (China, India), liberalisation of conditions of commercial exchange between industrialised countries and developing countries as well as a substantial decrease in transportation costs, Western European and American investors have gained 1.5 billion new employees until the end of the first decade of 21st century – employees devoid of basic social protection and the support of strong trade unions fighting for their rights. It resulted in a great decrease in labour costs for investors and initiated a mass exodus of heavy and light industry, and later also services, from Europe and the USA to Asia (Smoczyński 2011: p. 22).

At the same time, along with progressing liberalisation of financial markets, barriers for capital transfer disappeared. Financial capitalism began to take shape in Europe, ensuring the possibility to generate profit in isolation from traditional production. Companies gained new source of increasing income through investments in foreign financial markets – long-term investments or speculation (Schulmeister 2007: p. 76). Effectively, Europe has become hostage to unequal index of production – the advantage of mobile financial capital over the much less mobile human capital. Thus, as a potential area to invest it has become less and less attractive to domestic and foreign capital.

It was a cause for real decrease in steer-ability and effectiveness of welfare state. Globalisation, because of its non-negotiability as an external element of economic reality (Jepsen, Pascual 2005: p. 233), has become one of the most crucial challenges for the European social model. Wishing to retain workplaces, European governments were forced to consent to decrease labour costs and deregulate the labour market. It resulted in a progressing erosion of a traditional employment relationship. Under employers' pressure, legal regulations were adopted sanctioning new forms of employment: part-time work, fixed-term employment, remote work, temporary work, employment on the basis of mandate agreement or specific-work contract, micro jobs, self-employment, false self-employment. However, welfare state still assumed stability of professional career, so it was not prepared to eliminate new social risks related to all the more common fragmentation of employee's professional biography (Kaelble 2004: p. 36).

Compared to traditional employment, non-standard forms of labour result in lessened income and level of social security for the workers. They are profitable in transitional periods, e.g. between education and employment, unemployment and employment, employment and pension, or when combining childcare with professional work (the so-called interim job markets). If the atypical employment becomes a constant part of biography and the main source of income for years, it can directly result in poverty in the post-productive period (Schmid 1999: p. 125–148).

The incompatibility of social security system in terms of unemployment with the changes in the labour area must be noted. Unemployment insurance does is ineffective in relation to people working under non-typical forms of employment. The absence of social security contributions results in absence of right to benefits after losing work. The contribution-based systems give no right to benefits to people who were never employed. Created as tools to smooth unemployment based on total cyclical and frictional unemployment, they are not suited to the needs of those unqualified and thus subject to structural unemployment (Clasen, Clegg 2006: p. 530–531). It has become necessary to shift the weight in unemployment security from passive benefits (which guarantee income only temporarily) to active benefits, aimed at reintegration with the job market and raising employability of the unemployed.

In order to lessen the effects of globalisation, EU established the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) in 2006. The main role of EGF is to provide financial support to workers who lost their jobs because of dynamic shifts in the market environment (Regulation 1927/2006). The help (microloans, special social programmes) is expected to ease job market reintegration of the workers from the sectors facing major structural disruptions brought upon by the dislocation of jobs to different parts of the world.

Ageing of the European society

According to the EC's demographic forecasts the dependency ratio will double until 2050, i.e. it will increase from 28.4% in 2010 to 58.5%. This means that the number of employed for each pensioner will decrease from 3.5 in 2014 to 1.7 in the middle of the century. The number of over-65-year-olds will increase almost twice before 2060 (from 87 million now to 153 million) and the number of 80+ Europeans will triple, i.e. rise from 23 million to 62 million. In 2014 the lowest dependency ratio was observed in Ireland (19.3%) and the highest in Germany (31.5%) and Italy (33.1%) (Eurostat 2014).

In the two decades between 1990 and 2010 the working-age population increased only by 1.8% in EU-27. At the same time the post-working age population increased by 3.7% and the number of children and adolescents decreased by 5.4%. This results in the ever-strengthening of the "reversed" demographic pyramid.

Although population of the EU is still increasing, in the recent years this was mostly due to immigration. Depopulation is becoming much more common: in 2009 eight of the EU-27 countries noted a decrease in population, mostly because of negative birth rate (in Hungary, Estonia, Belgium, Germany, Latvia and Romania) or emigration (Lithuania and Malta). In the upcoming decades the areas mostly threatened by depopulation are Mediterranean and Central-Eastern Europe, which have the lowest natality in the EU (European Commission 2011: p. 59-60).

According to the forecasts, the number of people able to work (those in working age, which is 15–64 years old) will decrease in the next five decades from 67% to 56%. In effect, the smaller population of productive-aged will face increased costs related to the upkeep of rising post working-age population.

The decrease in working-age population is especially dangerous to the financial stability of pension systems based on the repartition method. The lack of money to suffice for steady flow of pensions results in the need of financing public pension systems from the country's budget, i.e. taxes. This undermines the logic of intergenerational solidarity. That logic was based on the assumption that the productive generation provides financial input as well as the generational one: children who will be future contributors to the system.

Inefficiency of pension systems in the EU countries was also influenced by the method of fighting long-term unemployment amongst the 50+ population by occupational deactivation, popular in the 1990s. The surplus of labour resources, difficult to introduce into the job market, were "removed" by liberalising the regulations allowing early retirement.

Increase in older population also means more expenses for health service and long--term care (increased spending results from age-specific ailments). Due to weakening of family links (divorces, childlessness) and resulting loneliness of the 64+ generation, Europe sees a systematic growth in the need to provide public care towards older people.

Adaptation processes in the European social model

Because of problems generated by globalisation and ageing, at the turn of the millennium Europe (traditionally the centre of the world) has lost its status as an inspirational model to follow. The goal of keeping the quality of life on the same level while competitiveness was decreasing has become a big challenge for the European countries.

Supporters of neoliberal approach in economy argued that in the face of globalisation and related social dumping from emerging economies, it is necessary to change traditional institutional solutions within the regulation of labour market (including minimum pay), social benefit system and trade unions' prerogatives, which meant a departure from the European social model (Krakowski 2008: p. 24–27). Critics opposed and pointed to successful Nordic countries building their position on the global market based on high taxes, large labour market flexibility and high social security, as well as development of knowledge-based economy. They pointed out that Europe should build its comparative advantage through changes in the production structure and focus on the development of advanced technologies, resigning from a pointless competition in labour-intensive industries, where European countries are not able to compete against other parts of the world because of higher labour costs.

Both at the national and the EU level, European policy-makers decided to join in the competition in pleasing the global capital. Social democratic parties, which were in power in 13 out of 15 countries of the old European Union in the 1990s, gave this attitude a go-ahead. Social democrats believed in a spell propagated by Margaret Thatcher: TINA – *there is no alternative* (for neoliberalism) and repeated it like a mantra in most EU countries, putting neoliberal theories into practice in economic and labour market policy. The latter was yielded to the paradigm of competitiveness and effectiveness. And social democratic discourse on left-wing values – equality, social justice – was replaced with a discourse on rationality.

As a result, at the turn of the centuries most EU welfare states were dominated by the paradigm of activation in social policy and the concept of flexicurity. They were

Europe's response to challenges related with global competition and the third phase of demographic transition. The concept of flexicurity in particular, which was considered a way to increase flexibility in the European labour market, was aimed at combating the phenomemon of jobless economic growth in Europe.

Social democratic Third way – new social agreement for Europe?

The key to the modernisation of the European social model carried out by social democrats in Western Europe was the idea presented by Anthony Giddens in his book "The third way. Renewal of Social Democracy" of "stimulating social investment state", which can be regarded as an attempt to determine a new social agreement for post-industrial Europe.

Giddens suggested transforming a net of social security based on social claims into a system of mutual rights and responsibilities of citizens and the state. His vision of modernised welfare state leads to replacing a classic "post-factum redistribution" with "redistribution of possibilities". He has opted for depending entitlements to benefits from the level of individual's involvement in activities aimed at improving difficult living conditions they had found themselves in. He claimed that only individuals co-operating with support institutions, through participating in training courses or active job-seeking, should be entitled to receive support (Giddens 1999: p. 60–61; 89–104).

Thanks to Tony Blair's skilful promotion of the idea of the Third Way in political discourse, a heated debate on the need to rebuild the existing social model was initiated in Europe. Social policy reforms in Great Britain, carried out consistently in this new "activation" spirit, became an inspiration for similar transformations in continental Europe (Germany, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland). Whereas in case of Scandinavian countries, a turn to active policy, observed around the EU in late 1990s (except the Mediterranean countries), cannot be regarded as innovation or a break away from the previous path of development. These reforms need to be examined in categories of a minor adjustment of traditionally active system of social protection.

Increased pressure on individual responsibility and mobilisation of working age people in the labour market was also accompanied by institutional changes in labour market policy. On one hand, punitive mechanisms creating dependence of granting financial support from the motivation of the unemployed person to take up work were enhanced, on the other hand, active forms of support were extended (courses, training courses, grants, subsidised employment, and so on) enabling retraining or acquiring indispensable assets to start one's own business (Dingeldey 2007: p. 193). It is worth noting that moving in the direction of rise in employment rate, which means replacing a discourse on unemployment on national and union levels with a discourse on the need to increase employment rates (so-called *employability* in EU's numerous official documents and strategies), should not be examined in the categories of the willingness to achieve full employment and social inclusion, but mostly as rescuing the stability of social security systems deregulated due to demographic crisis (Alber 2010: p. 121). The aim has been to maximise the employment potential of human resources through extending retirement age, combating the dependency culture (that is cuts in social security system – reduction of benefits), reaching for labour force located in the so-called „undisclosed reserves".

A method of social sphere management was also modified. A concept of *new public management* appeared, transferring private sector management models into the structures of state institutions. Social services began to develop market mechanisms as part of contracting services, granting licences, issuing vouchers, which means so called *quasi--markets*. Competitive factor in social services was introduced to increase consumer's choice, raising their quality and effectiveness of public expenditures. As a result, the role of the state in offering social services was limited to ensuring legal frameworks, financing and quality control of tasks carried out by private enterprises. The relation between benefit providers and recipients of benefits has also changed from the previous *applicant-clerk* relation into *customer-service provider* relation (Schmid 2006: p. 370; Gülker, Kaps 2006: p. 31; Anioł 2010: p. 460–461).

There have been attempts to solve the problems arising from unfavourable demographic balance, budget deficits and high unemployment by an increase in individual citizens' contribution to the social security system and commercialisation/privatisation of social services, which was also recommended by the European Commission. According to some scholars, it was the European Commission that was the crucial driving force for liberal discourse, which preceded and accompanied privatisation and liberalisation of public services in Europe (Mahnkopf 2009: p. 225). Capital elements were introduced to pension systems and actual retirement pensions were lowered. In case of unemployment benefits, the term of their payment and the amount were limited, and motivation elements were introduced. Reforms in health service limited the catalogue of benefits and introduced or increased private financing (of services and medications) (Busch, Hermann, Hinrichs, Schulten 2012: p. 6; Alber

2010: p. 118–121). Steering towards the American version of labour market policy and social policy, politicians wished to achieve a balance between efficiency and social justice (Mahnkopf 2009: p. 224).

According to scholars analysing the effects of the privatisation process and public sector commercialisation, it is doubtful if the policy leads to increased efficiency of services offered and a growth in the level of individual autonomy. Private-sector service providers are mainly focused on gaining profit, avoiding unnecessary risk (so called cream-skimming effect). This leads to a dualistic or even mutualistic support system, where customers posing less "risk" are served by commercial enterprises, and customers with a high degree of social risk remain in the public sector.

The process of privatisation lead to a growth in social polarisation and a decrease in the quality of public services for people remaining in a difficult situation, as they are the largest group of recipients of public services (cf. the case of the USA). If social services are guaranteed as social rights and available to all on the basis of citizen's status, there is a strong pressure to maintain high standards and support tailored to the needs of middle classes (Scandinavian countries). Moreover, because of the lack of sufficient knowledge and information, it is difficult for the citizens to make the best choice from a large number of service providers (see pension funds, vocational training). Additionally, in relation to private social insurance, a serious risk connected to cumulative effect of economic recession needs to be taken into account. The system of private pension funds is prone to the cyclical nature of the financial sector. As a result, in the period of crisis, not only the poorest but also middle classes are affected by recession (Mahnkopf 2009: p. 228–229).

Some authors analysing coincident trends in European social policy of in recent years, are also advocates of the thesis on convergence, which means disappearance of differences in models between welfare states in Europe. In modernisation activities, changes in the model's structure are clearly visible between "individual and collective elements of the model, financing the system and entitlements to benefits and legitimisation" (Heise, Lierse 2011: p. 202). Under the influence of neoliberal theory in social policy, the paradigm of supporting privatisations, competitiveness, effectiveness, and in the scope of job market policy, conditioning benefits prevailed in almost all European countries. Moreover, these are trends promoted by the EU institutions. A provision in the Lisbon strategy on "active welfare state" is a confirmation of the thesis on the Union-wide nature of these changes. In all activities taken up as part of Open Method of Coordination there are clear recommendations to recommodify, privatise and lower the level of insurance benefits (Oppeln 2007: p. 9; Heise, Lierse 2011: p. 204).

Changes in the stratification of European society

The will to face the global workforce competition by deregulating European job market initiated two threats which the ruling elites influenced by the neoliberal intellectuals failed to acknowledge. The quality of employment positions has decreased and Europe started to see the long-forgotten (although well-known in the USA) phenomenon of the working poor: people unable to support themselves from their jobs.

One of the most essential effects of the post-war welfare state was the emergence of a broad middle class. However, since the beginning of 21st century, a number of people with permanent employment has decreased and the number of people devoid of permanent job or waiting to be employed is on the rise. There are growing differences in the income between the high-salary sector, unskilled workers and people working on the basis of flexible employment forms. A growing stratification of European societies can be observed.

Social cohesion, one of the key achievements of post-war Europe, is questioned. Europe is gradually losing its egalitarian character.

In addition, since 2008, Europe struggles with the economic crisis that has a negative impact on the situation on the labour market. The labour market is not capable of absorbing all the young ambitious people who are a part of the best-educated generation in the history of Europe (studying abroad, student exchange, traineeship and vocational practice in foreign countries). For a growing proportion of these people, the only alternative is working in low-salary sector, on the basis of unstable agreements, so called flexible employment forms (Bauman 2011). A substantial proportion of young Europeans does not succeed in finding any job. Unemployment rates among young people (15–29 years old) reached the following levels in 2014: in Spain (38.9%), in Portugal (25.2%), in Greece (45%), in Italy (32.4%) (Eurostat 2015).

Social scientists analysing the aforementioned phenomenon conclude, that graduates entering the job market at the beginning of 21st century will become the first generation in post-war Europe experiencing a decrease in life quality and social degradation (falling below their parents' material level). This will be a very painful experience, taking into account that Europe accustomed it's citizens to success, constant advance, increase in welfare, increase in professional possibilities and increase in prosperity (Bauman 2011). Some scholars even believe that youth should be added to the list of classic social risks, that temporarily or permanently exclude the individual from the possibility to work, as defined in convention 102 of International Work Organisation, along with unemployment, illness, accident in the workplace, disability, death, maternity and old age (Zawadzki 2012: p. 39–41).

Changes on the European job market brought forth by its liberalisation and globalisation result in a new social issue of the 21st century. A major contradiction occurred between the existing socio-economic system (dominated by flexible forms of employment) and the inability of fulfilling aspirations of a dignified life by the best-educated generation of graduates since WW2. By the end of the 2000s "a group with common identity, common insecurity and a feeling of losing control of their future" emerges in Europe (Smoczyński 2011: p. 22). The common trait of this group is insecurity about the immediate future and low income, which prevents them from having a planned and dignified life. Modern sociologists use the term precariat to describe this emergent social stratum of workers facing exploitation in service economy, employed under flexible modes with low wages and deprived of basic forms of social security (Standing 2011; Smoczyński 2011: p. 21). The elementary good that the members of this new class have no access to is the feeling of security, what also has a negative impact on natality.

Pessimistic scenarios (especially the current economic crisis continuing since 2008) predict that the EU will cease to be perceived as a place of increasing welfare and it will become synonymous with stagnation. This may in turn strengthen the political position of the European populist parties.

Social dimension of the economic crisis of 2008

Since 2008, the world economic crisis has been the next blow for the European social model. Paradoxically, the solution to the situation, promptly described as the crisis of the banking and finance sector, was not the regulation of financial markets but further deregulation of the job market in Europe. The European welfare states were treated as a variable that had to adjust to the deficits of the economic and monetary union, which was part of activities aimed at improving the situation carried out under the auspices of the European Commission. (Supiot 2013: p. 19).

The economic reforms administered to countries in the most dramatic position (Southern Europe, Ireland, some Central and Eastern European countries) can be regarded as a sign of EU's new economic interventionism. In return for financial aid granted by so called Troika: EC, ECB and IMF, countries that used the support were obliged to introduce a number of reforms in the social sphere adjusting their economies, social model and public finances to conditions defined by the financial sector. It manifests itself in the reduction of public expenditure, reducing employment in the public sector, wage freeze and wage cuts, minimum wage cuts, deregulating the labour market (extended working hours, limitations in employees' rights, breach in autonomy of social partners during collective negotiations, weakening the position of trade unions), and reducing benefits from the social security systems (pension security reforms, cutting expenditures for public healthcare benefits) (Hermann 2013: p. 5–12; Hermann, Hinrichs, Brosig 2012: p. 6–45).

As a result, the Union administered backdoor social reforms to Southern and Central Eastern European countries in areas that in fact fall within the competence of the member states, that is they reach far beyond the EU's treaty provisions concerning the social sphere. It should be stressed that all countries affected by these drastic cuts belong to a group which had not provided their citizens with a comprehensive and extensive social support before the crisis.

These activities resulted in a further reduction of employment security and the development of precarious employment. Southern European countries are particularly affected by this phenomenon, where extensive protection from being laid off and related work security for employees working on the basis of a regular employment contract guaranteed security of income is greatly valued on account of strong family ties. It is clearly visible that, as a result of imposed reforms, the Mediterranean countries approach a fragmented and decentralised model of collective negotiations, which is characteristic for most countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Employment security faced a major increase in flexibility there.

It can be assumed that as a result of the crisis that has continued in Europe since 2008, deconstruction of the citizens' social security system occurred in the member states that received financial aid. The structural changes in social policy that have taken place, create favourable conditions for convergence to solutions typical of the Anglo-Saxon model (liberalisation of collective work relationships, decrease in employees' protection, reforms of pension security systems). This way, recommendations of the Troika and reforms implemented on their basis constitute a new quality of interference in the institutional order of social policy carried out in this part of Europe.

Thus, the crisis is a major breach in the process of EU's social unification. Southern and Eastern Europe drift apart from the continental core of ESM. The convergence only takes place in case of lowering social standards.

Conclusions

This article showed that exogenous factors (globalisation resulting in changes to economic structure and job market) and endogenic factors (introduction of the post-war baby-boomers to the job market, increased professional activity of women, ageing) have induced changes in the institutional structure of the European welfare state in the last 3 decades.

The adaptive measures are often perceived as a crisis of the basic link between European societies, i.e. solidarity. As a result of the rationality discourse, the Old Continent moved away from collective systems of social security towards elements based on individual precaution. Another typical phenomenon was the commercialisation of social services and the permanent rooting of the activation paradigm in social policy and on the job market.

How to interpret the above changes? Functionalists explained the distinctive shift from the liberal ideology at the turn of the 19th century with the appearance of the production technologies, because of which the societal organisation patterns became obsolete. Institutional structure of the 19th century state and its practice have proven dysfunctional when faced with the massive problem of fulfilling the basic needs of legions of industrial workers pouring into the cities, who had no protection whatsoever in case of temporary or permanent incapacity for work. A functional need for a systemic solution of the workers issue arose. Globalisation and the following deindustrialisation of the European continent have also shown dysfunction of the established institutional structures of the industrial state in providing security to the worker on the job market – they could not protect him or her from structural unemployment. A functional need for a reconstruction of social security system arose.

This process came in stages. In the 1980s a radical attempt at dismantling the welfare state was made from the neoliberal positions (Thatcherism and Reaganomics). 1990s and the beginning of 21st century in turn became a period of modernisation and attempts to search for optimal solutions in creating social security for Europeans that would balance their previous social privileges with the needs of modern world. This has taken shape in active social policy. One might interpret the latter period as an example of Europe's social adaptability to the new objective structural circumstances, which extort a reconstruction of mechanisms which protected Europeans from social risks.

The Analysis of the 2008+ period might in turn suggest that the "window of opportunity" has once again been opened for offensive pushing of the neoliberal narrative in countries that were strongly hit by the crisis and which remained on the periphery of the active social policy discourse in Europe (Mediterranean Europe and Central-Eastern Europe). These countries are also placed furthermost from the social nucleus of Europe (with rudimental model of social security in the South and continental-liberal hybrid in the East). The reforms introduced at the Troika's dictate include a significant decomposition of old channels of security by pushing for the flexibility of the job market (lessening labour protection, decentralising unions). Contrary to Scandinavian countries, this is not balanced out by a policy of individual support through a developed active policy on the job market. The measures are clearly unilateral.

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