

The Importance of Social Policy Advancement within the European Union Integration Process: A Theoretical Review of Different Approaches in Examining the Development of the EU Education Policy

Jasmin Hasić
LUISS Guido Carli of Rome

***Abstract:** The article attempts to scrutinize a part of a larger analysis in relation to the practical and theoretical aspects of the EU education policy and its contribution to the EU integration process, in the context of promoting free movement of labor and workers. This short review article investigates economic, political and legal aspects of the above mentioned policy, placed within a deeper context of the integration priorities of Member States in the past 40 years. Moreover, the aim of the article is to theoretically examine the developmental consistency of the European education policy by suggesting actual reasons for such cause of action. Special consideration will be given to the extent in which the EU policy of education conflicts with the concept of harmonization of law.*

***Keywords:** European Union, integration, social policy, education*

INTRODUCTION

In its short historical development, the European Union (henceforth *the EU*) has reached a point of strong social and political integration.¹ In this sense, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the impact of different EU policies onto the day-to-day life of its citizens, particularly in addressing the real challenges within the society such as environmental protection, health, education, unemployment, technological innovation, energy, etc. The headway of the European integration process is primarily based on principles of subsidiarity² and change in social policy strategy from "harmonization" to "mutual recognition". In this respect, political integration is viewed as a process by which nation-states selectively pool their sovereignty and set up institutions of supranational governance (Peterson 2001:4923). The lack of attention given to the social component of the EU integration process is partly a result of the fact that scholars of the EU studies have clearly under-utilized the rich scholarship and knowledge on social processes, and partly because sociologists themselves have not played an active role in the field (Delhey, 2004:3). This paper is intended to highlight some of the aspects in which one particular EU social policy area, the education, has grown in its importance over years and contributed to the overall EU integration project.

The paper seeks to address the following questions: In what ways did the EU education policy practically and theoretically grow in importance within the European Union integration process, and what are the reasons and implications of such growth? In order to attain this goal, the paper is aimed at establishing an interconnection between the EU education policy within both historical and theoretical models, and the overall development of the EU integration process. Later on, the focus will be set on examination practical reasons for the advancement of the education policy and its impact on other EU social policies, such as employment and free mobility of workers. The article will conclude with the evaluation of different political issues related to the mentioned social policy. The present work, of course, cannot aspire to explore such broadly defined topic in its entirety, thus the author is going to try and limit only on the analysis of the proposed concepts.

¹The term European integration differs from the term *europeanization*, which can be understood as a process that results in a change in the behavior of elites; however this change does not result in deeper integration (Featherstone 2003:8).

²The principle of subsidiarity is defined in the Article 5. of the Treaty on the European Union. It ensures that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made to verify that action at Union level is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level. Specifically, it is the principle whereby the Union does not take action (except in the areas that fall within its exclusive competence), unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level. For more details, please see:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm

Understanding the Role of Social Policies in Advancing the European Union's Integration Process

When addressing the question of the "European governance", one often refers to the notion of the European Union as an entity ruled by set of procedures and mechanisms that standardize the behavior of both public and private actors within the selected areas of integrated policies.

EU's supranational, yet pluralistic, institutions (Schmitter, 1996) display a significant role in fostering the social change across the continent, mainly through introducing protective legal frameworks and encouraging the cooperation between the Member States. This is further deepened through continuous coordination and harmonization of different national policies (which includes the active involvement of different stakeholders).

In line with this conceptualization, Schimmelfenning and Rittberger (2006) define several EU integration process areas. They observe their development in the context of:

- a) new policy areas, being regulated on the EU level partially or exclusively (*sectorial or sectoral integration*)³;
- b) competencies, being increasingly shared across the EU member states or delegated to autonomous supranational institutions (*vertical integration*);
- c) territorial capacity, realized through accepting new union members (*horizontal integration*).

The EU social policy has managed to develop and grow precisely because of and through the development of the EU itself, activities of the EU Commission, different interest groups and the "spillover" process. Development of the EU social policy is, arguably, a positive and necessary process. Such development has economic gains for the market as it assists in production of highly skilled, well trained and well educated workforce.

The social dimension of the EU integration has evolved around the concept of "Convergence of Objectives", as in the two Council Recommendations, respectively, "Convergence of social protection objectives and policies". Thus, rather than being rooted in supranational competence or binding legislative instruments, "soft" policy coordination in the EU has been set as the norm in social policy (Begg, 2004:110).

³Sectorial integration is understood as a process through which new policy areas or sectors are becoming increasingly regulated at EU level. An increase in sectorial integration thus implies that at least one new policy sector is being (partially or exclusively) regulated by the EU.

By establishing the research projects, and relatively small-scale EU programs, issuing communiqués and attracting the attention of different actors to the EU policy process (formally or informally), the Commission attempts to improve the policy's outcomes, thus paving the way for the Commission's preferred course of action, should a policy window open up in other related areas. Similarly, the Commission carries out extensive analysis and comprehensive evaluations, both of its own actions and programs, and, perhaps more importantly, of policies of the member states at the national level (Cram 1997:163).

The EU's priority aims are both in increasing the scope and depth of diverse areas. This primarily refers to the sector of education and employment (improving human resources and working conditions, access to information, equality in access to education and subsequently to the labor market etc) as well as research and technology (establishing high-quality education programs, language learning and social adjustment support, decentralization of educational institutions, making education systems more flexible, etc).

Developing education strategies contributes to social cohesion and help in overcoming social inequalities. In addition, it fosters the employment and free movement of workers, which is one of the essential freedoms in the EU. Overall, the EU education policy facilitates the EU integration process by introducing effective mechanisms that dissimulate social exclusion and fragmentation of other social policy areas.

In the following two chapters, this author will closely examine the historical development and the growing role of education at the EU level, and its impact in the integration process.

The EU Education Policy – Historical Development

In the most recent past, the EU sectorial integration has intensively developed in the areas of security and defense, immigration and asylum, but also education and employment policy.

Even though the European Union sets global goals and encourages cooperation between the Member States, the common policy of teaching, organization and training system remain at the national level. The EU institutions extend great deal of respect towards the national educational traditions of each Member State, and the EU's role in this sector is currently realized solely through providing complementary guidance, development funds and by establishing community/union level programs.

The Importance of Social Policy Advancement within the European Union Integration Process: A Theoretical Review of Different Approaches in Examining the Development of the EU Education Policy

The educational policies of the each EU Member State are founded on a number of important principles. They are based on ideas of the so-called European values - personal freedom and responsibility, equality, human dignity, solidarity, active citizenship, democracy and market economy.⁴

From the historical point of view, the interests of the EU integration have been recognized primarily with in line with growing economic issues. However, need for skillful workers as well as trained, well-educated experts in different fields have become a very important component of future economic development. This *need* might also be interpreted as a prerequisite for future economic and technological advances, where competitive human capital becomes one of the European Union's top priorities.

In the early 1970s, the EU was puzzled with a dilemma of initiating a uniformed action in the areas of education and training, health and safety at work, which later on led to the establishment of several European networks to encourage action and minor advancement in this field. The first meeting of the EU Ministers of Education was held in November 1971. The very first specific form of cooperation was materialized on February 9. 1976, when the Action Program on Education was adopted.

The most constructive mode of cooperation in the field of education was recorded in the early eighties. Education policy was perceived as a primary tool in combating the unemployment. This era can be considered as the beginning of the pilot programs aimed at facilitated exchange of university students (known as Erasmus), the education of children of migrant workers and the exchange of information among the EU Member States and the institutions of higher education. From the mid 1980s, both the EU and the OECD considered that most countries would benefit from a greater coherence within a framework that brings together discrete awards and structures. This would improve the linkages, coordination and international recognition of awards to facilitate the mobility of labor (Duff, 2011).⁵

⁴In sum: (the) principle of democracy and respect for human rights; principle of market mechanisms; principle of investment in education (related to the development of human resources); principle of mobility of students and teachers; principle of decentralization; principle of participation and cooperation; principle of equal access to education for all; principle of tolerance and solidarity with minorities; principle of multiculturalism; principle of pluralism of opinions and thoughts; principle of evaluation and monitoring processes; principle of transparency in education and principle of lifelong learning.

⁵In 1985, at a meeting held in Milan, the European Council approved the report "Europe for the people", which emphasized the role of education and culture in the EU sphere.

Formally, the EU education policy was institutionalized in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which provided that the European Parliament and the Council would be responsible for cooperation in education and training in the emerging European Union. It was affirmed that the EU has become complementary authority in deciding the education policy with respect to the Member States. The Agreement on Social Policy⁶ (1992) was one of the first acts incorporated into the main body of the consolidated treaty under the title XI on *social policy, education, vocational training and growth*, thereby endorsing the commitment of Member States to the development of the social dimension, as an important component in the process of the EU integration. In other words, the social partners' agreement proposed a constitutionally recognized role of the legislative process at the Community/Union level. Furthermore, the Agreement expanded opportunities for access to education and training, where all national governments contributed to creating an environment open to proposals for promoting greater gender equality.

In 1993, the EU Commission issued a document on the education policy: the White Paper on "*Growth, Competitiveness and Employment*". It was followed by another official document entitled "*Teaching and learning towards the learning society*". Both white papers reported on the challenges in the current education policy in the EU and called the Member States upon the swift reaction in the most critical areas of developing an information society, strengthening the growth of scientific and technological knowledge and promoting the concept of the knowledge society and lifelong learning.⁷

Soon after, in 1994, the EU Commission's White Paper on *social policy*⁸ emphasized the importance of growth, competitiveness and employment. In addition, it turned attention towards the adaptation of common education and training systems.⁹

⁶This Agreement proposed a radical change in the Community legislative process in the sphere of social policy. Later on, it was annexed to the Protocol on Social Policy of the Treaty of Maastricht, which included a compromise of an 'opt-out' for the UK and a 'twin-track' EU social policy concept. For more details please see:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/agreementonsocialpolicy.htm>

⁷These non-binding resolutions were founded on six priorities - education of children of migrant workers, enhancing the relationship between education systems in the Community countries, promotion of foreign languages, equal opportunities, higher education and more effective processing of documents and statistics.

⁸A White Paper COM (94) 333 on the European Social Policy was adopted in July 1994. The text is available at:

http://europa.eu/documentation/officialdocs/whitepapers/pdf/social_policy_white_paper_com_94_333_a.pdf

⁹The EC's 1994 White Paper introduced several key factors in evaluating the quality of education: the impact of information technology on people's lifestyles, the development of scientific and technical culture, the impact on internationalization of the economy and the labor market.

The Importance of Social Policy Advancement within the European Union Integration Process: A Theoretical Review of Different Approaches in Examining the Development of the EU Education Policy

In 1995, a separate Directorate-General for Education and Culture was established under the European Commission, while in 1998, the so-called Bologna Process was introduced with aims of building a European area of higher education by the year of 2010, where students can freely choose from quality courses offered to them across the EU, with an effective system of recognition of studies and diplomas. Another goal to be attained was to increase the attractiveness of European higher education not only for students from European countries, but also to those who come from *the outside*.

Every two years, the education ministers of the states participating in the Bologna process¹⁰ held a meeting to evaluate the implementation of existing strategies and to set aims and new policy targets for the upcoming period. The first in line of these conferences was held in 2001 in Prague. The last in line of these regular meetings of Education Ministers was held in 2012 in Bucharest.¹¹

The European Union's interest in enhancing the education policy developed further after the Lisbon summit (2000)¹², with a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing primarily on the common concerns and priorities of the EU. Education and training systems were set to be adapted both according to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment.

¹⁰Bologna process includes both the EU and non- signatories of the Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe, currently more than 47 countries.

¹¹Conference in Prague (2001) was aimed at strengthening the role of students as active partners in the implementation of the Bologna process and emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning as a component of the education reform. Conference in Berlin (2003) marked the initiation of specific steps towards the implementation of the preset goals on measuring the quality of studies in the first and the second cycle, as well as the start up of the third (PhD) cycle. Conference in Bergen (2005) sought to establish the external dimension of the Bologna process, by including the countries of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Moldova into the process. The Ministers of Education adopted documents that provided standards in the qualifications framework and quality assurance. Also, it was prescribed that all students will automatically qualify for the Diploma Supplement, in one of the most widely spoken languages. Conferences in London (2007) and in Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) were intended for a detailed evaluation of the progress and developing strategies for the next decade. Conference in Budapest and Vienna (2010) was help upon the completion of the reform process which began more than 10 years ago. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was officially supported through a Declaration adopted by 47 countries. Finally, at the Conference held in Bucharest (2012), Ministers reflected on the economic crisis which has affected the European continent, and recommended an increased investment in the education as an investment into the future; in particular, strengthening the competitiveness of universities and better opportunities for their comparison.

¹²European Council Presidency conclusions of March 23. and 24. 2000. The text is available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

The European Council's Spring Report (2001)¹³ covers these topics. Ministers of Education have adopted the following concrete strategic objectives for the coming ten years:

- Increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the EU;
- Facilitating the access of all to the education and training systems;
- Opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

It was the sole intent of the Commission to encourage Member States in improving the quality of their education and training systems in two ways: through the process of target setting and by stimulating a debate on subjects of common interest. This is done using the process known as the *Open Method of Coordination*.¹⁴ In 2002 the Spring Summit approved such joint work program. Since then, a series of "Joint Reports" are published every other year.¹⁵

Communication from the EU Commission (dated on November 20, 2002.) on the European benchmarks in education and training, identified concrete, measurable targets grouped into six areas:

- investment in education and training;
- early school leavers;
- graduates in mathematics, science and technology;
- population having completed upper secondary education;
- key competencies;
- lifelong learning.

¹³Report of the Education Council of the European Council adopted in February 2001. The full text is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/rep_fut_obj_en.pdf

¹⁴The OMC provides a new framework for cooperation between the Member States, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives. Under this intergovernmental method, the Member States are evaluated by one another (peer review), with the Commission's role being limited to surveillance. The European Parliament and the Court of Justice play virtually no part in the OMC process. For more details please see:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/open_method_coordination_en.htm

¹⁵2004 Report, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/jir_council_final.pdf 2006 Report, available at:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/c_079/c_07920060401en00010019.pdf.

The objectives for education and training systems, as foreseen by the European Council, mark the EU education system to be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010.¹⁶

During the Czech Presidency of the European Union in 2009, a new strategic framework "Education and Training 2020" was adopted. It lays out the new goals of the lifelong learning and mobility; improves the quality and efficiency of education and training; promotes social cohesion and active citizenship and improves innovation and entrepreneurship.¹⁷ All told, it is obvious the EU education policy has been one of the primary integration tools contributing to the increase of opportunities in and amongst the EU cooperation partnership and mutual support both within the EU and in the global market. In addition, from an economic point of view, education policy served as an excellent foundation for promoting the quality of research, essentially, to facilitate the swift changing labor market needs. Within this context, the recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes can be understood as a necessary support for freedom of movement, which was a primary aim of the original EU treaty. As mentioned, the Erasmus, Socrates, Comenius, Da Vinci or other education exchange programs were politically designed to assist such process, i.e. to enable a smooth the progress and support for greater EU integration both in political and in cultural sense.

The EU Education Policy in Perspective – Key Implications, Challenges and Contributions to the EU Integration Process

There are several reasons that suggest growing importance of the education policy in the overall EU integration process; key amongst them is an increase of pace of the EU integration and labor mobility, followed by the strengthening of the competition within the EU internal market, and, arguably, the integrative advancement of the overall process towards the monetary and political Union.

¹⁶Barcelona European Council, 15. and 16. March 2002, Presidency conclusions no. 02/8, March 16. 2002. According to the timetable, the results are to be evaluated in mid-2003, followed by the submission of an interim report on the implementation of the work program to the spring 2004 European Council, with the final report coming in 2010. For more details:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/c11086_en.htm

¹⁷It also affirms the foundations for a new ambitious target, the so-called Europe 2020 strategy. The Europe 2020 strategy has three key priorities: Smart growth (economy based on knowledge and innovation); Sustainable growth (efficient, greener and more competitive economy); Support and integration (increased participation in the labor market and in combating the poverty).

With regards to the migration and mobility of students, and subsequent skilled and trained workers, one has to take in consideration varying demographic factors, such as ageing of the population throughout Europe, which will eventually result in lower limits for new young workforce entering into labor market, as well as in need for new skills especially in high technology industries with rapid staff turnover.

Practical examples of these shifting factors can be found in the cases of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The UK was, in particular, criticized for its poor record on intermediate skills development. Given the fact that the UK government placed more emphasis on qualifications rather than adopting new skills, the implication being that it would become increasingly difficult to find a job without a recognizing qualification, workers from the UK had a particular disadvantage in the European market place. On the other hand, in the Netherlands, the output of qualifications appeared to have increased more rapidly than the skill requirements of jobs, leading to possible threat of over-qualification described as "educational crowding-out" (Hantrais, 2000). It is obvious that enforcement of agreements related to the mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications, that revised EC Treaty commitment to *education, vocational training and youth* and the Commission's Action Programs have undoubtedly removed many of the formal and practical obstacles to intra-European mobility and encouraged young people to become mobile.

Unfortunately, they have failed in eliminating the important differences in approaches to education and training or changed their relationship with the labor market. Most economists would argue that education mobility is determined by a whole range of factors operating at the level of the socio-economic environment. If mobility is to be encouraged, incentives are therefore needed to be given through the company law, taxation, wage systems and employment law supported by qualification, training and transferable social protection rights.

Bridging the gap between economic and social policy, investment in education of human resources through quality education and training was being projected as an important component in the EU social model and the EU identity, where requirements of social integration, as well as the enhancement of employability and personal fulfillment are not incompatible (EU Commission, 1995). The importance of the EU treaties and charters on education and associated rights was often stimulated either by the need to protect employees, Kleinman (2002) stipulates that headway in education system, which directly affects the employment prospects (the so-called "employment centered" social policy) is common ground of the most EU Member States, the EU Commission and organizations such as OECD. It is clear, from the analysis of the Commission's documents that, while unemployment is the key social priority, education policy overall is subordinated to the key economic goals of public expenditure. Hence, development of quality education systems and the shift from passive maintenance to work-related active measures in education and training need to become the central issue of the EU integration process.

The Importance of Social Policy Advancement within the European Union Integration Process: A Theoretical Review of Different Approaches in Examining the Development of the EU Education Policy

Hantaris' study (2000) suggests that continued emphasis on education of human recourse capacities development can be explained by three main reasons:

- social protection systems in the Member States were derived from the employment insurance-related model characteristic of Continental Europe rather than being based on Universal access of right.
- since the EEC had been established as economic community, the justification for any interest in human and social rights was a consequence of the need to ensure the free movement of labor as an important factor of mobility within EU.
- national governments were more willing to acquire the supranational measures regulating the technical aspects of working conditions than they were to allow any interference in the provision and delivery of social welfare services that could best be dealt with at local level.¹⁸

The EU actions to use the education as a tool for reducing the unemployment and struggle with social exclusion have generally been balancing with actions by Member state governments. Nevertheless, the role of the EU will continue to be inferior, and only supportive of, policies of Member States governments. Even though the social dimension to European integration process and the impact of education on its overall performance, as well as on the other social policy areas (such as employment and worker's mobility)¹⁹ has been on the agenda for a long time, yet it has been slowly confronting the resistance from many, if not all, Member States.

The reasons are not hard to identify. According to Begg (2004), they can be synthesized as follows: Firstly, the social policy is a sensitive matter that reflects accommodations painfully reached at national level, and recent welfare reforms that have proceeded at differing paces and in different directions.

¹⁸Paradoxically, L. Hantaris (2000) points out that the active approach to education policy, in the context of employment is helping to reinforce the divisions within the society between work-rich and work-poor household. From this perspective, the member states appeared to be opting collectively for an employment - based model of social protection, while reluctantly accepting that provision had to be made through residual schemes at national level to ensure sufficient resources for the "unemployable".

¹⁹Moreover, effective employment policy and social protection can enhance the productive potential of an economy, rather than being seen purely as a response to problems with hefty price tags that erode competitiveness (Atkinson, 1999). During 1990s, the focus on employment became even stronger as the structural funds were used to support the Union's employment strategy and the national action plans for employment, while also helping to prepare for enlargement. In the event of more integrated and inclusive approach to social policy in 1990s, The Treaty of Amsterdam stressed out that employment is to be considered as an avenue to greater integration and cohesion in the EU. Official estimation of the EU employment level is around 85% and in the US 88%.

Secondly, any suggestion that the European Union should acquire a role in redistributive policy is abomination to many member state governments, which are concerned to prevent further "mission and sovereignty creep" by EU institutions.

Thirdly, whereas economic integration can, largely, be justified on the grounds that there are resulting gains in the economic efficiency needed as a response to increasingly open markets, the normative and political foundations for the *europeanization* of social policy remain to be built. "Positive" integration is in this case more than "negative" integration implicit in reducing the barriers to free movement of goods, services, and factors of production.

It is extremely difficult to assess the extent in which the European education policy had a positive impact on the mobility and opening up opportunities for workers to find jobs and for employers to find people with adequate skills, thereby enhancing employment and economic growth. The impact of the EU's education policy on labor mobility is visible only in an indirect way, when analyzing Union's priority was to reduce unemployment, intra-European mobility, creating jobs by stimulating economic growth and competitiveness. None of these aims could have been achieved without a quality and high-scale investment in education systems. In spite of the removal of administrative barriers and legal restrictions, attempts to harmonize social protection systems etc, implementation of EU's norms on reducing intra-European mobility and employment could not have been realized without the mutual recognition of qualifications and freedom of movement in the area of education.

Many of the remaining practical barriers may have little to do with legal restrictions on mobility and establishment. Analysis of migratory patterns suggests this trend; personal decisions about workers' mobility are mainly affected by his/her educational prospects, in particular access and quality of training, recognition qualifications, and also by the social and relational context, including the working environment and household circumstances.²⁰ Realizing the need for establishing a lifelong learning process is one of the key indicators of EU's approach to the structural changes in the economy. The transition from automated robot society to information society and consequently provoked a lot of pressure to change the demands on the workforce. When these differences are combined with mobility it is clear that the practical and political issues raised are not easily amenable to common policy solutions.

²⁰Despite the general agreement over arrangement to facilitate and encourage freedom of movement among employees and self-employed workers, article 48 of the EEC Treaty explicitly excluded public servants from the freedom of movement clause. The revision of this article 39 in the consolidated EC Treaty specified that the provisions did not apply to employment in the public sector. This restriction was intended to safeguard the general interests of the state and does not therefore cover all public sector employment. Posts in the judiciary, police, armed forces and diplomatic services, as well as architects and supervisors in public administration, may be reserved for nationals, whereas access to professional employment, in nursing for example is not restricted.

Another factor highlighting the bond between the education policy, employment rates and the EU integration is the principle of internationalization in the European Union, which manifests itself mainly in the field of vocational education. It is particularly important for the EU single market, which is becoming more important matter of mobility of skilled labor and comparability of qualification and experience. In this context, the above mentioned Strategy 2020 can be observed as an initiative of the European Commission's aimed at creating new skills and jobs through facilitating the education systems and training tools. In other words, European Union's contribution towards full employment is founded on acquiring new skills and adapting to changing labor market conditions.

This is arguably connected to with both Erasmus program and the Bologna process, which was predecessor for the European Higher Education Area. Creating this Area of common educational values is designed to foster the employment and the overall, integration efforts through practice of use of foreign languages, learning about foreign cultures and tolerance. The benefit to the society is subsequent skilled and mobile labor force, which increases the overall competitiveness of the EU in the global market.

CONCLUSION

Recent developments in the EU have heightened the need for the institutional process of modernizing the rules of governing the relations both between the Member States and the EU itself. A new Lisbon Treaty, signed and ratified by the EU leaders, is expected to provide the Union with the legal framework and tools necessary to meet future challenges and citizens' demands in various areas of economic and social policies.

The Lisbon strategy, as a foundation of the EU social policy development, requires the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of education systems and the facilitation of access for European citizens to education and training at all stages of life. In the context of an increasingly knowledge-based economy, human capital can be seen as a key factor linked to economic success, productivity, social cohesion, full employment and a better quality of life and work, as well as wider and deeper EU integration. In other words, these imposed strategies require improvement of the labor market as well allowing more diversified accessibility of various job placements in all member states.

By examining all the theoretical and practical aspects of this topic, a conclusion can be reached that European social policy was designed primary for educated workers employed in the regular or formal economy. Education and training policy is intended to ensure the employability and flexibility of young as well as elderly people in the changing conditions of EU integration process and progress. The route out of poverty, through the EU integration, can be achieved by strengthening of the labor force and the formal economy, therefore the purpose of promoting the mobility of labor and education lay in its contribution to the competitiveness of markets and European integration itself.

It is obvious the EU education policy has been one of the primary integration tools contributing to the increase of opportunities in and amongst the EU cooperation partnership and mutual support both within the EU and in the global market. In addition, from an economic point of view, education policy served as an excellent foundation for promoting the quality of research, essentially, to facilitate the swift changing labor market needs. Within this context, the recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes can be understood as a necessary support for freedom of movement, which was a primary aim of the original EU treaty. As mentioned, the Erasmus, Socrates, Comenius, Da Vinci or other education exchange programs were politically designed to assist such process, i.e. to enable a smooth the progress and support for greater EU integration both in political and in cultural sense.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Atkinson A. (1999): *The Economic Consequences of Rolling Back the Welfare State*, Cambridge, MIT Press.
2. Begg I. (2004): *Policy Responses to Marginalization: The Changing Role of the EU in Resisting Marginalization*, ed. Duncan Gallie, Oxford Press, pp. 243 – 261.
3. Carrera Sergio and Geyer F. (2009): *EU policy on education: The impact on the social inclusion of vulnerable groups*, CEPS special report.
4. Cram L. (1997): *Policy-making in the European Union: Conceptual lenses and the integration process*, European Public Policies series, Routledge.
5. Delhey J. (2004): *European Social Integration - From convergence of countries to transnational relations between peoples*, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin.
6. Duff T. (2011): *Reflections on Ireland's education/training policy making process leading to the National Framework of Qualifications: national and international influences*, Dublin Institute of Technology, Issue 9.
7. Featherstone K. (2003): *The Politics of Europeanization*, OUP Oxford.
8. Hantrais L. (2000): *Social Policy in the EU*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, Second edition.
9. Kleinman, M. (2002): *A European Welfare State: European Union Social Policy in context*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.
10. Peterson, J. (2001): *Integration: European*. In Smelser, N.J. and Baltes, P.B. (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 11, Amsterdam, Elsevier, pp. 4923-4925.
11. Schimmelfennig F. (2010): *Europeanization beyond the member states*, *ETH Zeitschrift für Staats- und Europawissenschaften* Zurich.
12. Schimmelfennig F. and Rittberger B. (2006): *Theories of European integration: Assumptions and Hypotheses in European Union: Power and Policy Making*, ed. Richardson J., Routledge.

13. Schmitter P. (1996): Imagining the Future of the Euro-Polity with the Help of New Concepts. In Marks, G. et al. *Governance in the European Union* (London: Sage), pp. 121-151.
14. Wessels W. (1997): An Ever Closer Fusion. A Dynamic Macropolitical View on Integration Processes'. *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 267.

Jasmin Hasić