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Social Cohesion as an Aspect of the Quality of Societies: Concept and Measurement

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1. Introduction

Since about thirty years quality of life as a central societal goal has guided national policy. The concept of quality of life replaced the idea of wealth as the then dominant goal of societal development. The very broad and multidimensional notion of quality of life enlarged the perspective of societal development by considering not only economic aspects but also social and ecological concerns. Nowadays, the concept of quality of life is probably the most prominent and widely used theoretical framework for assessing the living conditions in a society. As regards the empirical operationalisation of quality of life one can distinguish various approaches which reveal different notions of the concept and thus highlight different components as relevant. But a common feature of all empirical approaches is the focus on the individual. They are based on a conceptualisation of quality of life as concerning individual characteristics.

In opposition to this individual-centred perspective of societal development, several other welfare concepts emerged during the last 10 to 15 years which put the focus on aspects concerning societal qualities such as the extent of equality, security or freedom or the quality and structure of the social relations within a society. Among those welfare concepts referring to characteristics of societies are for example "sustainability", "social quality" or "social cohesion". Besides the model of sustainable development, especially the idea of the social cohesion of a society received great political attention at the national and supranational level. At the national level for example the Canadian Government and the British Liberal Party have been concerned with issues of social cohesion. At the supranational level the European Commission has strongly emphasised the economic and social cohesion of the European Union as a main policy goal. Corresponding to the great interest at the political level much conceptual and empirical research on social cohesion has been undertaken.

Referring to these developments, the present paper is serving two purposes. First, an attempt is made to clarify the meaning of the concept of social cohesion and to determine its inherent dimensions by reviewing the existing theoretical approaches to this issue. This includes a reflection of the relationship to the concept of quality of life by discussing the question whether conflicting, supplementary or identical societal goals are addressed by the two concepts. Second, a proposal to operationalise and to measure social cohesion is presented. The suggestions refer to the efforts made in the framework of a research project whose objective is to develop a European System of Social Indicators. Based on the conceptual considerations outlined in the first part of the paper, measurement dimensions of social cohesion are derived and appropriate indicators are exemplarily defined and quantified for the EU member states and several other countries.

2. The Concept of Social Cohesion¹

Social Cohesion is viewed as a characteristic of a society dealing with the connections and relations between societal units such as individuals, groups, associations as well as territorial units (McCracken 1998). The sociologist Emile Durkheim was the first who used the concept of social cohesion. He considered social cohesion as an ordering feature of a

¹ This part of the paper has been mainly drawn from Berger-Schmitt/Noll (2000)

society and defined it as the interdependence between the members of the society, shared loyalties and solidarity (Jenson 1998b). Aspects often mentioned in describing social cohesion are the strength of social relations, shared values and communities of interpretation, feelings of a common identity and a sense of belonging to the same community, trust among societal members as well as the extent of inequality and disparities (Woolley 1998, Jenson 1998b). The Social Cohesion Network of the Policy Research Initiative of the Canadian Government defined social cohesion as "the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all Canadians" (PRI 1999, p. 22).

Dimensions of Social Cohesion

There have been various efforts to determine the dimensions of social cohesion. Collaboratively, the Canadian Policy Research Networks and the Policy Research Initiative of the Canadian Government, explored the dimensions of social cohesion as indicated in four policy documents of the Canadian Government, the French Government, the OECD, and the Club of Rome. Five dimensions were identified (Jenson 1998b, p. 15ff.):

- Belonging – Isolation which means shared values, identity, feelings of commitment
- Inclusion – Exclusion which concerns equal opportunities of access
- Participation – Non-Involvement
- Recognition – Rejection which addresses the issue of respecting and tolerating differences in a pluralist society; this aspect was emphasised in the document of the Club of Rome (s. Berger 1998)
- Legitimacy – Illegitimacy with respect to the institutions acting as a mediator in conflicts of a pluralist society

Another effort of "mapping social cohesion" resulted in three categories of issues covered by the concept (O' Connor 1998, p. 2):

- ties that bind, such as values, identity, culture
- differences and divisions: inequalities and inequities, cultural diversity, geographical divisions
- social glue which refers to associations and networks, infrastructure, values and identity

Furthermore, several implicit propositions on the dimensions of social cohesion can be extracted from descriptions of the concept and of empirical results. Similar to the three categories listed above, Woolley has distinguished three ways to define social cohesion (Woolley 1998, p. 2-5):

- as absence of social exclusion,
- as interactions and connections based on social capital
- as shared values and communities of interpretation based on group identity.

A definition of social cohesion by relating it to the concepts of social exclusion/inclusion and of social capital has also been presented by other authors. For example Dahrendorf et al. described a social cohesive society as a society preventing social exclusion: "Social

cohesion comes in to describe a society which offers opportunities to all its members within a framework of accepted values and institutions. Such a society is therefore one of inclusion. People belong; they are not allowed to be excluded" (Dahrendorf et al. 1995, p. vii). Other scientists have emphasised that the social capital of a society is an essential foundation of its social cohesion (McCracken 1998; Maxwell 1996).

From the review of the various approaches I have drawn the conclusion that the concept of social cohesion incorporates mainly two societal goal dimensions which can be analytically distinguished:

- (1) The first dimension concerns the reduction of disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion.
- (2) The second dimension concerns the strengthening of social relations, interactions and ties. This dimension embraces all aspects which are generally also considered as the social capital of a society.

The two dimensions must be viewed as independent from each other to a certain degree. In principle, strong ties within a community can be accompanied by the tendency to discriminate and exclude those people who do not belong to that community (s. for example Narayan 1999, p. 8). The issue of a strong social cohesion within a community which itself is exclusive has led to the question "Can social cohesion be a threat to social cohesion?" (Jenson 1998a, p. 4). This problem highlights the importance of considering *both* dimensions - disparities/inequalities/social exclusion *and* social relations/ties/social capital - in order to get a comprehensive picture of the social cohesion of a society.

Social Exclusion

As described above, the conceptualisation of social cohesion proposed in the present paper conceives social exclusion as one aspect of the first dimension of social cohesion. Social exclusion represents a further concept which has become more and more popular during the last decade. In recent years, it has increasingly attracted attention in scientific and socio-political discussions on actual social concerns. The popularity of the concept was especially promoted through the growing interest in matters of social exclusion at the level of the European Union. The European Commission launched a series of research programmes in the framework of the European Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion and of the European Poverty Programmes.

By the increasing research on social exclusion older terms of poor living conditions such as poverty or deprivation have been replaced to some extent. The term social exclusion has often been used in the sense of a multidimensional notion of poverty. This leads to the question of how to define social exclusion and how to contrast the term from the notion of poverty. The origin of the concept of social exclusion can be traced back to France, where the term was used in the context of debates on a new poverty and defined as a rupture of the relationship between the individual and the society due to the failure of societal institutions to integrate individuals (Silver 1994; Rodgers/Gore/Figueiredo 1995; de Haan 1999). The researchers of the European Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion and of the European Poverty 3 Programme implicitly relied on this meaning of social exclusion as they defined it in terms of the denial of citizenship rights - civil, political and social rights - which major societal institutions should guarantee. They

suggested, that social exclusion should be conceptualised as the insufficiency of one or more of the following four systems:

- “the democratic and legal system which promote civic integration
- the labour market which promotes economic integration
- the welfare state system promoting what may be called social integration
- the family and community system which promotes interpersonal integration” (Berghman 1998, p. 258-259).

While the French social exclusion approach focuses on relational issues, that is to say on the disruption of social ties between the individual and the society, poverty represents a concept of the Anglo-Saxon research tradition with a focus on distributional issues, that is to say on the lack of resources at the disposal of individuals or households (Room 1995; Room 1998; de Haan 1999). Thus poverty may be regarded as a characteristic of individuals and households whereas social exclusion may be conceived as a feature of societies and of the individuals' relations to society. In contrast to this position are the considerations made in the framework of a research project on “Patterns and Causes of Social Exclusion” launched by the International Institute of Labour Studies and the United Nations Development Programme in 1993. The researchers argued that social exclusion can be regarded both as a property of societies and as an attribute of individuals (Gore/Figueiredo 1997; ILS 1998). As an individual attribute it is defined as a low level of welfare (economic disadvantage) and the inability to participate in social life (socio-political disadvantage). This perspective equals social exclusion to a multidimensional notion of poverty which describes a state or an outcome of a process. As a societal characteristic the term social exclusion refers to the impairment of social cohesion caused by the way in which institutions regulate and thereby constrain access to goods, services, activities and resources which are generally associated with citizenship rights. This view focuses attention to the processes of social exclusion and its causes which are attributed to the failure of institutions (Gaudier 1993).

The conclusion arising out of these considerations is the requirement to differentiate between the causes of disadvantageous living circumstances and the processes leading to them on the one side and the outcomes of those processes themselves, that is people's living situation. The causes may be attributed to societal institutions and can then be described by the concept of social exclusion as a property of societies. The impact of social exclusion on people is observable in the form of poor living conditions. In this sense social exclusion represents a characteristic of individuals and corresponds to the concept of poverty in a multidimensional notion.

Social Capital

The conceptualisation of social cohesion as it is proposed here considers social capital as representing a second main dimension which may be used to describe the social cohesion of a society. The concept of social capital covers topics like the density and quality of relationships and interactions between individuals or groups, their mutual feelings of commitment and trust due to common values and norms, a sense of belonging and solidarity which are supposed to be the fundamentals of the internal social coherence of a society (McCracken 1998, Woolley 1998; Jenson 1998b; O' Connor 1998). “The social capital of a society includes the institutions, the relationships, the attitudes and values that

govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development. Social capital, however, is not simply the sum of the institutions which underpin society, it is also the glue that holds them together. It includes the shared values and rules for social conduct expressed in personal relationships, trust, and a common sense of “civic” responsibility, that makes society more than a collection of individuals. Without a degree of common identification with forms of governance, cultural norms, and social rules, it is difficult to imagine a functioning society” (Social Capital Initiative 1998, p. 1).

There are various theoretical approaches and perspectives of social capital which use a more or less narrow concept. But they all have in common that they regard social capital as a property of a social entity and not of an individual. It is a relational concept, it presupposes a social relation and exists only as far as it is shared by several individuals. Therefore, it cannot be the private property of a single person, but has the character of a public good (Grootaert 1998; Immerfall 1999; Narayan 1999).

A rather narrow concept of social capital is used by Robert Putnam (Putnam/Leonardi/Nanetti 1993; Putnam 1995), one of the most prominent author in this field of research. He defines social capital as a set of “horizontal associations” between people, as “networks of civic engagement” which mediate norms and operation rules of society and generate and reinforce trust in the credibility of these rules and in social relationships (O’ Connor 1998; Hjerppe 1999; Social Capital Initiative 1998). In this sense social capital is defined as “features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1993, p. 36, cited in Rossing Feldman/Assaf 1999, p. 30). A more general conception of social capital, which also covers vertical associations, has been used by Coleman. He defines social capital as “a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors - whether personal or corporate actors - within the structure” (Coleman 1988, p. 598, cited in Social Capital Initiative 1998, p. 2). The third, most comprehensive perspective is hold by North (1990). He also includes formalised relations and structures of macro-institutions, such as the political regime or the legal and judicial systems (Social Capital Initiative 1998, p. 2; Rossing Feldman/Assaf 1999, p. 2)

Corresponding to these different scopes of the concept, a distinction between three levels of manifestation of the concept has been made (Immerfall 1999, p. 121-122):

- the level of interpersonal relations, such as family, friends, neighbours
- the level of intermediary associations and organisations, such as clubs, firms, political parties
- the macro-level of societal institutions

In a similar way Narayan (1999) differentiates between (1) the social capital within primary groups which he labels “bonding” capital, (2) the cross-cutting ties, that is the linkages between social groups which are calls “bridging” social capital, and (3) the functioning of the formal institutions of the state.

Social capital is not only considered to be an essential basis for the social cohesion of a society, but at the same time as a main component of the wealth of a nation and as an important determinant of economic growth, besides physical, human and environmental capital (Jenson 1998b; Hardi/Barg 1997; Hjerppe 1999, Grootaert 1998; Wiman 1999).

This view is empirically supported by results showing a relation between the social capital of a society and its economic well-being (for example the studies of Putnam 1993; Knack and Keefer 1997, and Shleifer 1997). Furthermore, there are also investigations pointing to the improvement of other dimensions of welfare such as education, health, rates of crime, and the environment (Coleman 1988; O' Connor 1998; Rossing Feldman/Assaf 1999).

Social Cohesion and Quality of Life

The concepts of social cohesion and quality of life are related to each other in multiple regards. There are at least three ways of thinking about the relationship between the two concepts. First of all one has to take into consideration that although social cohesion represents an attribute of a society it ultimately rests on the behaviour, attitudes and evaluations of its members, too. Social cohesion is based on social capital which is also created by social relations and ties established, maintained and experienced by individuals. Thus, looking at the social cohesion of a society involves aspects which are part of the individual life situation and in this sense components of the individual quality of life.

Secondly, elements of the social cohesion of a society may have a direct impact on individual quality of life. Empirical examples are the above cited results on the influence of social capital on economic and other dimensions of welfare. At a conceptual level, the perspective of social exclusion as a process rooting in the malfunction of societal institutions and resulting in a deprived living situation of the individual is another example.

Thirdly, one can take the point of view that the social cohesion of a society affects the individual quality of life anyway. Social cohesion can be conceived as a societal quality which is experienced by individuals in their daily lives, for example in the form of the perceived inequality or the social climate at the working place, at school or in the neighbourhood, and thus also refers to the individual quality of life. This perspective considers elements of the social cohesion of a society to form an integral part of the quality of life of the individuals belonging to that society. Such a position, which is supported here, advocates a broad conceptualisation of quality of life encompassing not only individual characteristics of the life situation but also societal qualities. In this sense, quality of life represents the common overarching policy goal with social cohesion as an important component to be addressed.

3. The Measurement of Social Cohesion - Examples for Dimensions and Indicators in the Framework of a European System of Social Indicators

The concept of social cohesion will be operationalised and measured in the context of a European System of Social Indicators (EUSI) which is going to be developed in the framework of a current European research project². This indicators system considers dimensions of social cohesion across a wide range of life domains³. As explained above, we distinguish between two principle goal dimensions of social cohesion:

² The project bears the title "Towards a European System of Social Reporting and Welfare Measurement" (EuReporting) and is funded by the European Commission from March 1998 until February 2001. The development of a European System of Social Indicators is the objective of a subproject located at the Social Indicators Department of the Centre for Survey Research and Methodology (ZUMA), Mannheim, Germany. The subproject is directed by Heinz-Herbert Noll, the head of the Social Indicators Department.

³ Besides dimensions of social cohesion, dimensions of quality of life and of sustainability are covered by the indicators system. See Berger-Schmitt/Noll 2000

(1) Reducing disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion within a society. Within this first dimension the following issues can be distinguished:

- regional disparities
- equal opportunities of/ inequalities between
 - women and men
 - generations
 - social strata
 - disabled
 - citizenship groups
- social exclusion

(2) Strengthening the social capital of a society. From the previous discussion of the concept the following aspects have been identified as relevant:

- availability of social relations
- social and political activities and engagement
- quality of social relations
- quality of societal institutions
- furthermore, European-specific concerns, that is aspects of the social cohesion *between* European countries will be considered

These dimensions have been operationalised for various life domains. The European System of Social Indicators distinguishes between a total of fourteen life domains. Within each domain the two principal goal dimensions of social cohesion with the aspects listed above have been operationalised, as far as they are meaningful for the respective domain. The operationalisation of the dimensions in the different domains is presented in the following tables (tables 1 and 2).

Concerning the first goal dimension - reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion - measurement dimensions for the various aspects can be derived for nearly all domains (table 1). Regional disparities are taken into account for example with respect to access to transport, leisure and cultural facilities, educational and health care institutions, employment opportunities or the state of the environment. Issues of equal opportunities/ inequalities are considered for many domains and population groups. Examples are gender inequalities in the engagement in housework and childcare, political participation or employment opportunities; generation inequalities in social relations or unemployment risks; inequalities between social strata in housing conditions or physical health; inequalities between disabled and non-disabled people in access to public transport or educational institutions; inequalities between nationals and non-nationals in educational enrolment or public safety. The aspect of social exclusion can be operationalised in many domains, too. Relying on the previous discussion of the concept and the distinction made between two different notions of the concept - the causes and processes leading to disadvantageous living situations on the one hand and the results and manifestations of these processes, that is the deprivations themselves on the other hand - the operationalisation of social exclusion will be oriented at the second notion. Thus,

Table 1: Goal Dimensions of Social Cohesion: Reduction of Disparities, Inequalities and Social Exclusion within a Society

Life Domain \ Dimension	Regional Disparities of ...	equal opportunities / inequalities between women and men, generations, social strata, disabled, citizenship groups concerning	Social Exclusion
Population			
Households and Families		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engagement in housework and childcare - existence of family relations 	
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - housing conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - housing conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - homelessness - poor housing conditions
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to / quality of transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no access to public/private transport
Leisure, Media and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - availability of facilities and goods in the area of leisure, media and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leisure time - access to media, recreational and cultural facilities 	
Social and Political Participation and Integration		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - availability of social relations and social support - social and political activities and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social isolation - social discrimination
Education and Vocational Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to education and vocational training - investment in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - educational enrolment and qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of completed education and vocational training
Labour Market and Working Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employment opportunities and risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employment opportunities and risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long-term unemployment
Income, Standard of Living, and Consumption Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - income level and standard of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - income level and standard of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poverty
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - availability of health care facilities - health status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - health status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - permanent health impairments
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - state of environment 		
Social Security		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social insurance coverage, benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of social protection
Public Safety and Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crime rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - becoming a victim of crime 	
Total Life Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality of life index 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality of life index - overall subjective well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - multiple deprivation

Table 2: Goal Dimensions of Social Cohesion: Strengthening the Social Capital of a Society

Life Domain \ Dimension	Availability of Social Relations	Social and Political Activities and Engagement	Quality of Social Relations ...	Quality of Societal Institutions	European-Specific Concerns
Population					
Households and Families	- social relations within households	- care for old-aged household members	- between household members		
Housing					
Transport					- transport connections between European Countries - frequencies of journeys between European Countries
Leisure, Media and Culture	- membership in leisure organisations	- activities in leisure organisations			- dissemination of cultural products across European Countries
Social and Political Participation and Integration	- existence of personal relations - membership in political and social organisations	- frequency of personal contacts - support within informal networks - civic engagement in public realms	- outside the household	- political institutions - church/religious institutions - social institutions	- European Identity - social relations and attitudes to other EU nationals - similarities in basic values and attitudes - social and political activities at the European level
Education and Vocational Training				- educational institutions	- exchange of pupils, students - teaching and dissemination of European languages
Labour Market and Working Conditions		- participation in the area of working life	- at the work place	- labour unions - labour offices - labour courts	- connections between European Countries in working life
Income, Standard of Living, and Consumption Patterns					
Health				- system of health care	
Environment					
Social Security				- social security institutions	
Public Safety and Crime				- legal system	
Total Life Situation					

manifestations of social exclusion will be measured such as homelessness, social isolation, long-term unemployment, poverty, heavy health impairments or a lack of social protection.

The second goal dimension of social cohesion - strengthening the social capital of a society - concerns fewer life domains. Most of the aspects of this dimension refer to the life domain of "social and political participation and integration". Naturally, this domain covers all general issues of social relations and engagement outside the own household community such as the availability of relatives and friends, frequency of contacts and support within those personal networks, membership in organisations, engagement in the public realm such as volunteering and political activities. Other life domains relevant to these aspects are "households and families" and "labour market and working conditions" which concern social relations and activities within the own household or family respectively at the work place. The quality of societal institutions is a component of the social capital which applies to several life domains since, for example, institutions of education, health care, social security or the legal system are addressed. European-specific aspects of social cohesion concern the social cohesion *between* European countries. They can be operationalised in several life domains, too. Examples are the frequency of journeys, the dissemination of cultural products, the exchange of pupils, students and labour between European countries, the dissemination of European languages, social relations and attitudes to people from other European countries, and the formation of a common European identity of citizens.

In the European System of Social Indicators, the domain-specific measurement dimensions related to the goal dimensions of social cohesion are further differentiated by firstly distinguishing subdimensions of each measurement dimension and then developing one or several indicators for each subdimension. Thus, the final result represents a list of indicators of social cohesion which can be categorised by life domain, goal dimension, measurement dimension and subdimension. In the following, I will demonstrate this approach by example of two life domains and present some indicators of social cohesion based on data sources which allow the monitoring of developments in a cross-national comparable perspective. The selected life domains are "Social and Political Participation and Integration" and "Labour Market and Working Conditions". The first domain has been chosen because it well covers all aspects of the social capital dimension of social cohesion on a rather general level as has been outlined above. The second domain has been selected because it provides sound examples for domain-specific indicators of the inequality dimension and the social capital dimension of social cohesion. In total, these indicators will show the impact of the working life on the social cohesion of societies. It should be noted that the subdimensions and indicators for both life domains are preliminary suggestions till now and will be revised in future work.

3.1 Dimensions and Indicators of Social Cohesion in the Domain of Social and Political Participation and Integration

The social capital of a society can be mainly operationalised at the level of measurement dimensions of the individual social and political participation and integration. They concern the individuals' social relations, contacts and activities in private networks as well as in public areas, the quality of their social relations in the private realm, and the perceived quality of institutions

There are well-known differences between individuals in the availability of social relations and social support by informal networks, for example between the young and the elderly.

Table 3: Dimensions and Indicators of Social Cohesion in a European System of Social Indicators - Suggestions for the Domain 'Social and Political Participation and Integration'

Goal Dimension	Measurement Dimension	Subdimension	Indicators (selected examples)
I. Reduction of Disparities, Inequalities and Social Exclusion			
Regional Disparities			
Equal Opportunities / Inequalities - Women and Men - Generations - Social Strata - Disabled / Non-Disabled - Nationalities	Inequalities Between Generations in the Availability of Social Relations and Support within Informal Networks ⁴	Inequalities in the Existence of Social Relations	Inequality of the Availability of a Close Friend
		Inequalities in the Frequency of Social Contacts	Inequality of the Frequency of Contacts to Close Relatives
		Inequalities in the Support Available by Informal Networks	Inequality of the Support Available in Case of Feeling Depressed
	Inequalities Between Women and Men in Political Participation		Inequality of Representation in National Parliaments
Social Exclusion	Social Isolation	Objective Social Isolation	Percentage of People with Rare Social Contacts Outside the Household
		Subjective Social Isolation	Percentage of People who Feel Lonely
	Social discrimination		Percentage of People Repudiating People of a Different Race
			Percentage of People Repudiating Foreigners

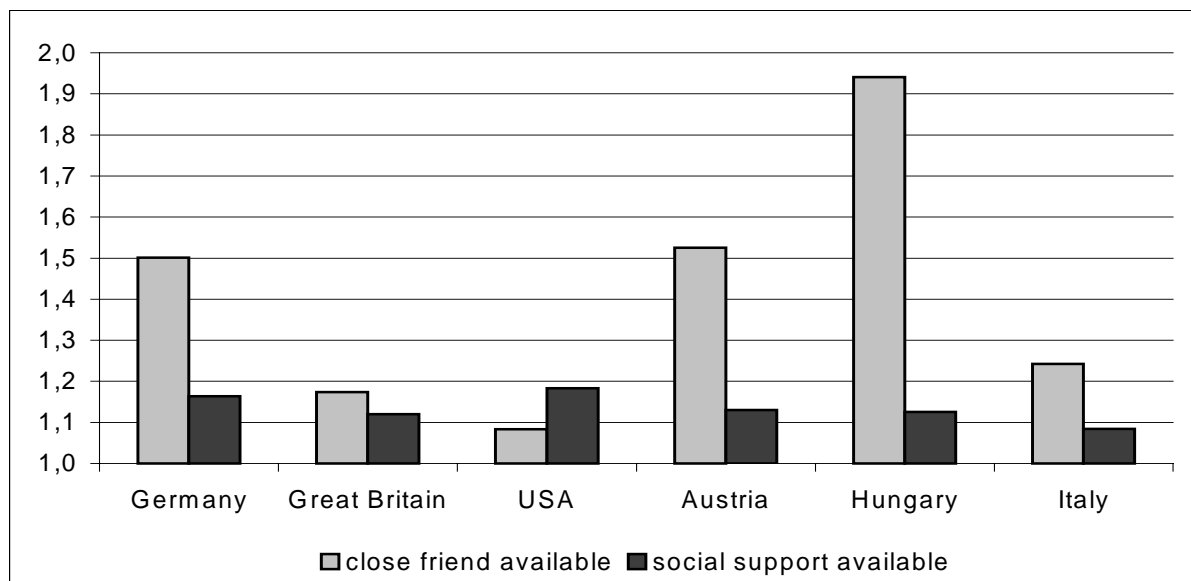
⁴ For saving space and keeping the table straightforward, dimensions and indicators of equal opportunities / inequalities of different generations and of women and men have been presented in this table, only. However the European System of Social Indicators will also consider similar dimensions and indicators for the other population groups listed in the first column of the table.

Goal Dimension	Measurement Dimension	Subdimension	Indicators (selected examples)
II. Strengthening Social Capital			
Availability of Social Relations	Existence of Personal Relations	Relations to Relatives	Existence of Close Relatives
		Relations to Friends / Neighbours	Existence of at Least One Close Friend
	Membership in Organisations	Membership in Political Organisations	Membership in a Political Party
		Membership in Social Organisations	Membership in a Charitable Organisation
		Membership in Church / Religious O.	Membership in a Church / Religious Organisation
Social and Political Activities and Engagement	Frequency of Personal Contacts	Contacts to Relatives	Weekly Contacts to Close Relatives
		Contacts to Friends / Neighbours	Weekly Contacts to the Best Friends
	Support within Informal Networks	Support in Activities	Available Support in Household Jobs
		Support in Personal Problems	Available Support in Case of Feeling Depressed
		Support in Material Needs	Available Support in Case of Financial Distress
	Civic Engagement in Public Realms	Political Participation	Political Interest
		Engagement in Social Organisations	Volunteering in the Charitable Realm
		Church / Religious Activities	Regular Attendance of Church
Quality of Social Relations	Subjective Quality of Social Relations Outside the Household	Quality of Personal Relations	Good Relations to Neighbours
		Attitudes Towards Other People	General Trust in People
		Perceived Quality of Social Relations of Other People	Perceived Conflicts between Generations
Quality of Societal Institutions	Perceived Quality of Political Institutions		Trust in Political Parties
			Satisfaction with Democracy
	Perceived Quality of Social Institutions		Trust in Charitable Organisations
Perceived Quality of Church/Religious I.		Trust in Church / Religious Organisations	
European-Specific Concerns	European Identity		Identification with Europe
	Social Relations/Attitudes to Other Europeans		Friends Living in another European Country
	Similarities between European Countries in Basic Values / Attitudes		Similarities in the Value Attached to Freedom
			Similarities in the Value Attached to Tolerance
	Social and Political Activities at the European Level		Participation in Activities of European Associations

Thus, as to the first goal dimension of social cohesion, the consideration of equal opportunities and inequalities in this domain seems to be meaningful (table 3). One can distinguish three subdimensions of inequalities: the existence of social relations to relatives, friends and neighbours, the cultivation of these relations in the form of meetings or other forms of contacts, and the support available from them in case of need.

Examples of indicators for these subdimensions are inequalities between the young and the elderly in the availability of a close friend or in the support available by relatives, friends or neighbours in case of feeling depressed. The figure below shows the ratios of the respective percentages of the young and the elderly based on data of the ISSP 1986⁵. In all countries the ratio of young and old people with at least one close friend turns out to be above the value of 1 which indicates a relative disadvantageous situation for the elderly. Especially in Hungary there is a considerable difference with young people having a close friend nearly twice as often as elderly people. However the inequality between the young and the elderly in the availability of social support in case of feeling depressed is much smaller because elderly people can partially compensate the lack of friends by an increased support from neighbours or relatives. The cross-national differences are rather small in this respect.

Figure 1: Ratio of the Percentages of Young and Elderly People with a Close Friend and Social Support Available⁶



Source: ISSP 1986

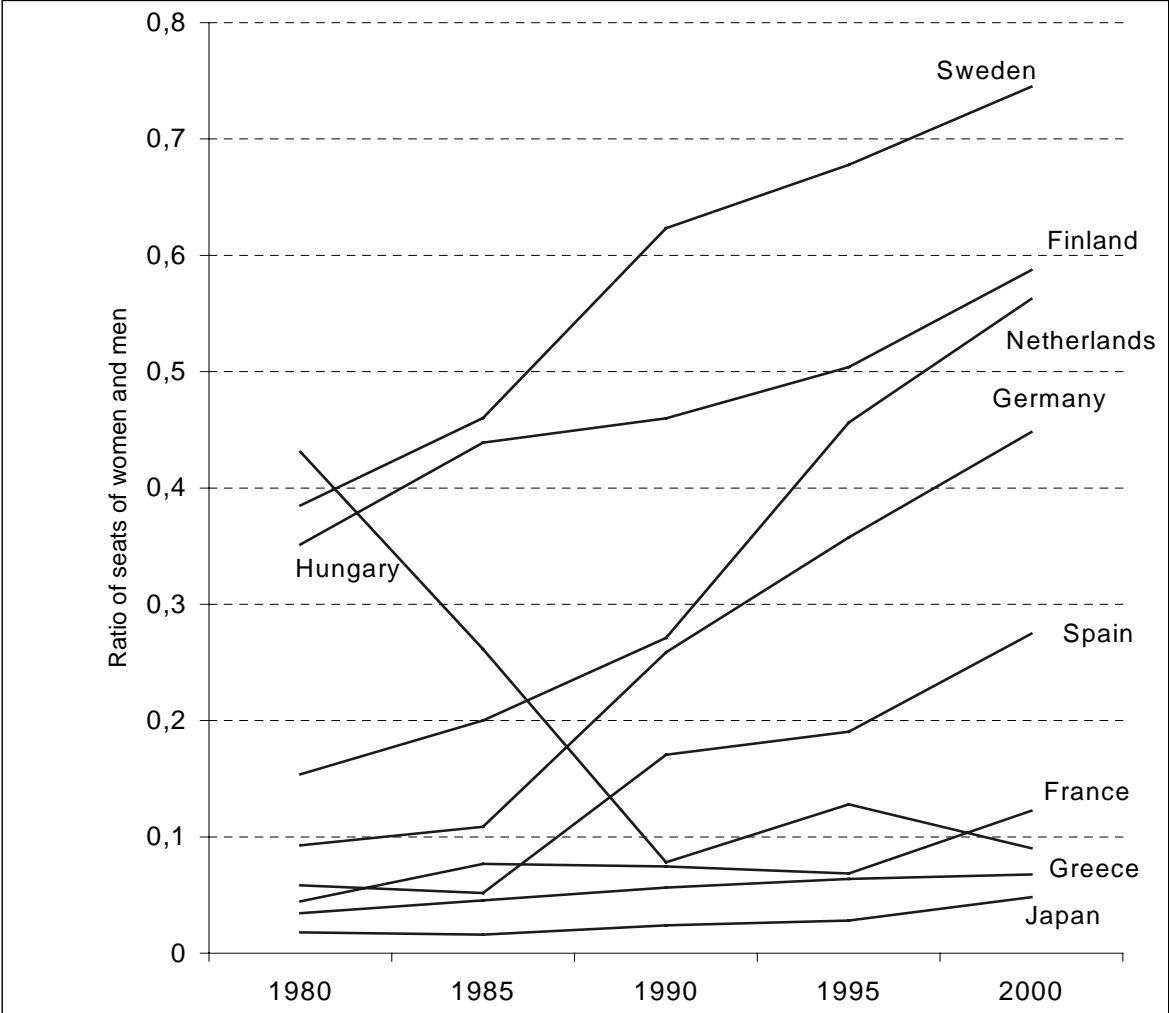
Further inequalities in the domain of social and political participation and integration exist between women and men with respect to the political participation which is lower for women than for men. An example of an indicator measuring gender inequality in this domain is the ratio of women and men in national parliaments. This ratio is below 1 in all European countries which means that women are underrepresented in all parliaments. This is

⁵ Time comparisons will soon be possible since the social network module of the ISSP is planned to be replicated in 2001.

⁶ Ratio of the percentages of young (18-34 years) and elderly people (65 years and older) in the availability of a close friend respectively in the availability of support by relatives, friends or neighbours in case of feeling depressed

exemplarily shown in figure 2 for selected countries. In nearly all countries women have gained in political influence across time, with the exception of Hungary where women more often belonged to the parliament before the political system change. Nowadays, the highest share of women among parliamentarians can be found in the Nordic countries, especially in Sweden. In the Netherlands as well as in Germany a considerable increase of women's representation in parliaments can be observed. Also some Southern European countries – Spain and Portugal – show improvements of the position of women while other countries like Greece, Italy and France nearly stagnated in this respect. At present, in Greece the ratio of women and men in the parliament is most unfavourable for women. However, compared to the European Countries, according of equal status of women and men seems to be still less realised in Japan for example.

Figure 2: Ratio of Seats of Women and Men in National Parliaments



Source: International Parliamentary Union

As to the operationalisation of the aspect of social exclusion within the life domain of social and political participation and integration, two measurement dimensions will be distinguished: social isolation and social discrimination (table 3). Social isolation will be measured by objective deficiencies of social contacts as well as by subjective feelings of

loneliness. The extent of social discrimination in a society will be measured by self-experienced discrimination on the one hand and the inclination to repudiate special population groups on the other hand.

As emphasised above, the second goal dimension implied by the concept of social cohesion – strengthening the social capital of a society – can be mainly captured by measurement dimensions of the general participation and integration of individuals in private spheres as well as in public areas. The social capital of a society can be considered as the result of interpersonal relationships and interactions, individual engagement in areas of public interest and common wealth, and well functioning and trustworthy institutions. Thus, appropriate measurement dimensions are the existence of social relations in the form of personal relations and organisation membership, social contacts and support within private networks, civic engagement in public realms, the subjective quality of social relations as well as the perceived quality of societal institutions.

As to the availability of social relations the European System of Social Indicators will distinguish between personal relations to relatives and to friends or neighbours on the one hand and more formal relations in the form of organisation membership on the other hand. The latter are concentrating on political, social and church or religious organisations⁷. Examples of indicators are the membership in a political party, a charitable organisation, and a church/religious organisation.

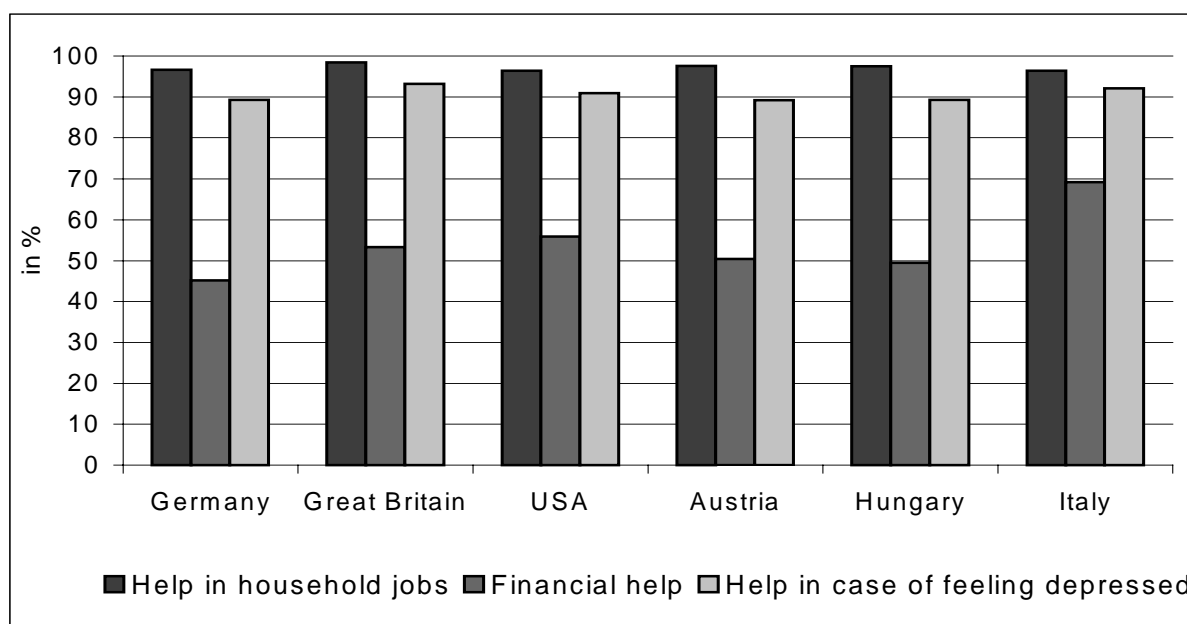
A corresponding distinction between the private area of informal relations and the rather public realms will be made with respect to social and political activities and engagement. Activities within the private area cover the frequency of contacts to relatives and to friends or neighbours and the social support available by these private networks in case of needing help in special activities, in personal problems or financial aid. Engagement within public realms will be measured for political, social and church/religious fields of activity, in accordance with the kinds of organisations considered.

Indicators for activities within informal networks are the available support by relatives, friends or neighbours in household jobs, in case of feeling depressed and in case of financial distress for example. These indicators are presented in figure 3, again based on data of the ISSP 1986.

The figure shows that in all countries included support in household jobs by relatives, friends or neighbours is available for nearly everybody. Informal social support in case of feeling depressed is also widely obtainable; about 90% of the respective populations can rely on the help from private networks. In opposition to that, financial help in case of needing a large sum of money is not so easily to get from the family or friends. This is true for all countries, but especially for Germany where only the minor part of the population can receive financial aid from this type of source. However, in Italy for the overwhelming part of the population help from private networks is also available in case of financial distress.

⁷ The wide range of leisure organisations as well as job-related organisations will be excluded here. They are considered in the framework of the respective life domains.

Figure 3: Available Support from Relatives, Friends or Neighbours⁸



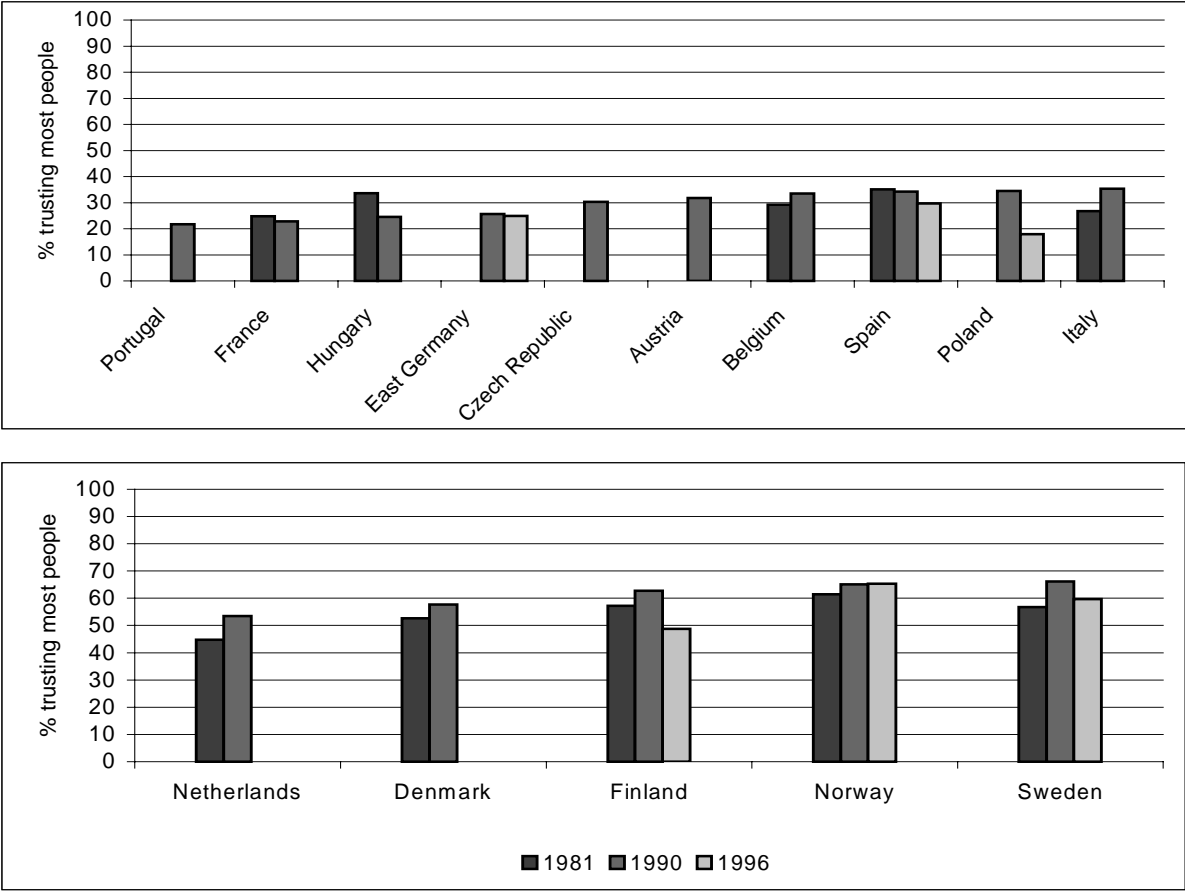
Source: ISSP 1986

Civic engagement in the political, social and church/religious area indicates the propensity not to restrict activities to the private sphere but to strive for community interests and common objectives, too. This civic engagement is a significant component of the social capital of a society, also because it reflects feelings of belonging to a community and the commitment to common values and goals. Examples of indicators are the level of political interest, volunteering in charitable organisations and the frequency of church attendance.

The social capital of a society not only rests on the private networks of social relations and support and the more formal networks of civic engagement in public areas but also on the subjective quality of the social relations involved. One can distinguish between the quality of actual personal relations, the quality of the own relations to other people in general or to special population groups, and the perceived quality of social relations of other people (table 3). Indicators for the respective subdimensions are the subjective quality of neighbourhood relations, the general trust in people or the perceived conflicts between generations for example. Figure 4 describes the general trust in people which members of different societies have. There are remarkable differences between the countries with a clear parting line between the Nordic Countries on the one hand and the Southern and East Central European countries on the other hand. In the upper part of the figure the countries with a rather low level of trust in people are represented. These comprise the Southern and East Central European countries as well as France, Austria and Belgium. No more than one third of the respective populations of these countries think that most people can be trusted. In opposition to that, the majority of the Danish, Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian people trust other persons, also the Dutch population have confidence in most people.

⁸ Questions: " Now we'd like to ask you about some problems that can happen to anyone. First, there are some household and garden jobs you really can't do alone - for example, you may need someone to hold a ladder or to help you move furniture. Who would you turn to first for help?"; "Suppose you needed to borrow a large sum of money? Who would you turn to first for help?"; "Now suppose you felt just a bit down or depressed and you want to talk about it? Who would you turn to first for help?"

Figure 4: Trust in People⁹



Source: World Values Survey

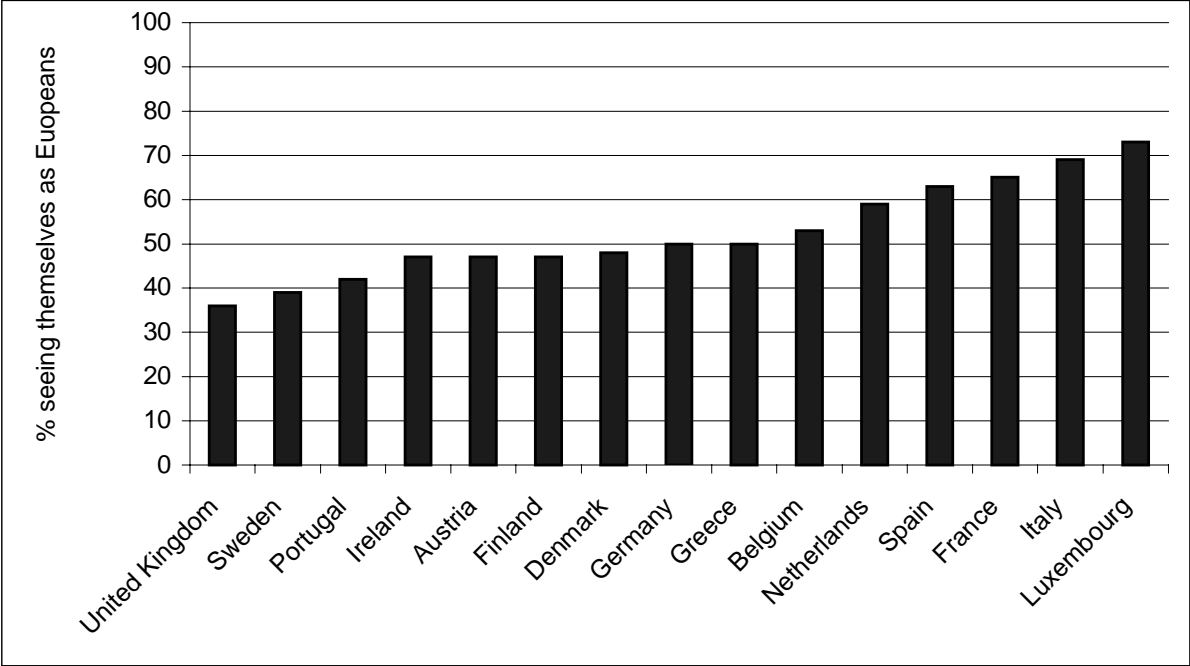
A further aspect of the social capital of a society is the quality of its institutions. This aspect has been operationalised as the perceived quality of political, social and church/religious institutions corresponding to the three public realms of civic engagement distinguished before (table 3). Appropriate indicators related to this measurement dimensions are the satisfaction with the system of democracy, the confidence in political parties, the confidence in church or religious institutions, or the trust in charitable organisations.

The European System of Social Indicators to be developed will also consider the special objective of the social cohesion *between* European countries. In the domain of social and political participation and integration the issue of a common European identity of citizens, the share of values and attitudes, the social relations and attitudes between European citizens, and the participation in Europe-wide social and political activities are relevant dimensions of the goal of strengthening the social cohesion between European countries. Examples of indicators for these dimensions are the identification with Europe, social contacts with people from other European Countries, similarities in the commitment to basic values such as freedom or tolerance, and the participation in activities of European associations. The figure below describes the degree of identification with Europe in 1998 as measured by the percentage of people seeing themselves as Europeans, too, and not only as members of their nations. This indicator has been surveyed by the Eurobarometer yet since the beginning of the 1980s.

⁹ Question: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"

Overall, the time series reveal a considerable stability across time for all countries with unsystematic variations only. Luxembourg, Italy, France, Spain and the Netherlands are the countries with the strongest identification with Europe; a majority of the respective populations of these countries see themselves as Europeans. A rather weak identification with Europe can be found in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Portugal.

Figure 5: Identification with Europe¹⁰



Source: Eurobarometer 1998 II

3.2 Dimensions and Indicators of Social Cohesion in the Domain of Labour Market and Working Conditions

While most aspects of the social capital dimension of social cohesion mainly focus on the domain of social and political participation and integration, the inequality dimension is relevant to nearly all life domains. Particularly in the domain of labour market and working conditions, inequalities are widespread and cover many facets. First, the European System of Social Indicators will monitor regional disparities in employment opportunities and in unemployment risks which will be measured by objective indicators such as the disparity of regional employment and unemployment rates as well as by subjective indicators such as perceived employment opportunities and risk of job loss (table 4). Secondly, there are well-known differences in the employment conditions of various population groups which have to

¹⁰ Question: "In the near future do you see yourself as ... ?". The sum of the answer categories "(NAT.) and European", "European and (NAT.)" and "European only" is indicated.

Table 4: Dimensions and Indicators of Social Cohesion in a European System of Social Indicators - Suggestions for the Domain 'Labour Market and Working Conditions'

Goal Dimension	Measurement Dimension	Subdimension	Indicator (selected examples)
I. Reduction of Disparities, Inequalities and Social Exclusion			
Regional Disparities	Regional Disparities of Employment Opportunities and Risks	Regional Disparities of Employment Opportunities	Disparity of Regional Employment Rates
			Disparity of Perceived Employment Opportunities in Regions
		Regional Disparities of Unemployment Risks	Disparity of Regional Unemployment Rates
			Disparity of Perceived Risk of Job Loss in Regions
Equal Opportunities / Inequalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women and Men - Generations - Social Strata - Disabled / Non-disabled - Nationalities 	Equal Opportunities/Inequalities with Respect to the Employment of Women and Men ¹¹	Equality of Employment Opportunities	Ratio of Employment Rates of Women and Men
			Ratio of Women's and Men's Rates of Reintegration into Employment
			Gender Differences in Perceived Employment Opportunities
		Equality of Unemployment Risks	Ratio of Unemployment Rates of Women and Men
			Ratio of Women's and Men's Rates of Job Loss
			Gender Differences in Perceived Risk of Job Loss
		Equality of Working Conditions	Wage Differentials of Female and Male Employees
			Gender Differences of Autonomy at Work
		Equality of Occupational Opportunities	Occupational Segregation of Women and Men
			Ratio of Women's and Men's Employment Rates in High Occupational Positions
Gender Differences in Opportunities for Advancement			
Social Exclusion	Long-term Unemployment		Unemployed Since at Least 12 Months
			Unemployed Since at Least 24 Months
			Long-term Unemployed not Receiving Assistance

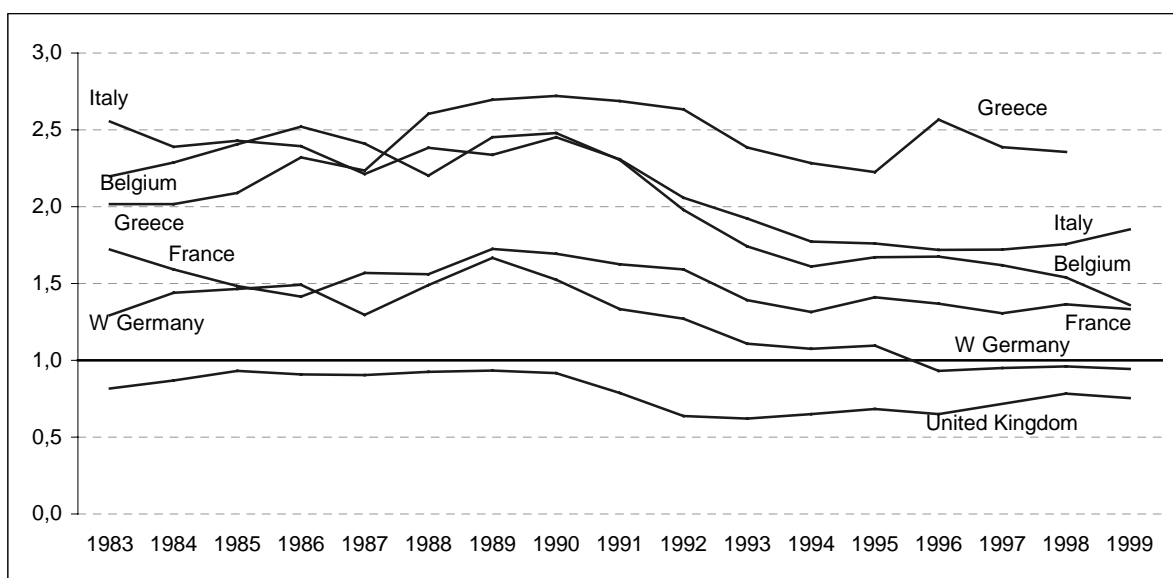
¹¹ For saving space and keeping the table straightforward the dimensions and indicators of equal opportunities of women and men have been presented in this table, only. However the European System of Social Indicators will also consider similar dimensions and indicators for the other population groups listed in the first column of the table.

Goal Dimension	Measurement Dimension	Subdimension	Indicator
II. Strengthening Social Capital			
Availability of Social Relations			
Social and Political Activities and Engagement	Participation in the Area of Working Life	Membership in Job-Related Organisations	Membership in Labour Unions
			Membership in Professional Organisations
		Co-Determination of Company Decisions	Employees with Rights of Co-Determination
			Companies with a Workers' Council
		Employees Represented by a Workers' Council	
Quality of Social Relations	Quality of Social Relations at the Workplace	Social Relations between Colleagues	Good Relations between Colleagues
		Social Relations between Superiors and Employees	Good Relations between Management and Employees
Quality of Societal Institutions	Perceived Quality of Labour Unions		Trust in Labour Unions
	Perceived Quality of Labour Offices		Satisfaction with Labour Offices
	Perceived Quality of Labour Courts		Confidence in Labour Courts
European-Specific Concerns	Connections between European Countries in Working Life	Employment of Non-Nationals	Share of European Non-National Labour Force
			Share of European Non-National Employed Persons
			Commuting to Another European Country
		Social Contacts with Non-Nationals	Good Relations to Foreign Colleagues
			Job Contacts to People in Other European Countries
		Attitudes Towards a European Labour Market	Approval of Employment of Non-Nationals
Willingness to Work Abroad			

be observed: unequal opportunities for women and men, inequalities between young and old workers, disadvantages for disabled people and for foreigners.

A very prominent concern are gender inequalities in employment. The indicators system will consider the inequality of employment opportunities measured for example by the ratio of women's and men's rates of employment or of reintegration into employment after a period of non-employment. Furthermore, gender inequality of unemployment risks will be included and captured by objective and subjective indicators. An example of an indicator is the ratio of unemployment rates of women and men which is presented in the figure below for selected countries.

Figure 6: Ratio of Unemployment Rates of Women and Men



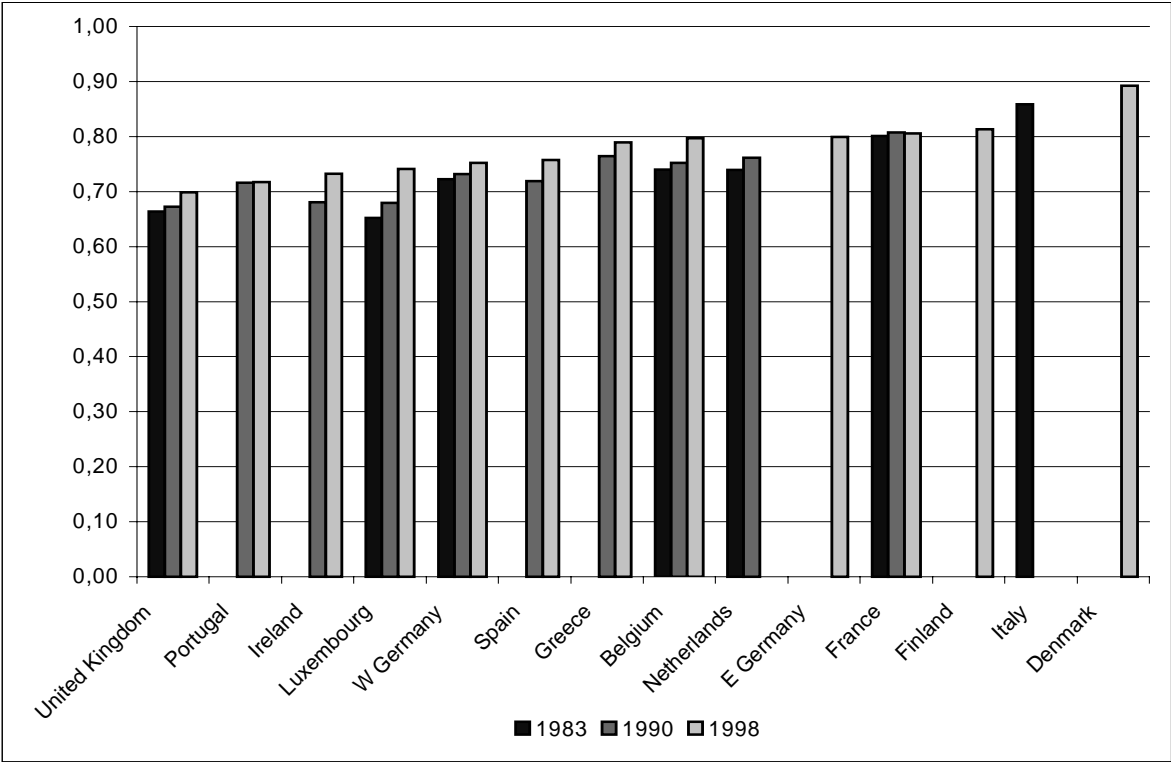
Source: Eurostat, New Cronos Database, Labour Force Surveys

In many European countries the ratio of female to male unemployment rates clearly exceeds the value of 1 which indicates higher rates for women than for men. At present, the most unfavourable situation for women exists in Greece where women are more than twice as frequent unemployed than men. The female unemployment rates are currently about twice as high as the male rates in Spain and in Italy, too. However, compared to the 1980s the situation in Italy has considerably improved. Gender inequality in unemployment has also decreased in Belgium, France and West-Germany while in other countries no systematic change can be stated. Besides West-Germany, countries with an approximately equal ratio of female and male unemployment rates are Ireland, Norway, Austria and Finland, while in the United Kingdom as well as in Sweden unemployment rates of men are even higher than those of women.

Another aspect of gender inequalities in employment are the working conditions of women and men. The wage differentials of women and men are an example of an indicator for this subdimension which reflect differences in the occupational positions of women and men as well as the equity of remuneration. The inequality of wages of female and male manual workers in industry is described below for three points in time (figure 7). The countries are

listed according to the degree of inequality in 1998. In all countries women earn less than men but the differences are most pronounced in the United Kingdom where the wages of women only amount to 70% of the wages of men. The smallest wage differentials between women and men can be stated in Denmark where female workers earn nearly 90% of the amount of male workers. As far as time comparisons are possible, in most of the countries a decrease of the wage inequalities can be observed during the last 15 years, so for example in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Luxembourg, West-Germany, Spain, Greece and Belgium.

Figure 7: Ratio of Gross Hourly Earnings of Female and Male Manual Workers in Industry

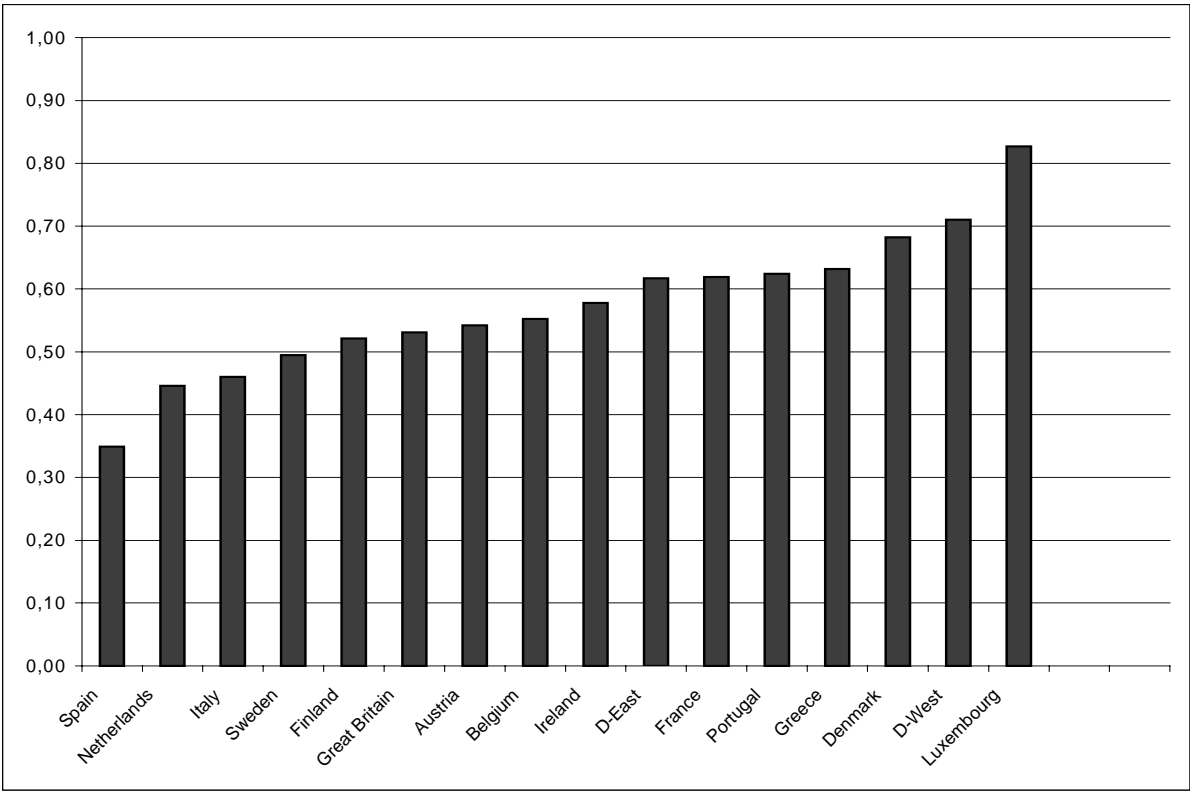


Source: Eurostat, New Cronos Database

As a further dimension of gender inequality in working life the occupational opportunities will be considered by the indicators system. Suitable indicators are the degree of occupational segregation of women and men or differences in the professional advancement measured for example by the ratio of women and men in supervising positions. This indicator is presented below (figure 8), based on the data of the Second European Survey of Working Conditions which has been conducted by the European Foundation of Living and Working Conditions in 1996¹². The ratio of women to men supervising other people at their workplaces is below 1 in all countries which indicates that women are less often employed in a rather high occupational position than men. The most favourable relation for women can be found in Luxembourg and also in West-Germany and in Denmark, the most unfavourable relation can be observed in Spain, the Netherlands and Italy.

¹² The first survey was conducted in 1991/1992

Figure 8: Ratio of Percentages of Women and Men who are Supervisors at their Workplaces¹³



Source: Second European Survey of Working Conditions, 1996

The European System of Social Indicators will include similar inequality dimensions with respect to other population groups, too. However, an explanation of them is omitted here, because it would be redundant in such an exemplary description as presented here.

The extent of social exclusion represents another important aspect of the social cohesion within a society which means exclusion from the labour market with respect to the life domain under investigation. An appropriate measurement dimension is long-term unemployment, for which various indicators can be defined such as the rate of unemployed since at least 12 months or the rate of unemployed since at least 24 months (table 4).

The domain of labour market and working conditions also comprises various aspects which refer to the goal of strengthening the social capital of a society. In this sense, a relevant measurement dimension is the participation in the area of working life with the subdimensions of membership in job-related organisations and co-determination of company decisions. Possible indicators for these subdimensions are the rate of membership in labour unions and in professional organisations, or the rate of employees represented by a workers' council.

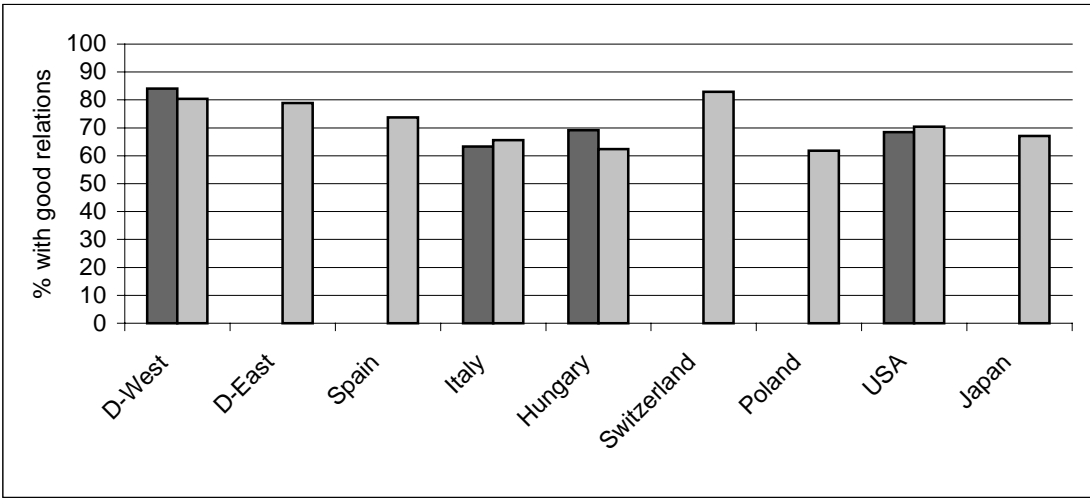
Another measurement dimension derived from the goal of strengthening social capital is the quality of social relations at the workplace. One can distinguish between the social relations

¹³ Question: "How many people work under your supervision?" The ratio is calculated from the percentages of women and men who mention at least one person working under their supervision.

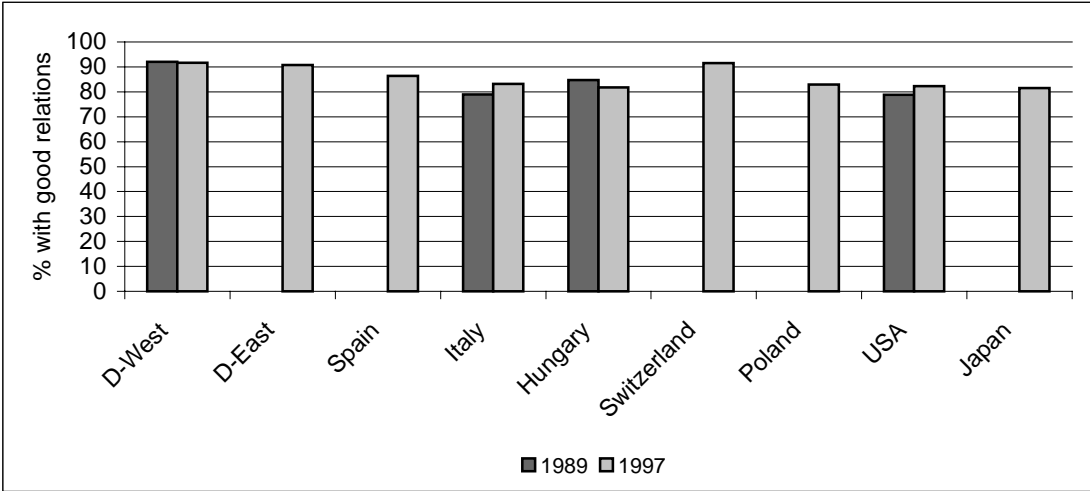
between colleagues and between superiors and employees. Indicators are the percentages of employed people who perceive good relations between colleagues respectively between superiors and employees at their workplaces (figure 9). As to the relations between colleagues, the various countries differ little. These relations are evaluated as 'very good' or 'quite good' by 80 to 90% of the employed populations. Greater differences can be found with respect to the relations between the management and employees which are less often regarded as good especially in Hungary and in Poland (62%) compared to Switzerland (83%) or West-Germany (80%).

Figure 9: Quality of Social Relations at the Workplace

- relations between management and employees



- relations between colleagues

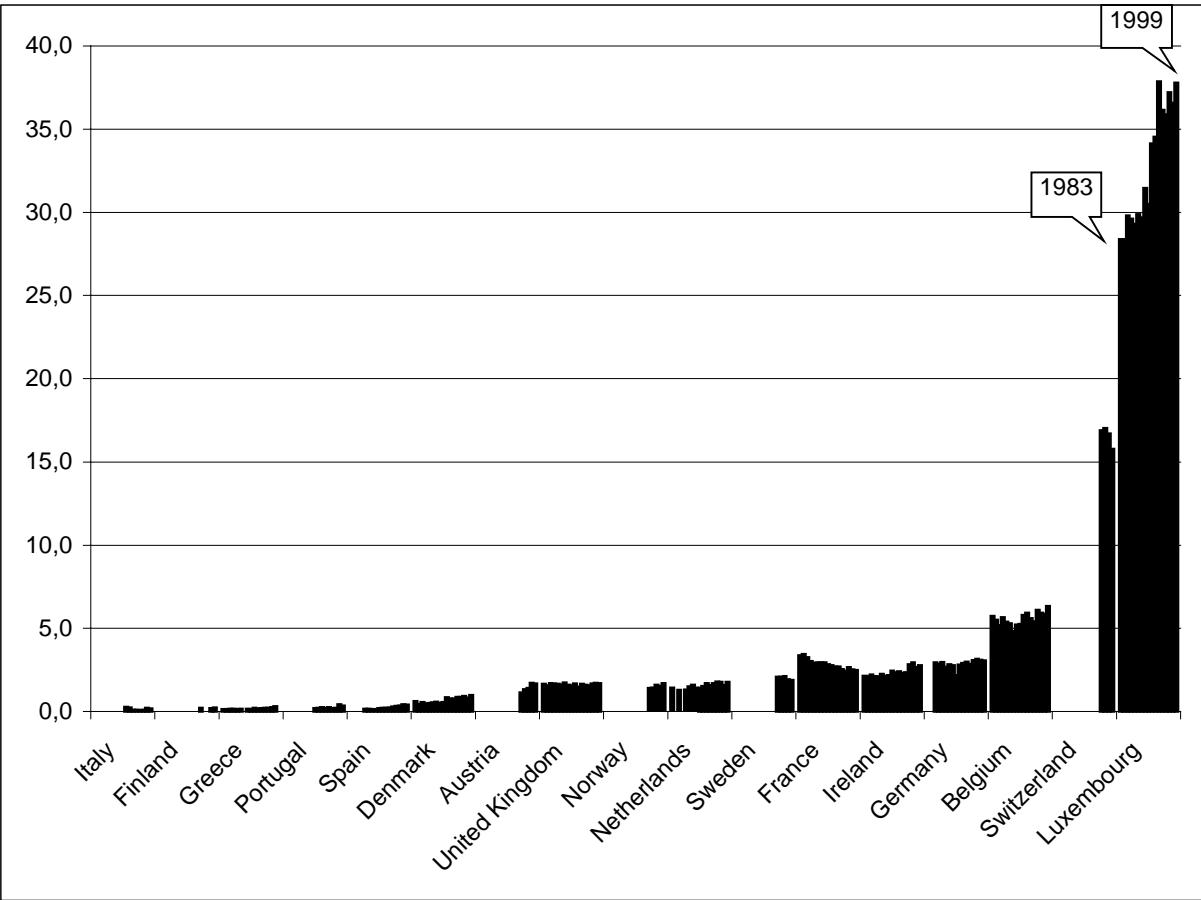


Source: ISSP

The aspect of the quality of societal institutions is operationalised in the domain of labour by three measurement dimensions: the perceived quality of labour unions, labour offices and labour courts. Indicators of these dimensions are the trust in labour unions, the satisfaction with the work of labour offices, or the confidence in labour courts.

Finally, in the domain of labour there are various concerns relating to the social cohesion between European countries. They deal with the connections between European countries in the working life: the employment of people from other European Countries, the contacts to employed people from other European Countries, the attitudes towards a European labour market. Examples of appropriate indicators for these dimensions are the share of the European non-national labour force, the rate of employees commuting to another European country, job contacts to employed people in another European country, relations to foreign colleagues at the workplace, approval of employment of non-nationals, willingness to work abroad.

Figure 10: Share of Non-National Labour Force from European Union Countries, aged 15-64 years



Source: Eurostat, New Cronos Database, LFS

At present, the connections between European countries in terms of employment seems to be rather weak for most of the countries with a few exceptions. Luxembourg has a high percentage of non-national labour force from other European Union countries which has considerably increased during the last 15 years. The second highest rate of foreign labour force can be found in Switzerland. Also in Belgium a comparatively large and constant share of the labour force has the citizenship of another EU country, which is probably due to the presence of the EU Institutions. In Germany, Ireland and France between 2 and 3 percent of the labour force are foreigners belonging to the EU; Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, the

United Kingdom, Austria and Denmark have rates between 1 and 2 percent. The labour force of the rest of the countries including all Southern European nations is characterised by a very small share of non-national European Union members.

4. Summary and Conclusions

In recent years the concept of social cohesion received great attention by social scientists as well as by politicians. Social cohesion represents a central societal goal at the national and the supranational level. For example, the European Commission has strongly emphasised the economic and social cohesion of Europe as a main policy goal of the European Union. Social cohesion represents a concept which focuses on societal qualities such as the extent of inequality or the strength of social relations and ties within a society. In opposition to that, quality of life as another goal guiding national and European Union policy has been mostly dealt as a concept related to the individual welfare. In this paper the position is taken that although social cohesion represents a societal quality it affects the individual quality of life because the elements of social cohesion are perceived and experienced by the members of the society. Thus, the social cohesion of a society can be conceived as an aspect relevant to the individual life situation, and in this sense, it represents a part of the individual quality of life. Under this perspective a broad conceptualisation of quality of life seems appropriate. Quality of life can be considered as the overarching policy goal which includes social cohesion as one component.

From a review of the scientific discussion of the concept of social cohesion the conclusion was drawn that there are mainly two goal dimensions inherent in the concept: (1) the reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion and (2) the strengthening of social relations, interactions and ties. In the framework of developing a European System of Social Indicators an effort was made to operationalise this conceptualisation of social cohesion across several life domains.

Concerning the first dimension of social cohesion regional disparities, issues of equal opportunities and inequalities between population groups and the aspect of social exclusion will be addressed by the indicators system. Examples of measurement dimensions within various life domains are regional disparities of the state of environment, equal opportunities of women and men in employment, inequalities between social strata in the state of health, social exclusion from material goods measured by income poverty.

The second dimension of social cohesion comprises all aspects which together constitute the social capital of a society. This includes the social relations available at the informal level of private networks and the more formal level of organisations, the activities and engagement within private networks as well as within public realms, the quality of social relations and the quality of societal institutions. Social relations and activities are aspects which are mainly addressed by the life domain of social and political participation and integration, but to a minor part also by the domains of employment (social relations at the workplace, participation in working life) and households and families (family relations, household activities). The quality of societal institutions represents a component of social capital which applies to several life domains. Institutions of education, health care, working life, social security, social services, the political system and legal system will be addressed. The perceived quality of these institutions as measured for example by trust in, satisfaction with or approval of institutions will be considered. Furthermore, the European System of Social Indicators will cover European-Specific aspects of social cohesion which concern the social cohesion

between European countries. These aspects can be identified in several life domains, too. Examples are the social relations between people of different European countries, the exchange of pupils and students, and labour, the share of values, or the dissemination of European languages.

By example of two life domains, 'social and political participation and integration' and 'labour market and working conditions', the operationalisation of the concept of social cohesion with its two dimensions and various aspects was explained in greater detail. For both life domains a rather broad range of indicators of social cohesion can be specified. Accordingly, the lists of exemplarily suggested indicators are rather extensive, especially in view of the fact, that social cohesion is only one of three concepts which will be measured by the European System of Social Indicators (s. footnote 3). Thus, the future work on indicators of social cohesion will aim at reducing their number and achieving a parsimonious and manageable set of indicators. The challenge will be to find out the "best" indicators, that is the most meaningful, valid and reliable indicators which are of high political relevance and can be measured for as many points of time and as many countries as possible in a comparable way.

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