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**UK in a changing Europe initiative**

Topic: Society, social policy and welfare

SCOPING REPORT

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## Executive summary

### Overview of area scoped

- Tasked with addressing the European Social Model, one of the initial findings of the report was that this model has undergone major transformations. Consequently, our report covers the comparative and European dimensions of social policy and welfare studies.
- We identify four major groups of research, and a table is provided (p. 8) which summarizes the typical questions, key characteristics and approaches of each group.
- **Comparative welfare state studies:** Stemming from debates about welfare regimes, in the early 2000s, research was focused on explaining the impact of social policy reforms for different welfare state models. Debates about the need for welfare reforms in the postindustrial era were influenced by the emergence of the “social investment state” (SIS) paradigm. This model is promoted at EU level, and has substantially transformed the traditional roles of social and labour market policy in member states. Post-crisis systematic comparative research is still scarce.
- **Comparative social policy studies:** Cross-national policy research, much undertaken by UK-based scholars, includes quantitative studies assessing the socio-economic outcomes of policy reforms, as well as comparative case studies examining processes of reforms. Findings in different policy fields have been used to both contest and support the appropriateness of the SIS model, both in general terms, and in its affect on individual member states and social groups (such as women, young people). Cross-referencing of findings from healthcare, education and social protection policy research is relatively limited.
- **Political economy, economic sociology, geography:** Influential research from these disciplines has sought to explain the causes and consequences of changing political economy in welfare capitalism. This includes examining the diversity – and its limits – of ‘European capitalisms’. A related focus is on the relative importance of globalisation, European integration and post-industrialism in shaping the European welfare capitalism of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The scope of this work has been extended to include further critiques of the impact of the crisis, changing economic governance in the EU and its likely implications. Work can lack policy specificity and detail, and both conceptual and normative differences can prevent cross-referencing of findings with research in comparative welfare state and social policy studies. Recent work in sociology offers new empirical tools and conceptualisations of how the EU is developing as a social formation, and there is much scope for fruitful dialogue with these innovations.
- **EU studies:** Research has been concerned with the development and effectiveness of EU governance mechanisms for social policies. Some studies also analyse the substance of EU policy making, arguing that the OMCs do have some effect, and frequently offering a critical analysis of the EU’s agenda. There is relatively little cross-reference between work in EU law and those working on EU social policy governance. Work in several disciplines is challenging the state-centric understandings of EU policymaking in the social field, and the methodological nationalism in comparative policy research, but is not yet bearing fruit in terms of new systematic empirical comparative studies in the social policy domain.

## Main trends

### **Inequalities, “social investment” and changing political economy of welfare**

- The institutionalisation of austerity measures in and beyond the Eurozone, and challenges of the wider ‘very low growth’ political economy of the EU. These have implications for diversity of social models and likely trajectories of reform in Europe.
- The emergence of new social inequalities and the changing significance of social divisions of class, gender, age, ethnicity, migration status within and between EU member states. These inequalities are evident in the context of combined national and EU-level policy and economic developments, as well as being a result of the ongoing ageing of societies in Europe. They have implications for the sustainability of welfare systems and their staffing, for health services, poverty, employment and migration.

### **Markets in social protection and public services in the EU single market**

- There are substantial increases in the roles of private and third sector actors in public services and policy, although this varies by country and policy area. It is most evident in healthcare, schools, higher education, employment and training, pensions and increasingly in social care.
- Use of private and third sector actors is promoted by the EU as “social innovation”, and regulated directly or indirectly through governance of the single market.
- Such developments have the potential to change the distribution of private and public authority over public services, social protection and socioeconomic outcomes, with consequential effects for the relationship of citizen, state and the EU.

### **Transnational, private and informal social protection**

- Mobility, migration, and increased precariousness and insecurity in employment, increases in inequality and destitution mean that households are developing informal and private, and often transnational, strategies for social protection
- The expanding use of marketised and personalised provision in public services delivery means that the interaction of formal EU and member state regulations may be creating regulatory gaps in social protection.
- In turn, this affects the practice of, and patterns in, UK residents’ informal strategies for social protection, with implications for social outcomes of individuals and families.

## Main gaps

- We have relatively limited evidence about social policy developments of the 2010s, how they relate to the Eurozone’s new economic governance, the changed European political economy, and what their short and medium-term socio-economic impacts are.
- Disciplinary gaps result in shortfalls in the evidence on the *overall* pattern and significance of changes in the governance of welfare and public services, the role of the third sector, “social

innovation” and their implications for social outcomes. We lack the integration of findings on social protection, and public services like health, education, employment and care.

- There is little work on the ways in which cross-national and EU developments, especially the regulation of market integration, affects social policy and practice across different policies (labour market, pensions, healthcare) in different countries. Inter-disciplinary engagement of scholars from policy, politics and legal scholars is limited, leading to gaps in evidence.
- The dynamics of intra-EU migration, welfare states’ reforms, and the development of new informal and transnational forms of social protection are poorly understood.
- The production of good quality evidence is limited by methodological nationalism and narrow conceptualisation of the ways in which the EU might affect domestic and local policymaking. New conceptual tools and analytical approaches are required to theorise, and interpret, the entangled relationships of EU and member state policy and politics in the social domain. We identify the need for a “third generation of comparative research”, to integrate comparisons of the interaction of EU-level and member state policymaking across countries *and* across policies.

## Recommendations including how to use current research knowledge better

The diverse empirical evidence and analyses developed within relevant disciplines should be synthesised to understand EU-wide developments, and in particular their political, social and policy implications. There are several ways in which this might be achieved.

- Fund, and secure high profile publication for, cross-disciplinary meta-reviews, (similar to those common in the health and medical sciences), to assess the existing knowledge base on the three main trends outlined in the report and summarised above. Reviews should be policy-relevant, and include findings on the substance and direction of policy-making at the EU-level.
- Fund cross-disciplinary seminars for review, contestation and debate on the meta-reviews as a necessary quality assurance for the team undertaking the review.
- Facilitate dissemination in the EU policymaking field, including by ‘re-packaging’ findings for different EU audiences and the use of social media to improve their research and policy impact.
- Fund, or commission, work to identify and/or develop analytical and research tools to facilitate the emergence of “3<sup>rd</sup> generation comparative research”, and to identify likely effective combinations of methodologies and methods which could be used in such research.
- Provide funding and policy impact support specifically to assist researchers in making their existing empirical work relevant and accessible to EU policymaker audiences. This would also provide incentives to researchers to consider the relevance of their work to EU policy debates.
- Co-ordinate with major EU and national research institutes as appropriate to co-badge high profile seminars and policy events, perhaps co-commissioning meta-reviews of policy domains.

## 1. Introduction: policy and research from the European Social Model to the Social Investment State

Questions of social policy, society and welfare in the EU context were historically addressed using the concept of the 'European Social Model' or the 'social dimension' (of Europe). The origins of the term European Social Model (ESM) can be traced back to the late 1980s and the policy debates surrounding preparations towards the Economic and Monetary Union. In these debates, defence of the ESM was intended to signal that further European integration did not have merely an economic dimension but had also a deeper socio-political dimension embedded in – but also aiming to secure and expand - the social and employment rights enjoyed by the citizens of the national welfare states in Europe. While the concept was always ambiguous (Jepsen and Pascual, 2005) it is fair to argue that the ESM concept was from very early on strongly associated with what can be called traditional social democratic political values such as equity, social justice and solidarity. It was also positively associated with a vision for Europe that could meet European trade unions' concerns regarding the scope and trajectory of the European integration. As Busch et al (2013) put it

In the context of social democratic and trade union debates on the EU the European Social Model primarily encompasses six policy objectives:

- (i) pursuing a macroeconomic policy aimed at full employment;
- (ii) in wage policy, allowing real wage increases that reflect productivity growth and implement European minimum wages that reduce the low wage sector;
- (iii) underpin social security systems that realise a high level of protection in pension, health care and family policy, as well as in unemployment benefit;
- (iv) provide for participation rights at enterprise and establishment level that give employees a high degree of codetermination; furthermore, promote social dialogue at European, national and sectoral levels.

Elements of the ESM have been institutionalised in EU law and Treaties, but given its politically laden origins, the ESM concept has long been the centre of contention regarding its normative power, its empirical reality and its usefulness as a frame for policy developments and reforms within European Union. In the EU, the 'social dimension' has most frequently stood to distinguish the social systems of EU member states from the liberal, marketised model of welfare of the USA. The EU terrain of social inclusion and social cohesion had little resonance for UK policymaking. The UK's 'welfare regime' (Esping-Andersen 1990) has therefore sat at a critical distance from the ESM from its inception. "Social Europe" has not reflected the underpinning norms, institutional practices or policy preferences in British social policy.

In 1997, the Blair government signed up to the social protocol of Maastricht, in a symbolic departure from the previous Conservative governments' rejection of the EU's social dimension. In the same year, the Amsterdam Treaty was signed. This made employment policy a legitimate matter for EU-level policymaking for the first time, but its vision of good employment policies

was not that of the existing “European Social Model”, but of a reformed welfare and labour market system.

It did so at a time when crucial developments affected the role of the EU in social policy and welfare issues. First, the identification of shared socio-demographic and economic challenges of post-industrial societies, which existing welfare states were considered ill-equipped to handle (Taylor-Gooby 2004; Pierson 1998); second, the wider transnational influence of new kinds of policy research, promoting particular responses to these challenges (OECD 1994); third, the rise of ‘new’ social democrats across the political landscape in many member states, favouring labour market and social policy reform; and finally, Nordic influence on an area of key policy importance to Sweden, Finland (and Denmark), following the former’s accession in 1995.

The new social democrats’ influence at the turn of the century showed in the enthusiasm with which a new substantive policy focus for the EU was adopted in 2000, the “Lisbon Strategy”, for which a new method of policymaking was applied, that of the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC).<sup>1</sup>

Lisbon represented the zenith of member states’ enthusiasm for EU-level engagement in social policy matters. It was shot through with the reforming rhetoric of the new social democratic project, and it rested, sometimes explicitly, on much of the contemporary research in comparative welfare state and social policy studies. Scholars working in the field were recruited to write reports and sit on commissions (Atkinson, et al 2002; Ferrera et al 2000; Esping-Andersen et al 2002). To date, these are the studies with most policy impact.

Originally using the development of monetary union as a guide, a number of separate OMCs were developed in the early 2000s, from health, pensions, education, social inclusion and most importantly, employment. Subjected to frequent reform, the 2008 economic crisis made the Lisbon Strategy, and its policy tools, seem hopelessly mismatched to the socio-economic circumstances. Yet Europe 2020, which replaced it as a social and employment programme, retains much of the substance and perspectives of the earlier Strategy. It is more focused on increasing employment and on migration, than its predecessor. The direct influence of social policy scholars and their research is less evident than in the earlier programme. This also reflects the changed politics of the EU, including the way in which employment and labour market policy has been integrated into the domain of economic governance over the past decade.

The particular combination of policies and characteristics attributed to the European social model showed its political and ideological origins in the development of the single market. Its successors in the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020, similarly represent different political choices and compromises, more or less influenced by perspectives in particular fields of research. This is reflected in the patterning of recent research which in many cases has centred around questions of the feasibility and future of European welfare states (for example the Framework 7 programme on work and employment, RECOWE), and, to a lesser extent, the desirability and feasibility of EU social policy influence within and beyond the Eurozone (Sabel and Zeitlin 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Originally used in the creation of EMU.

The most influential research which has shaped policy developments in the shift from the European Social Model to its alternative, the “Social Investment State” (SIS) over the last 20 years or so has been dominated by scholars working outside the UK. This is notwithstanding the high quality and well-regarded research of UK scholars working in particular policy fields, especially in the field of comparative social policy, comparative sociology and sub-fields (pensions, employment, care, gender equality, poverty). Some scholars have developed policy impact through arms-length EU institutions (e.g. ETUI, European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions). Very few individual scholars reach the status of regular recognised high level Commission expert. From the UK, for example, Professors Tony Atkinson (Oxford) and Jill Rubery (UMIST) stand out in this regard.

The remainder of this report is presented in three additional sections. Section 2 outlines in more detail the key characteristics of existing research in this area. It does so, first, by providing an overview of four major areas/disciplines of research, before going on, in section 3, to identify the overlaps and gaps in knowledge which such an overview affords. Section 4 presents three future knowledge needs which are underserved by current research, and which are of particular relevance for the UK, in the area of society, social policy and welfare. We also identify a fourth need – to develop a “third generation” of comparative research – in order to improve the quality of our evidence base and better reflect the changing realities of the EU. Section 5 outlines the challenges in developing new knowledge, and harnessing existing knowledge, to tackle such emerging issues, and provides some recommendations as to how such challenges might be overcome. Section 6 outlines the current approach of other funders in this field, concluding that there is limited scope in current funding priorities for the improvement of knowledge related to our four ‘knowledge needs’. We conclude with a brief summary of the report.

## **2. Social policy and welfare in the EU: the current research field**

We have organised our review of current research into four broad groups, explained in sections 2.1-2.4 below. In some cases, the boundaries between these groups is difficult to discern, for example, where scholars are engaged in similar debates at different levels of analysis, or where individual scholars research across several sub-fields of research. In other cases, there appears to be a gulf between scholars working from different perspectives. Whether such distance stems from interdisciplinary indifference, unintentional ignorance, or normative incompatibility is not always clear. However, this distance generates two contrasting problems. The first is the emergence of knowledge gaps, as research questions and conceptual approaches prove difficult to synthesise, and individual disciplines or subject debates are primarily self-referential. It can also lead to the underutilisation of research produced in relative disciplinary isolation. How these affect the scope of existing research and dissemination of current knowledge is outlined in section 3 of the report.

### **2.1 Comparative welfare state studies**

Work in this field comes from a comparative welfare studies background to explain and promote particular sets of reforms across the welfare state as a whole. Stemming from debates about the origins of welfare states and then welfare regimes (Esping Andersen 1990), in the early 2000s,



research was focused on explaining the impact of social policy reforms for different welfare state models (Scharpf and Schmidt, 2000). This came in the form of large empirical comparative studies, often involving quantitative indicators (Scruggs and Allan, 2006; Bamba 2007; Starke et al 2008) as well as comparative case studies, exploring more general transformations of welfare provision (Bonoli and Amingeon 2007; Obinger, et al 2005). It is authors in this group who have developed the idea of the “social investment state” (SIS) (Morel et al, 2012; van Kersbergen and Hemerijck, 2012), developed its component concepts (activation, flexicurity, new social risks) and applied them to the perceived need for welfare state reform in Europe. In UK scholarship, Peter Taylor-Gooby’s work with colleagues on ‘new social risks’ has made a significant contribution to these debates (2004). Research in this field has used cross-national policy studies (see below) in order to bolster wider arguments for the effectiveness of particular types of reform (structural and flexibilising labour market reforms, promotion of mothers’ employment). Successful models of reform for different welfare regimes were typically identified (Netherlands vs Germany, for example; Ireland vs the UK), although even before the crisis, such categorisations were disputed empirically (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2008; Moreno and Palier 2005). The sub-field became centred around arguments for the necessity of reorienting welfare states towards education, training, childcare, and away from unemployment benefits, in-work protections, pensions, and anti-poverty measures (Bonoli and Natali 2012; Esping-Andersen, 2002; Ferrera, Hemerijck and Rhodes, 2000, 2001). Research from his sub-field on the welfare state changes wrought by the crisis is scarce and rather unsystematic (see Sindjberg Matinsen and Volland 2014). So far the emphasis has primarily been on the need to continue the same trajectory of reform (notably Hemerijck 2012).

Reflecting its origins in welfare regimes, work in this field is predominantly concerned with the benefits and welfare aspects of Europe’s social dimension and has not been able to integrate analysis of changing employment regulation, rights and collective bargaining, on the one hand, nor services, including health services and education, on the other. Despite the importance placed on education in the SIS paradigm, social policy and educational researchers do not appear engaged in extensive exchanges – at least in the English language debates. Research on both education and on healthcare policy and services is considered quite distinct from most comparative welfare state studies (exceptions from the UK include work by Clare Bamba , e.g. 2005, Eikemo et al 2008; and Martin McKee, e.g. Mossialos and McKee 2002, Karanikolos et al, 2013). Analyses of the gender implications of the SIS – outside the obvious (and contested) promotion of mothers’ employment – are limited.

## **2.2 Comparative policy studies**

Cross-national policy research, much undertaken by UK-based scholars, has contributed to debates on the relevance and appropriateness of the kinds of policies which have been promoted at the EU level. This includes work<sup>2</sup> notably in the policy fields of gender, care and family (Lewis 2006); child poverty and anti-poverty policies (Eardley et al 1996; Bradshaw 2007); poverty and social inclusion (Atkinson et al 2002; Atkinson and Marlier 2010); employment and labour market policies (e.g. Viebrock and Clasen 2009, Clasen and Clegg 2011); and pension systems (e.g. Meyer et al, 2007).

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<sup>2</sup> These citations are examples only of the range and scope of influential work in these fields.

There is considerable overlap in the academic debates, conceptual reference points and individuals researching in specific policy studies, especially in social protection, with those in the domain of welfare state comparison and models. The UK boasts a number of scholars working in particular policy fields, whose work has influenced, drawn on, and contested, those scholars working with a 'broader brush' in welfare state studies. However, while this literature provides important, detailed empirical evidence on actual social models in action, work does not always explain how these findings relate to wider political economy developments in the EU more generally.

### **2.3 Political economy, economic sociology and geography**

Work in this area has sought to explain the causes and consequences of changing political economy in welfare capitalism. This includes work which examines the diversity – and its limits – of 'European capitalisms' (Esping-Andersen 1999; Hall and Soskice 2001; Scharpf and Schmidt 2000). Another body of work, in which UK scholars feature prominently, focuses more explicitly on the relative importance of globalisation, European integration and post-industrialism in shaping the European welfare capitalism of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g. Crouch 2008, 2011, 2012; Hay and Wincott 2012; Pierson, 1998; Schmidt 2002; Wincott 2003a, b, 2006). This work often provides normative critique of the changing political economy of welfare presumed by the SIS model, and the ideological and policy supports generated for these changes at the EU level. This work has been extended in light of the European crisis, to include further critiques of the impact of changing economic governance in the EU and its likely implications (Beck, 2013; Begg, 2010; Streeck 2011, Streeck and Schaefer 2013). A particular strength of this work is its integration of analyses of industrial relations, economic governance, aspects of welfare policy reforms. However, there is often not enough specific policy detail for immediate policy impact, while contrasting conceptual tools and normative perspectives can hinder constructive dialogue with those working on specific policy developments. Where normative differences are less relevant, the mutual exchange between these disciplines and those working on welfare state developments has been fruitful and influential (e.g., influence of Pierson and the historical institutionalist school on welfare state reform debates).

There are also a number of studies which take the social divisions in the EU and Europe as their object of analysis, although UK scholarship has perhaps less profile in this domain (Pichler and Wallace 2009; Williams et al 2004; Mau and Verwiebe 2010; Mau, 2012; Pfau-Effinger 2004). We need more studies of this type as they have a significant role to play in dealing with future knowledge needs (see section 4 of this report).

**TABLE 1: MAPPING RESEARCH ON WELFARE AND SOCIAL POLICIES IN EUROPE**

TOPIC/DISCIPLINE	TYPICAL QUESTIONS ADDRESSED	KEY CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES
1. Comparative welfare state studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ How and why do welfare states differ?</li> <li>⇒ Why and in what ways are welfare states reforming, and how do we explain patterns among these reforms?</li> <li>⇒ Which welfare state formations are best able to respond to contemporary challenges?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Empirical and conceptual</li> <li>⇒ Cross-national</li> <li>⇒ Quantitative, cross-sectional, and increasingly, longitudinal, large-N</li> <li>⇒ Small-N national case studies</li> <li>⇒ General, global findings</li> </ul>	Bonoli and Natali 2012; Esping-Andersen et al., 2002; Hemerijck, 2012; Morel et al 2012; Pierson, 1996; Scharpf and Schmidt, 2000; Taylor-Gooby, 2004
2. Comparative policy studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ How and why do policies in different countries produce similar/different socio-economic outcomes?</li> <li>⇒ Why are different policies developed in different countries?</li> <li>⇒ How far do common/diverse pressures explain countries' policy outputs and socio-economic outcomes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Empirical</li> <li>⇒ Cross-national</li> <li>⇒ Quantitative large-N studies</li> <li>⇒ Small-N national case studies</li> <li>⇒ Detailed and specific in findings</li> </ul>	Bonoli and Amingon 2007; Ebbinghaus, 2011; Meyer et al., 2007; Fagan et al., 2005; Sainsbury, 2012.
3. Political economy and economic sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ What are the drivers of socio-economic change in EU countries?</li> <li>⇒ What are the social divisions in EU countries and how are they changing?</li> <li>⇒ How do transnational economic developments impact on national political economies?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Conceptual</li> <li>⇒ Secondary and tertiary analysis are common</li> <li>⇒ Synthetic and global in perspective</li> </ul>	Hall and Soskice, 2001; Hay and Wincott, 2012; Streeck, 2013; Mau, 2012.
4. EU studies in law and politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ What are the EU policies which affect national policies and how is this influence effected?</li> <li>⇒ Which concepts explain the influence of the EU on national policymaking, and vice versa?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Theoretical and empirical</li> <li>⇒ Normative</li> <li>⇒ Qualitative (textual analysis, interviews) and mixed methods</li> </ul>	Alter 2009; Barbier 2012; Daly 2008, 2012; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Ferrera, 2010; Leibfried and Pierson, 1996; Stone-Sweet 2004.

## 2.4 EU Studies

Work of scholars in the social policy fields have focused on the development and effectiveness of new governance mechanisms – the social OMCs - for the organisation, management and implementation of social and labour market reforms in EU member states (Zeitlin and Trubek 2003, Sabel and Zeitlin 2010). These authors argue that the social OMCs are effective for what they argue is the necessary promotion of social and welfare reforms via the EU. There are two alternative critiques of this. The first, conducted by policy scholars, but often using the concept of “Europeanisation”, and using a rather instrumentalist perspective in EU governance from political science (Featherstone and Radaelli 2003), would claim that the impact of EU policymaking in the social field is at best limited, that national sovereignty and welfare politics remains central. Usually such studies have concluded that national civil servants try to package what they do as fitting an EU agenda, rather than the EU successfully wielding influence. Here, policy substance is treated an explanatory or dependent variable in instrumentalist models of political procedure. A small sub-group of scholars focus on the process and substance of EU policy making, arguing that the OMCs do have some effect (de la Porte 2011; Moreno and Palier, 2005), sometimes taking a more critical view of these effects in terms of their appropriateness, and their implications in terms of policy substance (Barbier, 2012; Copeland and Daly, 2012, 2014; Degryse et al 2013; Rubery 2011, 2008).

In particular, there are very few studies of how policy governance is changing among member states, and how this has been affected by the Union and its measures. There have been a number of important individual contributions from separate disciplines which draw attention to the emergence of a specifically European political and social field (Bickerton, 2012; Fligstein, 2008; Leibfried and Pierson, 1995; Mau, 2012; Alter, 2009). Each separately challenges state-centric understandings of EU policymaking in the social field, and methodological nationalism in comparative policy research. In general, empirically, much less attention has so far been paid to the indirect effects of changing EU economic governance, and the crisis, with respect to the UK’s ambivalent relationship to EU socio-economic developments.

## 3. Summary of knowledge gaps and overlaps in existing research

Looking across all four categories of research we have presented we can identify three significant problems across current literatures: policy knowledge gaps; lack of nuanced and empirically robust theorising about respective EU-member state roles shaping policy outcomes; absence of synthetic overviews to provide interdisciplinary and robust evidence base on socio-economic developments and understanding of policy outcomes.

### 3.1 Policy knowledge gaps

- ***EU regulation of cross-border employment, benefit claims, pensions.*** This is related to our identification of the future increased importance of transnational welfare, as well as current national and EU debates on revisiting free movement regulations. Integration of work in welfare state, social protection, migration and law would help to bridge this gap.

- ***Implications of changing economic governance and changing political economy in the EU.*** Can the UK's welfare model and political economy be sustained as other dominant welfare states are 'liberalising' and undergoing 'structural reform'. How does the differentiation of European political economy affect the development of UK and its social policies? What are the implications for UK social, labour market, and public services' policies of operating outside the new economic governance in Europe? Tackling these questions requires dialogue between social policy, political economy, sociology and geography scholars.
- ***Implications of developing European markets in private pension provision, and markets in social and public services.*** These affect the UK in several ways: because the UK already has market mechanisms in these areas; because regulation in this field may have implications for UK (liberal) practice; and because the UK might seek to influence, or be sought out as a source of inspiration/example by EU. Utilising existing work in law, healthcare and education policy to consider implications for new public services markets would improve the knowledge base.
- The ***use of third sector provision*** is an increasingly important part of current EU policy (see Europe 2020), under the sobriquet of "social innovation". Undertaking research in this area could draw on useful insights for UK (e.g. how to maintain quality controls and professional standards in third sector public services provision at low cost and maintaining social value of third sector provision). This requires integration of public administration, and work in healthcare and social care in a comparative context.

### 3.2 Theorising EU-member state relations

Studies examining the effects of the EU on national welfare states (our 'group 4' scholars) have focused primarily on procedural questions, using the concept of Europeanisation. They have not addressed the ways in which ***policy substance***, and especially, ***changes in welfare state governance*** are being shaped by EU-wide developments. Both welfare state studies, and comparative policy studies scholars (and to perhaps a lesser extent those working in the political economy domain), take the national welfare state within the EU as their conceptual starting point. However, there are many areas of EU governance that challenge this analytical approach. For example, the implications of new economic governance for social budgets, developments in labour mobility regulation and migration, and the emergence of a single market in pensions (e.g. Ebbinghaus and Whiteside, 2012). We lack more realistic and sophisticated conceptual tools to disentangle the direct, indirect, short and long-term, legal/financial causes of *policy* influence. The challenges set up by the scattered theoretical accounts which attempt wider and more synthetic views of policymaking (see 2.4 above) need to be taken up in social policy and welfare state studies if the dynamics and consequences of policy developments are to be better understood.

### 3.3 Disciplinary fragmentation and knowledge gaps

There are three key ways in which discipline and subject specific developments constrain our knowledge and evidence base.

First, work in sociology and political economy has yet to be integrated into, or applied to, analyses of the implications of the crisis for social policies in particular. Scholars working in social policy, and the social investment paradigm, have in general in published work not yet

acknowledged the changed European political economy or EU governance landscape (but see Hemerijck 2012). At the same time, the more critical political economy perspectives need to be tested and fleshed out with more detailed cross-policy and cross-national comparisons. We would also encourage the direct exchange and where possible integration of work by economic and political geographers and sociologists in research on the EU and its socio-economic development. Their empirical interests in the distribution of inequalities, will be essential for unpicking the complexities and interrelationships of the EU's socio-economic landscape, and its implications for the UK in the next 5-10 years.

Second, there are also gaps in knowledge stemming from the disciplinary gap between social sciences scholars in this field, and the work of socio-legal and critical law scholars. Integrating the latter into cross-national policy and welfare state studies would substantially enhance the quality of knowledge and analysis in this field. In particular, we lack evidence on how legal changes and especially the role of the ECJ, are shaping policy and practice (in employment protection, mobility, transnational social rights, public expenditure constraints). There is work in political economy and in EU law which analyses market integration but the affect on how social policy and public services work in practice has mostly not been taken up by social policy scholars (and is perhaps more widely understood in healthcare policy studies, than social protection e.g. Greer and Rauscher 2011; Greer et al 2013; Mossialos and McKee, 2002).

Third, discussion of policy developments are conducted separately in, respectively, healthcare, education, social protection, and public administration. There is little to no cross-reference among these debates, and knowledge about overall patterns of, and possibilities for, policy developments across and between these areas is limited. Indeed, even within social protection sometimes policy developments are not well linked-together. As the reform focus in social policy moves to changing governance, and as changing mobility patterns affect national labour markets and welfare state staffing and sustainability, the need for integration of knowledge from across policy fields becomes more urgent.

## **4. Future knowledge needs**

In this section, we identify four main knowledge needs, summarising their scope and identifying the key questions which might be asked.

### **4.1 Inequalities, “social investment” and the changing political economy of welfare**

The long-term and structural impact of austerity, low economic growth rates, and increasing socio-economic inequalities within and among MS will have ongoing political and well as social implications for the wider EU. There are potential changes to inter-MS relations, and EU policy adjustment is already part of political debate (e.g. on the regulation of mobility and social rights in the EU). With further increases in co-operation on economic governance which institutionalise austerity measures in and beyond the Eurozone, the implications of these measures for the diversity of social models and likely trajectories of reform in Europe should be explored. In particular, the emergence of new social inequalities and the changing characteristics of social divisions of class, gender, age, ethnicity, migration status in the UK need to be examined in the context of cross-national and supra-national developments which echo and contrast with those in the UK. The future political development of the Union rests on the

shifting socio-economic foundations being laid now and over the next 5 years. We would do well to better understand how and why these foundations are changing.

### ***Key questions***

- Is there an emerging configuration of institutional arrangements which creates a new “European Social Model” – the “social investment state” - across the Union?
- What are the varieties in, divergences from such a model, and how can these be explained?
- What are its economic, social and political limitations and the implications for UK policy and practice?

## **4.2 Markets in social protection and public services in the EU single market**

In a number of policy fields, in the UK, and other EU member states, the role of private and third sector actors in public services and policy has been increasing substantially. This role does not take the same form in all countries, and also varies by policy area. It is most evident in health, schools, higher education, employment and training, pensions and increasingly in social care. The re-organisation, marketization and privatisation of public services will also increase substantially over the next years.<sup>3</sup>

Involvement of third sector and private providers in this new services landscape is advocated as part of “social innovation” at the EU level and widely adopted in the UK. The differential risks and opportunities for public, private and third sector service providers is less well understood. Yet national markets in service provision are emerging across the Union, some labour market integration begins to develop (especially in healthcare), and EU market integration in services is developed. In addition, there are also policy-specific measures, for example in insurance which has significance for the pension insurance market in the UK and likely socio-economic outcomes for pensioners.

These developments may fragment and diversify social provision and change the importance of place of residence in social provision (e.g. whether you live in urban or rural area can become a social risk). Such developments are changing the relative distribution of private and public decision-making authority over public services, social protection, socioeconomic outcomes, with consequential effects for the relationship of citizen, state and the EU. How detrimental effects can be avoided, what the distributional effects of such developments are, how these change our understanding of what social protections are provided by whom, are all under-researched.

### ***Key questions***

- What patterns of marketization and privatisation of social protection and public services are emerging across different policy areas, how are these shaped by EU-level decision-making?
- What is the impact on the distribution of private and public authority over decision-making about public services, social protection, and their socioeconomic outcomes?

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<sup>3</sup> This is more likely to be the case, and have more far-reaching implications, if agreement is eventually reached on the transatlantic treaty on trade in services.

### 4.3 Transnational, private and informal social protection

The increasing importance of individuals' and households' use of transnational and informal social protection strategies is very little explored or understood in the EU context, but is likely to gain in importance. Such strategies of social protection are already increasing in visibility due to mobility, migration, and austerity-driven welfare reforms, and it is in the field of migration studies that some work is emerging on these themes (e.g. Ambrosini 2013). However, increased precariousness and insecurity in employment, increases in inequality and destitution, and the expanding use of marketised provision mean that the interaction of formal EU and member state regulations may be creating regulatory gaps in social protection. In turn, this affects the practice of, and patterns in, UK residents' informal strategies for social protection, with implications for social outcomes of individuals and families. The adoption of different strategies also has implications for the relationships between citizens and the state in the UK and the EU, and represents challenges for democratic legitimacy and the sustainability of the "social investment state" as a socio-political settlement.

#### *Key questions*

- How is intra-EU migration shaping the interaction between EU and member states' labour market and social policy regulation, and vice versa?
- Is there an emerging EU regime of transnational welfare, employment and care, and what are its characteristics?
- How is the UK positioned in relationship to such a regime?

### 4.4 "Third generation" comparative policy research

The first generation of comparative research was interested in welfare states as a whole, focusing on expenditures to model the origins of welfare states. The second generation used both technological advances and new theories to generate large amounts of data, disaggregating (and sometimes, re-aggregating) the components of welfare systems to compare policies and outcomes using an increasing range of sophisticated methodologies. However, analysis of contemporary cross-national developments and reforms need to be explained against the background of *both* EU-level social policy influence and politics *and* the interaction among member states.

We identify the need for a "third generation of comparative research", to integrate comparisons of the interaction of EU-level and member state policymaking across countries *and* across policies. This entails theorising beyond the formal policymaking processes among states (the uploading/downloading and state-centred models of EU governance), towards explaining policy outcomes as they apply across the Union and differentially affect individual member states. In order that such explanations reflect the complexities of empirical reality, they also require complex but clear research designs, and integrated methodologies which facilitate systematic comparative analysis *jointly* across countries, policies and transnational EU-level policymaking.



This practical need for better analytical and research tools requires the apparently straightforward step of more explicitly integrating existing methodologies and analytical approaches in comparative research designs. Good examples where this has been attempted are available in other policy domains, such as financial regulations and migration (e.g. Donnelly 2010; Menz 2009), but not so evident in wider social and public policies (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010; Ferrera, 2005 offer some exception).<sup>4</sup> The proposed integrative approach to comparative empirical analysis profoundly challenges the methodological nationalism and policy-based specialism still inherent in most research in this area (see also Faist, 2014). Without these analytical tools, the only explanations of the forms, processes and consequences of UK-EU policymaking available to us in social policy will either remain narrow, or dependant on case-by-case qualitative detail. In either case, wider conclusions about the overall development of social and public policies in the EU, the UK and the relationship with other member states cannot be drawn.

## 5. Challenges meeting current and future knowledge gaps and how to overcome them

### 5.1 Interdisciplinarity and synthesis

**Problem** Reconnecting questions of democracy, of economic power and social provision are fundamental for the future of the EU and the UK, and must be a hallmark of future research in the field. For this, interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge, debate and synthesis are essential, yet we identified important gaps in understanding, sometimes produced by the way specific policy domains or political developments are treated by different disciplines and sub-disciplines. We also noted for the four future knowledge needs, that bringing together research from different disciplines would substantially enhance the quality of evidence and knowledge base.

#### **Recommendation**

- Fund, and secure a publishing platform for, cross-disciplinary meta-reviews,<sup>5</sup> (similar to those common in the health and medical sciences), to assess the existing knowledge base on the three areas of knowledge needs identified in section 4 of this report. Reviews should include research on the substance and direction of policy-making at the EU-level, to overcome the separation of EU-level and national-level research so marked in current literatures.
- Fund cross-disciplinary seminars for review, contestation and debate on the meta-reviews as a necessary quality assurance for the team undertaking the review.

### 5.2 Third generation comparative research

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<sup>4</sup> Professor Ferrera has recently been awarded an Advanced ERC grant for further development of his work in this field.

<sup>5</sup> Meta-reviews are not a well-established research activity among most of the policy fields covered in this report. It is difficult to secure funding to conduct them under usual funding sources, as they necessarily exclude the production of new empirical work, and will not of themselves produce new theories. They cannot be published in the conventional formats of academic social science publication: journal articles or books.

**Problem** On the one hand, analysis of what is ‘going on’ (policies, directives, court cases) in EU policymaking cannot explain the socio-economic development of the EU itself (or the roles of the UK within it). On the other hand, cross-national analysis of reforms in specific policy areas provide necessary detail about policies and their outcomes, but cannot shed light on EU-wide, or EU-triggered policy and socio-economic change. Yet even with the development of new theoretical approaches, we lack analytical frameworks and methodological syntheses, which would enable us to integrate transnational research with cross-national and inter-policy comparisons in robust and practical research designs (our “3<sup>rd</sup> generation comparative research”).

### **Recommendation**

- Fund, or commission, work to identify and/or develop analytical and research tools to facilitate the emergence of this “3<sup>rd</sup> generation comparative research”, and to identify likely effective combinations of methodologies and methods which could be used in such research.

## **5.3 Conceptual and policy engagement among policy scholars:**

**Problem** There is a need to overcome an underlying sense of irrelevance of the EU in relation to social policy among scholars in the UK working on cross-national policy analysis, and promote the relevance of UK-based research - including by mid-level and more ‘junior’ researchers - in the policymaking domains of the EU.

### **Recommendation**

- Fund the ‘translation’<sup>6</sup> of meta-reviews (5.1 above) for dissemination in the EU policymaking field to improve their research and policy impact.
- Provide funding and knowledge exchange to facilitate the presentation of new empirical work for an EU policymaker audience. This would also provide incentives to researchers to consider the relevance of their work at EU level.
- Co-ordinate with major EU and national research institutes as appropriate to co-badge high profile seminars and policy events, perhaps co-commissioning meta-reviews of policy domains.

## **6. Priorities of other funders**

EU-level and EU-comparative research on social and social policy issues is not prioritised among the main UK funding bodies. At EU-level, research funding in this area is strongly focused around current policy preferences and priorities.

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<sup>6</sup> Here we mean the translation from academic research finding into evidence which is accessible to relevant social and political actors.

## 6.1 UK-based funders (exc ESRC)

The **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** has priorities on *poverty, place (community), and ageing*. These priorities are framed against a UK-policy context and background, and current and recent grant awards studies reflect this context of the priorities.

The **Leverhulme Foundation** large research *programme* grants of recent years do not seem to have not been won by teams working in the field of social policy. Few research *project* grants have been awarded to social policy studies, and in such cases, the awards have a strongly UK national or even local focus.

The **Nuffield Foundation** has priorities in *children and families*, and in *law and society*. It also funds work on *taxation and public administration*. Awards are overwhelmingly dominated by national (UK) policy studies. The NF has funded studies in migration, welfare workers and care and the health of migrant families, but the EU-level or European comparative perspective, is not prioritised.

## 6.2 International funders

**NORFACE**, a Europe-wide co-ordinated funding programme of national social science councils, in which the ESRC participates, has prioritised society and welfare-related issues in its previous call (on migration) and its current call (*European welfare futures*). The 2014 call is very wide-ranging in policy terms, and projects must be comparative, although there is no requirement for an EU-level component. Results are finalised in autumn 2014.

In **Horizon 2020** the priorities are organised around the political priorities for EU policymaking. In these, there is a move towards interest in public sector governance especially in health and social care, ageing societies, and youth unemployment.

- *Health, demographic change and wellbeing*, two relevant funding streams are relevant: one on “personalising health and care”, and the other on “health and care delivery models”.
- *Inclusive, innovative and reflexive societies*, strongly emphasises research on young people in the streams “youth unemployment”, “youth mobility” and “insecurity”. Three other streams prioritise research on institutions, organisation and policy delivery. These are “technology of the public sector”, “social innovation” and “innovation in the public sector”.

There is an explicit political priority in H2020 to link the funding to the priorities of the EU’s socio-economic programme, Europe 2020. There seems to be relatively little scope to address more general questions of unemployment, inequality and insecurity, or structural issues on labour market development, the patterning of inequalities in the EU or the role and development of informal social protection. There are streams on public/social policy governance and social innovation.

**Others:** there are several funders in Germany, and in the Nordic countries which are funding research into EU social issues, the most visible of which is the social-democratic Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, which recently funded research into the changing social partnership and industrial relations in “Social Europe”, with co-badging from the ETUC.

## 7. Summary

The field of social policy and social welfare is diverse, and the various literatures from several disciplines reflect this diversity. With some greater disciplinary dialogue and better integration of empirical findings across disciplines and sub-fields of research, there is scope for substantial enhancement of the knowledge base available to scholars and policy actors.

We have a good understanding of pre-crisis welfare state reform trajectories, but have much less evidence about developments of the 2010s, how they relate to the Eurozone's new economic governance, and the changed European political economy, nor what their socio-economic impact will be.

Disciplinary gaps result in shortfalls in the evidence on the overall significance of changes in welfare state services like health and education, employment and care, and how cross-national and EU developments affect the overall pattern of services' reform.

The EU is undergoing substantial change and this will both the relationships among its member states, and the relationship of member states with the EU itself.

These changes directly affect the actions, life chances and regulation of UK residents and citizens. Still, the dynamics of intra-EU migration, post-crisis welfare state reforms, and the development of new forms of social protection are rather poorly understood, requiring input from the research and analysis produced across a number of disciplines.

There are limits to the production of knowledge about these issues at least in part due to the dominance of methodological nationalism and the limited conceptualisations of the ways in which the EU might affect domestic (national) and local policymaking. We recommend the development what we termed a "third generation" of comparative research to enhance our understanding of the entangled relationships of EU and member state policy and politics in the social domain.

More than 10 years ago, Alec Stone-Sweet wrote that "research typically examines only a small number of national cases, in just one or two policy areas. We still desperately need comparative, contextually-rich case studies that blend the lawyer's concern with doctrinal evolution, and the social scientist's concern with explanation, in a sustained way" (2004: 241). We can add to this the concern of the sociologist and geographer in explaining the emergence of new and diverse social formations shaped by the European Union over the last decade. Yet we seem nearly as far away from developing such synthetic and inter-disciplinary approaches now as we were then. It would be a major contribution of UK scholarship to begin to address this conceptual and analytical challenge directly.

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