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## Social Quality

### Résumés

**European Commission. 2001. Employment and Social Policies: A Framework for Investing in Quality. Brussels, June 20.**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/news/2001/sep/quality\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/sep/quality_en.pdf)

In this document, the Commission provides a broad framework to promote the notion of quality as a way to improve the inter-relationship between economic and social policies. The paper places particular emphasis on the goal of promoting quality in work. This implies focusing not only on creating "more jobs, but also better jobs," including equal opportunities for the disabled, gender equality, good and flexible work organization permitting better reconciliation of working and personal life, lifelong learning, health and safety at work, employee involvement and diversity in working life. Quality in work - better jobs - means not only looking at, or taking account of, the existence of paid employment but also looking at the characteristics of that employment. It is a relative and multi-dimensional concept. Various key dimensions often include a focus on both the specific characteristics of the job (e.g., pay, hours of work, skills requirements, job content) and on aspects of the wider work environment (e.g., working conditions, training, career prospects, health insurance coverage, etc.). Using these two broad dimensions, the document then suggests a list of indicators on quality in work which can be used in order to strengthen the coherence between quality in work objectives and policy instruments within the context of the European employment strategy.

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**Wolfgang Beck, Laurent J.G. van der Maesen, Fleur Thomése and Alan Walker (eds). 2001. "Social Quality: A Vision for Europe." The Hague: Kluwer Law International.**

For more information about the book visit the website of the European Foundation on Social Quality at: <http://www.socialquality.nl/start.htm>

This volume represents the outcome of two years of intensive debate about the future direction of the European Union and, especially, the balance between its economic and social priorities. It builds on the first book on social quality, "The Social Quality of Europe" (1997), which introduced the concept, defining it as the extent to which citizens are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions that enhance their well-being and

individual potential. The concept of social quality also refers to an evaluation mechanism, which aims at providing a realistic assessment of social standards. The basis for evaluation is the everyday life of the citizen. It is hoped that the concept of social quality may be used in order to develop a benchmarking system, by which to compare social progress in different states and determine the effectiveness of the European Union and national, social and economic policies. Social quality benchmarking goes beyond normal social and economic evaluations such as income distribution, growth, unemployment or poverty. It attempts to paint an overall picture of the citizen's place in society and their general level of well-being. The book develops three crucial elements of social quality: the theoretical validity of the concept, its practical application, and its identity or "genetic code." It establishes an independent identity for social quality, with a unique focus on the quality of the social, which enables it to act as the rationale for economic, social, and cultural policies and, therefore, an escape route from the dominance of narrow economic thinking in policy making.

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**Caroline de la Porte, Philippe Pochet and Graham Room. 2001. "Social Benchmarking, Policy-Making and the New Governance in the European Union." *European Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 11, No. 4: 291-307.**

The European Union has established an "open method of coordination" (OMC) among the member states as a means of pursuing economic and employment growth coupled with greater social cohesion. The paper analyzes the assumptions underlying this strategy, the manner of its operation and its implications for policy learning and for governance. It argues that the OMC has in substantial measure been inspired by the experience of the European Monetary Union, but that this is a perilous paradigm on which to base social benchmarking and the OMC. Second, it argues that the dynamic development of the OMC will depend crucially on the extent of public involvement in scrutinizing the policy areas which political leaders choose for benchmarking, the best practices which they identify in other member states, and the efforts which they then make to improve national performance. The conclusion is that the OMC is likely to have substantial implications for domestic and European governance, but that these could vary depending on the manner of its implementation. Finally, the paper considers the implications of the analysis for the broader theoretical literature.

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## **What's New?**

On February 15-16, 2002, the Department of Canadian Heritage (Strategic Research and Analysis), in partnership with Professor Audrey Kobayashi of Queen's University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, will present the Colloquium on Progress in Social Cohesion Research. This will be a follow-up to the workshop Globalization and Social Cohesion held in October 2000. Participation is limited to members of the Canadian Government Social Cohesion Network and holders of SSHRC Social Cohesion grants. For more information, contact Maureen Williams at: [maureen\\_williams@pch.gc.ca](mailto:maureen_williams@pch.gc.ca)

The papers and speeches presented at the Conference, "For a Better Quality of Work," which took place in Brussels in September 2001, are now available on the website of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions at: <http://www.eurofound.ie/newsroom/press11.htm>