

14th Conference „Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe“

Weakening Social Cohesion in Europe? Indicators, Analysis and Policy Implications

Villa Vigoni, Lovenno di Menaggio, October 14-16, 2019

Call for Papers

As a relatively new concept, firstly promoted during the 1990s, social cohesion looks back to a stunning career and is currently widely used in social research as well as in policy discourses. Although still characterized by a certain vagueness as well as a prevailing variety of different notions and definitions, there is obviously a growing body of empirical research on social cohesion, including large scale studies at national and cross-national levels.

Generally, the degree of cohesiveness seems to be the result of two different sets of impacting factors. At one hand features like inequalities, disparities, fragmentations and cleavages are apparently representing potential threats to the cohesiveness of a society or a grouping of societies like the European Union. On the other hand, there are impacting factors and qualities, which are potentially enhancing and fostering social cohesion, such as social relations and ties, fairness, collaboration, a sense of belonging and identity, involvement as well as trust and participation. Both of these categories of - negatively as well as positively - impacting factors apparently need to be taken into consideration when it comes to explain different levels as well as changes in social cohesion.

Currently quite many concerns are raised regarding risks to social cohesion within as well as between European societies. For example, a recent article in the German weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT (3/2018) reports on rising ruptures in the social fabric of societies and uses the picture of a formerly firm ridged ice area, that is being broken into only loosely connected ice floes, seemingly drifting apart inexorably.

Among the most frequently mentioned factors considered to be driving forces of a declining cohesiveness within societies, we find growing income inequalities, processes of large scale immigration, progressively increasing feelings of relative deprivation by various population groups as well as ethnic, political and religious divisions and tensions emerging in numerous European societies.

In recent years also more and more indications of a reduction or an easing of the cohesiveness of the European Union have been observed: The formation of an East-West as well as a North-South division, the decision of the UK to leave the union, strong disagreements in migration policies, disputes and conflicts around the Euro and fiscal policies, to mention just a few.

We are inviting contributions looking at social cohesion as an important topic of social monitoring and reporting from either perspective, within as well as between European societies. More specifically, the

conference seeks to bring together and discuss empirical evidence, allowing to better assess whether or not social cohesion within and between European societies is weakening or declining. If there is a proof of the latter, it would be most desirable to identify the driving forces behind the changes. Moreover contributions addressing issues of conceptualization and measurement of social cohesion may be welcomed as well. Issues to be addressed include the following:

- differences in levels and trends of social cohesion across European societies
- driving forces and risks – objective and subjective – of a declining cohesiveness within and across European societies, such as inequalities, migration, ethnic and religious division and tensions etc.
- the role of trust and identity for social cohesion in Europe
- the relevance of social cohesion in the policy discourse and European policy making
- potential consequences of a lack or decline of social cohesion
- forms and ways of enhancing social cohesion
- measurement of social cohesion: dimensions and indicators

While the conference will be focussed mainly on issues of social cohesion in Europe, there will also be sessions arranged to discuss „recent developments in European social monitoring and reporting“. Contributions presenting new initiatives, projects and releases on social monitoring and reporting in Europe are thus very much welcome as well.

Please submit your abstract (no more than 300 words) to Dr. Heinz-Herbert Noll (hh.noll@t-online.de).

The deadline for submissions is May 15, 2019.

Decisions about the acceptance of submissions will be made by the conference committee: Rob Bijl (SCP, The Hague), Carla Collicelli (CNR, Rome), Peter Farago (formerly FORS, Lausanne), Tadas Leončikas (Eurofound, Dublin), Heinz-Herbert Noll (formerly GESIS, Mannheim), Christian Suter (University Neuchatel), István György Tóth (TARKI, Budapest)

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The conference is kindly supported by:

