

WP 13 – Narrative Report; Prague Workshop (16-17 February 2007)

The CINEFOGO workshop “Changing Forms of State Intervention in Social Protection – their Effects on Social Citizenship Rights” took place in Prague on the 16th and 17th of February 2007. 13 experts from 12 different countries had been invited.

The workshop started with the presentation of the conceptual framework by the organizers. Prof. Dr. Evers introduced nine dimensions to be dealt with, such as cultural fundaments, activating policies or social investments with regard to social rights.

After this keynote the floor was open for different theoretical and case-based contributions by the participants. First of all, Prof. Dr. Martin Potucek pointed the attention on divergent discourses (such as academic, administrative, political and civic) about universal social rights. Thus there are obvious obstacles in nurturing public discourses about social rights at the national and EU levels because of different modes of communication. Prof. Dr. Björn Hvinden captured the audience attention to the emergent dynamics of social citizenship in Europe, e.g. to the shift from passive to active citizens. In contrast to Hvinden, Ruth Lister based her contribution on recent developments in the UK. Lister reflected on New Labour’s re-articulation of notions of social citizenship and its social investment philosophy.

A similar approach was chosen by PD Dr. Ingo Bode, who gave a report about social citizenship in Germany, especially with its relevance to unemployment protection, pension provision and entitlements to health care. On the other hand, Prof. Dr. Jean Claude Barbier raised the question ‘Where does the actual gist of ‘activation’ lie?’ In reference to a comparison with France and Denmark Barbier stressed that outcomes of activation strategies must be highly contextualised or rather that there is the challenge to design comparative indicators capable of capturing diversified dimensions.

The peculiar situation with regard to social protection and social rights mirrored the paper of Prof. Dr. Zuzana Kusa. She confronted powers of new discourses (like the magic of the subsidiarity principle) and the weakness of post-communist social/public policy (like discreditable words such as uniformity, equality and redistribution) on the example of Slovakia. A more specific approach pursued Prof. Dr. Bert de Vroom, who analyzed the connection between European Integration, Social Citizenship and the threat of New Social Risks with reference to the case of old age pensions.

The workshop closed with four recommendations for the further development of contributions by Prof. Dr. Anne-Marie Guillemard and Prof. Dr. Adalbert Evers. The questions developed by the organizers read as follows:

- What is the author’s own concept of social citizenship?,
- What can be said about the national context/culture/semantics/discourses to be found with respect to the issue of citizenship?,
- What are the interventions and the policy field to be studied? and
- what are the ‘outcomes’, both in terms of changing provisions, entitlements, arrangements as well as in terms of changing legitimacy/notions/semantics/discourses/?
- Furthermore, there was an agreement on the provisional working title for the planned book project (WP deliverable): ‘Social Citizenship – changing notions and realities’.