

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 2

**The E.U. integration project
and the politics of social policy**

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Lecture 2

1. Two key political questions raised by the E.U. integration project and the expansion of social policy in the late 1980s and the 1990s
2. Theoretical perspectives of the E.U. integration project and the politics of social policy

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Two key political questions raised by the E.U. integration project and the expansion of social policy in the late 1980s and the 1990s

A) Why did the expansion of E.U. social policy occur, and can it be sustained?

B) Is the growth of E.U. social policy a positive development?

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A) Why did the expansion of E.U. social policy occur, and can it be sustained?

- 2 ways of answering

- depending on interpretation of traditional theories of E.U. integration

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- (i) REALIST – E.U. integration, and consequently development of E.U. social policy, moves in a ‘cycle of near success’
 - due to individual states ‘self-interest’

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- Attempts to create meaningful wide-ranging E.U. social policy always damaged through:
 - a) the resistance of some individual Member states;
 - b) resistance of key interest groups (i.e. multinational corporations);
 - c) institutional weakness of E.U. itself.

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- (ii) FUNCTIONALIST – E.U. social policy has managed to develop and grow precisely because of, and through:
- a) the development of the E.U. itself;
 - b) the activities of the E.U. Commission;
 - c) the activities of European wide interest groups, pressure groups, and lobby groups
 - d) ‘Spillover’

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B) Is the growth of E.U. social policy a
positive development?

- 2 possible answers:

(i) from the 'right' of the political
spectrum – 'free market liberals'

(ii) from the 'left' of the political
spectrum – social democrats

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(i) from the 'right' of the political spectrum
– 'free market liberals'

- development of E.U. social policy
counterproductive (dangerous!)
- constitutes a constraint on the
functioning of the free-market
- plus = one element in growth of E.U.
'superstate' and large bureaucracy

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(ii) from the 'left' of the political spectrum – social democrats

- development of E.U. social policy is a positive and necessary development
- needed to protect E.U. citizens from worst excesses of free-market
- plus, has economic gains for the market as assists in production of highly skilled, well-trained, well educated workforce

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- *THEORIES OF EUROPEAN
UNION INTEGRATION*

1. FEDERALISM

2. FUNCTIONALISM

3. NEO-FUNCTIONALISM

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THEORIES OF EUROPEAN UNION INTEGRATION

1. FEDERALISM

- 3 main assumptions

a) societies are complex and diverse

b) societies are pluralistic

c) as societies are diverse and pluralistic,
institutions that protect diversity and autonomy, but
which produce unity, are required

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THEORIES OF EUROPEAN UNION INTEGRATION

2. FUNCTIONALISM

- the functions of different elements of societies (including public policy) would encourage and produce co-operation and integration

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3. NEO-FUNCTIONALISM

- based on principle of ‘spillover’ (as integration occurs in one area/sector of E.U. the benefits would ‘spillover’ into other sectors, and produce greater integration in them)