



European conference on shared social responsibility

1st March 2011, Brussels
European Commission, Building Charlemagne

Summary

The speeches can be accessed in full length under:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/conference2011_EN.asp

The video of the conference can be accessed under:

<http://scic.ec.europa.eu/str/index.php?sessionno=b6e32320fa6bc5a588b90183b95dc028>

The conference assembled around 390 participants from 42 different countries as well as 21 speakers. The central focal points were the state of social cohesion in Europe, the changes it undergoes, resulting challenges and viable solutions through the concept of shared social responsibility. The following order of speeches represents the order of the conference.

The conference was opened by **José Manuel Barroso**, president of the European Commission (EC), who brought up several present threats to social cohesion in Europe – among them the direct consequences of the financial and economic crisis, growing international competition and other effects of globalisation, growing social inequalities leading to more and more people in poverty, and demographic changes. Among these threats, two are central: social exclusion and unemployment. As a consequence, the European Union (EU) proposed the *2020 Strategy* focusing on intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth with several objectives and subordinated flagship initiatives. At the heart of many of these initiatives is employment with its positive effects on social cohesion. The responsibility for this programme is shared by many different actors within the EU.

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (CoE), highlighted the links between social justice, social cohesion, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and peace. In Europe today, these issues are challenged in several ways: through social unrest because of unequally distributed wealth and opportunities; growing anxiety resulting from economic hardship, xenophobic tendencies and social exclusion; and growing distrust in political institutions at national and European level. These developments call for bold and innovative approaches to secure human rights and fundamental freedoms. In concrete terms, what needs to be done is: restoring the ability of political institutions to solve problems; considering employment as the precondition for social cohesion and healthy economies; reprioritising the budgets in welfare states; making visible those who are left behind in decisional processes; reaching a social model that goes beyond multiculturalism – such a model would allow to create a very strong kind of security, to rebuild a common sense of togetherness, and would lead to united action.

Claus Offe, Professor of Political Science at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, Germany, discussed the need for, prospects of and obstacles to a concept of shared social responsibility. He highlighted several reasons why today it has become increasingly difficult to detect who exactly is responsible for a certain outcome – and why it is more and more difficult to hold governments responsible. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to detect the degree to which individuals are responsible for their own choices concerning their lives – whether it is luck or free choice that plays a major role. Instead, a part of society is suffering

from societal problems which are *collectively* produced and therefore, the remedial responsibility to solve these problems also lies with the collectivity of society and must be shared. Ways to increase the responsibility to solve collectively produced societal problems are incentives for individual behaviour, awareness-raising, governmental control mechanisms (regarding also the responsabilisation of economic actors), and especially the combination of state power and the specific resources of civil society.

Jean Lambert, Green Party Member of the European Parliament for London, UK, highlighted some major obstacles that the concept of shared social responsibility faces in society: The sharing of social responsibility needs time while there is not much general acceptance for this. It needs spaces for dialogue which often are limited. Concerning consultation, people need to know what it is about, what the objectives are and if their opinions will have an impact. Moreover, people need skills for this. A central issue is around the distribution of power and the empowerment of people in a time when people have the feeling that important decisions are taken outside the democratic sphere, that they don't have control over their lives anymore, and that the social contract is somehow broken.

Bernard Marquet, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE, emphasised the content of the draft *Council of Europe Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities*: in order to reassure citizens, to re-establish trust in the future and to consolidate our fundamental values, the *Charter* asks for better taking into account interdependency in society and to recognise the needs and contributions of all the different actors – among them those experiencing poverty. Based on this, a new form of governance could be established. The Charter is a result of the adoption of shared social responsibility as one of the pillars of the *Revised Social Cohesion Strategy*. There are also activities of the Parliamentary Assembly based on the concept of shared social responsibility. These activities focus among other things on the responsibility of politicians and the impact that political decisions can have on social and human rights.

Antonia Carparelli, Acting Director for Social Policies, DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, EC, explained that the joint project between the EU and the CoE on *A Europe of shared social responsibilities* was developed in connection to the *European Year 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion* – an initiative likewise linked to shared responsibility and participation. A related initiative is the *European platform against poverty and social exclusion*, one of the EU flagship initiatives intended to support the EU target for the reduction of poverty and exclusion. This initiative is an action-oriented framework providing tools to fight poverty based on the awareness that social inclusion and social cohesion are a matter for all areas of the policy spectrum. For this, cooperation and solidarity at EU level are essential, which is possible through – among others – the community funds and the Open Method of Coordination.

Gilda Farrell, Head of the Social Cohesion Research and Development Division, DG III for Social Cohesion, CoE, presented the draft *Council of Europe Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities*. The *Charter* starts from a deep recognition of interdependency within society, where everyone shares responsibility for solving the social and ecological problems we face. While states are withdrawing from areas of common goods and collective well-being, other societal actors are not prepared to contribute to these. Shared social responsibility is not about shifting responsibility to the weakest actors of society but about sharing responsibility between *all* the societal actors. As a consequence, the *Charter* aims at mobilising social resources within society. To do so, it is necessary to establish new forms of governance bringing together different actors from different levels and sectors. And by combining these governance models with deliberative democracy, it becomes possible for responsibility to be shared.

Adela Cortina, Philosopher, Member of the “Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas”, Spain, pointed out that the incoherence between existing declarations and their realisations in actions and behaviour raises mistrust towards national and European policies. To install such coherence, there is need of incentives to motivate people and institutions to act in the sense of the declarations, and institutions have to be designed in a way that they sup-

port such behaviour. There are two types of motives: motives to survive (or motives of caution) and motives of justice. If all stakeholders in a society agree to comply with common declarations, this increases trust in society and makes it function in a better way. This is possible if stakeholders comply with common rules because of their intrinsic value. The precondition for this is the mutual recognition of all interacting individuals. Therefore, this mutual recognition and the social links between people need to be strengthened. To reach this, there is already a range of concrete instruments in place.

Seán Healy, Director, Social Justice Ireland, focused on shared social responsibility as a mean to eradicate poverty. The starting point for this is an accurate analysis of the present situation of poverty. Based on this, there needs to be a vision of the future that is viable and sustainable. Economic growth – broadly proposed as vision – is neither ecologically sustainable nor will it help all people out of poverty, or will it lead to full-employment. An alternative appropriate vision would focus on adequate income for all, meaningful work, participation, sustainability and further aspects. To eradicate poverty, several issues must be addressed, among them the central issue of financing and redistribution in accordance with social justice. Therefore, the steps proposed by the *Charter* must be taken in order to establish a new sharing of social responsibilities.

Dominique Schnapper, Writer, Sociologist, Director of Studies – École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), France, explored the question on how to restore or maintain social links within a society that is based on individualism. The societal capacity to integrate immigrants is a telling example about a society's potential to reach social cohesion. There are several characteristics in contemporary democracies that make the integration of immigrants increasingly difficult, having to do with issues such as unemployment, a changing welfare state, weakening national identities, and differences in norms. Therefore, to reconstruct solidarity within a society is not just a question of redistribution but also of re-establishing the subjective sense of exchange between the individuals. This would mean to create a common project that transcends individual and immediate interests and helps to raise awareness of the meaning, values and achievements of democracy.

Pietro Guindani, Chairman Vodafone Italy, Coordinator Confindustria Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Working Group, highlighted basic principles proposed by both the *Charter* and agreed upon by CSR practitioners. Among these principles is the fact that responsibility for collective well-being is shared by different societal actors such as economic organisations and that social norms shouldn't be externally imposed but rather self-enforced and voluntarily agreed upon. But open questions remain on how several of the proposals in the *Charter* work in practice, and avoid risks such as complex and time-consuming negotiations, idealistic scenarios, or inadequate compulsory rules. Therefore, for implementation in practice, there has to be a certain consensus about some fundamental principles governing the operations of corporations, leading to positive competition in the field of socially responsible behaviour so that ethics also pays off financially. In the end, continuing social and environmental degradation will be more costly and more harmful to corporate interests than the costs associated to socially responsible behaviour.

Martin Hirsch, President, Agence du service civique, France, pointed out that besides shared social responsibility there are also cases of shared social *ir*responsibility, when individuals in responsible positions don't take notice of damaging mechanisms which are somehow unnoticed by the political debate – this was the case concerning the mechanisms at the basis of the financial crisis. An important issue regarding poverty alleviation is that there are mechanisms in our economies – all intending to create wealth – which are at the same time creating poverty and sometimes creating even more poverty than wealth. But in general it is possible to find alternative models for these malfunctioning mechanisms, e.g. also for such difficult issues as minimum salaries or school drop-outs. What is needed is a better distribution of the generated wealth, another kind of distribution of goods to poor people (e.g. through non-profit business models) and the ensuring of the efficiency of social expenditure through public authorities.

Stefano Rodotà, Emeritus Professor, University “La Sapienza”, Rome, Italy, spoke on the nature of common goods and implications of their growing importance. Common goods develop a more and more global character. Examples are water, health, food, or knowledge. And along the growing importance of common goods, not ownership but accessibility – and the right to access – becomes increasingly important and a key concept. It even becomes a human right, as in the case of water and knowledge with the access to knowledge being organised through the internet. Everyone’s basic right to access common goods is one of the reasons why they should be free from political power, from a purely market logic, and the instrumental use of individuals. A further attribute of common goods is that they raise awareness about the long-term perspective and about future generations. Scarcity of common goods can be natural or artificial; and artificial cases of scarcity also question the application of ownership-based approaches such as patents or copyright.

Mireille Delmas-Marty, Professor, Collège de France, raised the question on how to transform the present society of fear into a community of fate with a central role for common goods. For this issue, two basic sorts of fear are important. The first is the fear of others which leads to separation and exclusion. This as well can transform people into a community of values, but with borders to the outside as in the case of Europe. The second sort is the fear of risks and catastrophes, that can create a global sense of common fate, solidarity and the desire to live together. An important step for this is to responsabilise societal actors. One of the means to reach this is CSR – a soft law which needs to be strengthened and to be transformed into a hard law. The concept of shared social responsibility goes even further and extends responsibility over society through forms of multi-stakeholder governance, also contributing in this way to already existing attempts to responsabilise states.

Lorenzo Sacconi, Professor of Economics, University of Trento, Italy, spoke on the relevance of multi-stakeholder governance for shared social responsibility. Multi-stakeholder governance takes place between different kinds of institutions and organisations operating on different levels. Such a governance model might face different collective action problems that can be prevented by setting up the decision-making process and the governance model in a certain way. The decision-making process should take account of power differentials between stakeholders and their different claims based on needs, merit, or redress due to externalities. In this regard, basic needs have to be met first on the basis of a moral priority for the worst off. Besides this, the decision-process has to be impartial and deliberative democracy is a method which helps to reach this; at the same time this method creates motivations to comply with the co-decided actions and leads to trust among the participants.

Jean-Claude Barbier, CNRS Research Director, University of Paris, France, spoke on sharing knowledge as a condition to share social responsibility. The sharing of knowledge is difficult for several reasons: first of all, there are different kinds of knowledge that include scientific knowledge. The latter is mainly produced and evaluated by professionals but contributions of non-professionals can be equally valuable. A field where such a collaboration can be applied is the evaluation of public policies – as proposed by the *Council of Europe Charter on shared social responsibilities*. If knowledge is created for political use, there is the danger that politics influence the knowledge in a manipulating way; but knowledge has to remain neutral. For the sharing of knowledge, support is needed in three areas: to create the right for everyone to contribute to knowledge creation; to preserve knowledge diversity; and to make this knowledge accessible as widely as possible. The *Charter* encourages this through promoting organisational forms which enable knowledge sharing.

Anna Coote, Head of Social Policy, NEF (New Economics Foundation), UK, presented co-decision and co-production as practical methods for sharing social responsibility, especially in social services. Here, co-production is bringing together citizens, public officials and professionals in order to combine different kinds of knowledge and skills. This is a way to grow the human core economy (meaning the potential that exists in human relations and interactions) instead of growing the money economy. A condition for this is that everyone’s possibility to participate equally should be ensured, e.g. through shortening working time and giving all people more time for co-production. Otherwise, co-production wouldn’t be socially just and

a consequential risk could be the shifting of responsibilities from the state to individuals and families instead of *sharing* them. Therefore, there is also a smart, strategic, enabling and redistributing role for the state.

Maja Göpel, Director, World Future Council Foundation, Belgium, highlighted the challenges we are facing when seeking to assure shared responsibility for future generations. An often supposed challenge is that resource use of present generations has to be reduced in order to enable well-being of future generations. But this is more a question of distribution and of market failures that cause enormous environmental costs and negative externalities on future generations. Another challenge is the Western liberal understanding of justice marked by an individualistic point of view, focusing on what an individual gains and loses in a certain deal. Contrary to this, a community- or society-oriented perspective would look at what is required for the well-being of all within society; accordingly the better-off would have more responsibilities and duties towards the rest of society. What is needed in order to avoid short-term thinking in politics, is the institutionalisation of a long-term perspective in the political process through ombudsmen for future generations.

Peter Hall, Krupp Foundation Professor of European Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA, pointed out that in order to find solutions for present challenges to social cohesion, we shouldn't look only at markets and states, but also at societies which are constituted through manifold social relations within them. These social relations are social resources – for the individuals and for the communities – which matter for well-being in several ways. Therefore, we need to think about ways to maintain and to nourish them. This is possible through reframing the issues at stake – as it is done through the *Council of Europe Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities*. Furthermore, it is necessary to shift the way in which governments and their citizens think about public policy-making: there has to be more awareness about the effects of policies on social relations and networks, e.g. through 'social multiplier effects'. Deliberation can be an essential step in creating communities and civic initiatives but this needs support through more durable forms of social organisation. Therefore, it requires engaged and effective states, the commitment of businesses and solidarity that goes beyond the borders of Europe.

Carine Jansen, Belgian representative on the European Social Cohesion Committee, CoE, presented the links between the *CoE Action Plan for Social Cohesion* and the *Charter*. The *Action Plan* proposes well-being of all as the objective of our societies – as does the *Charter*. The meaning of well-being of all has to be concretised through the opinions of citizens which is also important for taking into account the immaterial aspects of well-being. This implies a societal learning process which has to involve all societal levels, foremost the local level but also the regional, national and European levels. Therefore, the *Action Plan* proposes a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches. In Belgium, related practical experiences are happening at the local level while at the national and European levels, the creation of networks and exchanges between the different regions is taking place, which allows to use these methods in very different contexts.

László Andor, Commissioner, DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, EC, stressed that in these times of considerable change and uncertainty, a common goal of the EU and the CoE is to build sustainable inclusive societies based on participation and trust. The CoE contributes to this objective with its *Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities* and its *Plan on Social Cohesion*. Shared social responsibility also lies at the basis of the *EU 2020 Strategy*, striving to involve all relevant stakeholders in a collective action aimed – among other targets – at increasing the number of people in employment, and decreasing the number of school drop-outs and the number of people living in poverty. While the EU has an important role to play in this, much of the responsibility lies with the Member States. An important role in all this can be played by social innovation, which promotes well-being and inclusion, and which complements economic and technological approaches. The overall approach of the EU also means a change in the governance system with a stronger role for the Heads of State and Governments of the Member States, and a greater involvement of all the relevant stakeholders at all levels.