

Work Package 4 Multilevel “Arenas” for Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion National Report Germany



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Abbreviations

AI	Active inclusion	
UB II	Unemployment Benefit II	Arbeitslosengeld II
ALMP	Active labour market policies	
BA	Bundesagentur für Arbeit	Federal Employment Agency
BMAS	Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
BMFSFJ	Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend	Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
BMWi	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie	Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology
EAPN	European Anti-Poverty Network	
EU	European Union	
FWA	Freier Wohlfahrtsverband	Free Welfare Association
GWA	Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge	German Association for Public and Private Welfare
LTU	Long-term unemployed	
NRP	National Reform Programme	
NSR	National Social Report	
NPM	New Public Management	
OMC	Open Method of Coordination	
SGB VIII	Sozialgesetzbuch VIII	Eighth Book of the Social Code

List of interviews

Interviewee	Abbreviation	Place, date
Free Welfare Association 1	FW1	Berlin, November 2012
Free Welfare Association 2	FW2	Berlin, November 2012
Free Welfare Association 3	FW3	Berlin, November 2012
Free Welfare Association 4, National network of the EAPN	FW4	Berlin, November 2012
FWA Consortium	FW5	Berlin, January 2013
Free Welfare Association 5	FW6	Berlin, November 2012
German Association for Public and Private Welfare	GWA	Berlin, November 2012
Local Authorities		Telephone interview, January 2013
Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	BMAS 1	Berlin, December 2012
Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	BMAS 2	Berlin, November 2012
Federal Employment Agency	BA	Nuremberg, December 2012
Member of Parliament, Party “Die LINKE”	PO1	Berlin, November 2012
Member of Parliament, Party “FDP”	PO2	Berlin, November 2012
Member of Parliament, Party “Buendnis ‘90/Gruene”	PO3	Berlin, November 2012
Confederation of German Employers' Associations	SP1	Berlin, November 2012
Confederation of German Trade Unions	SP2	Berlin, December 2012
German representative Peer Review “Building a Coordinated Strategy for Parenting Support”		Berlin, January 2013
Thematic expert Peer Review “Building a Coordinated Strategy for Parenting Support”		Telephone Interview, December 2013
European Commission representative		Paris, June 2013
Municipal administration Dortmund	MA1	Dortmund, May 2013
Municipal administration Dortmund	MA2	Dortmund, May 2013
Municipal government Dortmund	MA3	Dortmund, May 2013
Jobcenter Dortmund	LM1	Dortmund, May 2013
Trade union Dortmund	LM2	Dortmund, May 2013
Local branch of Federal Employment Agency Dortmund	LM3	Dortmund, May 2013
Economic development association Dortmund	LM4	Dortmund, May 2013
Social organisation for unemployed Dortmund	DSP1	Dortmund, May 2013

Umbrella organisation of social and welfare associations Dortmund	DSP2	Dortmund, May 2013
Welfare organisation for single parents Dortmund	DSP3	Dortmund, May 2013

Foreword

Reducing poverty and social exclusion is one of the main challenges for ensuring social cohesion in Europe. The research project COPE – Combating Poverty in Europe: Re-organising Active Inclusion through Participatory and Integrated Modes of Multilevel Governance’ – analyses trends of poverty and social exclusion in Europe, and examines the dynamics of minimum income protection policies that potentially help alleviate the risk of poverty in Europe. A particular focus is on the situation of single parents, long-term unemployed and the working poor, who face particular risks of poverty and social exclusion. To what extent have minimum income policies functioned as last resort social security for these three groups, and in what sense can ‘active inclusion’ policies credited with protecting them from poverty and social exclusion?

Co-financed by the European Commission in the 7th Framework Programme, the COPE project unites researchers and stakeholders from six European countries, the UK, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and Norway. Having started in February 2012, COPE runs over a three-year period. COPE’s method is comparative – analysing developments in five European countries (Poland, Germany, UK, Sweden and Italy). Its focus is inherently multi-level, looking in turn at developments at European, national and local level.

Section A: The Europe 2020 Anti-poverty Arena

1. Introduction

When following the current debate in the media, the impression suggests itself that European interference in social policies is highly unwelcome in Germany. Since the European Commission has postulated recently that unemployed EU citizens living in Germany should be eligible to the German minimum income scheme for jobless persons capable of working (the so-called ‘Hartz-IV’ benefits)¹, arguments for defending the German welfare state against suspected ‘social scroungers’ from other Member States and against ‘European meddling’ in very own national policy fields have been among the first and loudest reactions in the political and societal arena (Süddeutsche Zeitung: 2014). However, this German yelp is only a minor aspect of a broader European debate on further steps towards closer integration of Member States’ social security regimes, which is partly perceived as a necessary spill-over after having established free movement of workers and other economic and employment related EU regulations. Though, it is not only the question of harmonisation of social security regimes, but also the challenge to achieve greater social cohesion by integrating the fight against poverty and social exclusion into a greater political framework, which has entered increasingly the European agenda since the late 1990s. In this context, a number of policy instruments and - later on - a comprehensive governance architecture have been developed at the European level in order to achieve greater coordination among the Member States in the field of social and employment policies. Since the EU does not have legislative competences in these fields, a strong focus laid on the so-called ‘soft instruments’ such as reporting, benchmarking, peer reviewing, but as well increasingly on financial support via the EU structural funds.

When reflecting on these developments at the European level, the question arises which effects these tools have on policy making in Germany, where social policies seem to be reclaimed as a very own national field of action? Can we observe an impact of EU policies on policy making, legislation, political debates, public discourses or ideas? These questions shall be addressed in this report with a special focus on anti-poverty policies. Building on the overall research interest and the analytical framework of the COPE-project, we are interested

¹ In January 2014, a statement by the European Commission has reached the German media. According to this statement, the Commission judged the exclusion of EU citizens from the German minimum income scheme for needy jobseekers (Hartz-IV, see below) as inconsistent with EU law. According to the Commission, social protection cannot be automatically denied to EU citizens, although there is also a need for protecting national systems from ‘social protection tourism’. Independently from the nature of the statement, a debate on European interference in German social policies was kicked off in the German media.

in understanding *whether, and in case to what extent, the novel Europe 2020 anti-poverty strategy is leading to the emergence of a multilevel & multi-stakeholder as well as integrated (across policy sectors) arena* (Guidelines WP 4: 2013).

As elaborated by in the guidelines for this report, three main hypotheses regarding the effects and changes at the national level caused by European anti-poverty policies can be formulated:

1. *First, we may expect that, compared to the OMC-Lisbon phase, the Europe 2020 strategy is more likely to produce effects in the political sphere. Accordingly, we assume that the issue of (the fight against) poverty may have become more salient at the domestic level and/or European target/indicators have been more openly discussed - and then accepted or rejected by the various national actors. Although we expect a limited direct influence on policy changes at the national level, in some cases agenda shifts and revision of national legislation may also have resulted from national-supranational interactions within the Europe 2020 framework (NRPs, CSRs).*
2. *Second, at least in theory, we might expect increased cross-sector and cross-departmental coordination – i.e. more integration – in line with the new overarching framework for policy coordination. By contrast, the switch from the Social OMC to Europe 2020 and its implementation should have represented a step back with respect to both multi-level and multi-stakeholder involvement in governance processes.*
3. *Third, we may also expect that, from the first to the third annual cycle, the Europe 2020 arena has become more participatory – with regard to involvement of both stakeholders and levels of government – as well as more integrated mostly due to increased problem pressure in most MS, the above mentioned effects in the political sphere (i.e. our first hypothesis) and supranational actions aimed at reinforce governance mechanisms (Guidelines WP4: 2013).*

These hypotheses shall be tested in the report by adapting a strategy which aims both at capturing the *temporal dimension* of the European integration process in the field of anti-poverty policies and at analysing the procedural and substantive effects of this process in terms of *participation* (among stakeholders and political levels) and *integration* (across policy sectors and programs). For this purpose, we will in a first step provide necessary information on the socio-economic and institutional background in the field, as well as insights on the national process of implementing the ‘antecedent’ of the current EU anti-poverty model, the Open Method of Coordination in the field of social inclusion (OMC/Incl.).

In a next step, we will focus on the launch and the three cycles of national adaption of EU anti-poverty strategies within the European Semester since 2010. After discussing especially actor participation and policy integration at the national level induced by EU policies, we will provide some insights on the role of the European Union for local anti-poverty policies.

In the last sections, we will discuss our findings with regard to the above mentioned hypotheses before concluding with some general remarks on the role of EU policies and instruments in German anti-poverty policies.

The empirical basis of this report consists of a literature review, document analyses and evidences from 29 semi-structured expert interviews conducted with relevant policy makers at the national level and the local level. All interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed following the guidelines of qualitative content analyses (Mayring 2007).

2 The background

Germany's contemporary social security regime is still to some extent shaped by the industrial male-breadwinner model of the German economic miracle period during the 1950's and 1960's – a very sharp, unexpected and sustainable economic growth after World War II. Most reforms in the field of social and employment policies of the last decades still dealt with the heritage of the welfare state model of these times: a highly exclusive labour market regime based on stable employment relations and lifelong continual full-time careers of skilled workers and excluding women, older people, foreigners and disabled persons, who were sustained by their families or the social security institutions. Unemployment protection was built on the premises of this regime: the insurance model provided high, status-protecting benefits to the insiders of the labour market for - due to the good economic performance - mostly short periods. Poverty was only a side issue, mostly dealt with at the local level. The existing minimum income scheme (social assistance) was a de-facto last safety net for only a small group of persons.

However, the ideal model of the German economic miracle began to suffer from increasing unemployment rates and therefore substantial financing problems in the late 1960s. In the following decades, the number of beneficiaries relying on social assistance and unemployment assistance (an income-based benefit after the expiry of unemployment insurance benefits) raised significantly.

As a consequence - and especially after the economic problems caused by the reunification - subsequent reforms aimed at reducing the number of dependent beneficiaries by focusing on active labour market policies and later on by strengthening what has been called the 'activation paradigm': both demanding and enabling labour market measures (Eichhorst/Konle-Seidl 2008) with the aim to integrate formerly excluded groups into the labour market. Poverty reduction had entered the arena as a question of reducing unemployment and guaranteeing a monetary minimum income to the 'outsiders'.

In this chapter, we are going to outline the current German model of social protection and poverty reduction. Here, a special focus will be on the minimum income system for unemployed persons capable of work (introduced by the Hartz-reform-package 2003-2005) in contrast to the formerly existing segmented system of social assistance and unemployment protection. Furthermore, we will depict the relationship between the then existing national model and the European model of fighting poverty, transported via the social inclusion OMC. Here, we are going to discuss the effects of the OMC on German anti-poverty policies on the basis of a literature review, both in terms of potential substantial policy change and more

hidden forms of impact. In the last subsection, the pathway towards the current problem pressure in anti-poverty policies will be outlined: what are the specific challenges for Germany, especially since the beginning of the financial crisis?

2.1 The national “model” to fight poverty

The German social security model experienced a transformation since the late 1990s. Increasing numbers of jobless people and high long-term unemployed rates especially since the reunification were perceived as a crucial societal challenge. However, most measures to confront this challenge were focused on raising employment rates. Social exclusion was not perceived as a societal problem but mainly as a question of joblessness coming along with income poverty (Preunkert 2009: 166). Consequently, the institutional and programmatic reforms (and especially the Hartz-package 2003-2005) since the 1990s strengthened the labour market integration of formerly excluded people and fostered what has been labeled an activation regime (with both demanding and enabling measures, cf. Eichhorst/Konle-Seidl 2008). Passive benefits were meant as a way to prevent income poverty. Social inclusion therefore was discussed as a question of labour market exclusion, without a broader perspective bringing together different aspects of exclusion with other dimensions.

Institutionally, this limited perception of social exclusion was fostered by the separated organisation of several arenas of social and employment policies (Preunkert 2009: 166) before the Hartz reforms. While labour market issues, employment policies and unemployment protection are traditionally designed and governed at the national level, social assistance and social services were local issues, organised at the lower administrative levels. Furthermore, the involved actors differed highly. Employment policies were dominated by social partners (trade unions, employers’ associations and also chambers) and national public authorities. On the other hand, in the field of social assistance and social services, it was mainly Free Welfare Associations, local public authorities and to some extent private providers who were involved in policy design and delivery. Although these “social actors” had large experience in developing and implementing strategies of social inclusion (also in a more holistic and integrated manner), these strategies remained local and highly diverse among different regions and local entities, and did not enter the national sphere for a long time.

The current German minimum income scheme Unemployment Benefit II (UB II, *Arbeitslosengeld II*) reflects the German model of combating (working age) poverty. It was introduced by the Hartz reforms from 2003 to 2005 which “signalled a transition from human

capital oriented labour market policies to a stronger emphasis on activation” (Eichhorst/Marx 2011: 78). The main pillars of the Hartz reforms were the reorganisation of the Federal Employment Agency as well as the related improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of placement (activation), the merger of unemployment assistance and social assistance/minimum income protection and the continuation and enhancement of flexible employment (flexibility) (Zirra 2010: 223). Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of the unemployment protection and the minimum income schemes in Germany before and after the Hartz reforms.

Table 1: Old and new unemployment protection and minimum income schemes in D

Old System (until 2004)	New System (since 2005)
<p>1) <i>Unemployment insurance benefits</i>: funded through insurance contributions, earnings-related, limited duration, relative status maintenance</p>	<p>1) <i>Unemployment insurance benefits I (UB I)</i>: funded through insurance contributions, earnings-related, limited duration, not means-tested, relatively status maintenance</p>
<p>2) <i>Unemployment assistance</i>: tax funded, earnings-related, means-tested, infinite duration, relative status maintenance</p>	<p><u>Minimum income scheme</u> Consisting of</p>
<p>3) <i>Social assistance</i>: tax-funded, means-tested, flat rate, infinite duration; for persons not entitled to other benefits (also with working capabilities)</p>	<p>} 2) <i>Unemployment benefits II (UB II)</i>: tax-financed, means-tested, flat rate, after expiry of ALG I (and temporary supplement), infinite duration</p>
	<p>3) <i>Social assistance, social allowance, minimum income</i>: tax-financed, means-tested, flat-rate, infinite duration. Minimum income schemes for children, older people, disabled and other needy persons not able to work and not entitled to other benefits</p>

Source: Zimmermann/Fuertes 2014, partly based on Eichhorst Marx 2011

According to the slogan “demanding and enabling”, UB II shall provide labour market and social services as well as minimum income benefits for working age persons in needy households in order to finish benefit dependency and to exit poverty sustainably. On the one hand, employability of beneficiaries should be improved by identifying multiple barriers to employment that should be met by taking part in labour market as well as social services (enabling elements). On the other hand, the tightening of criteria of reasonable work and the

implementation of a sanction regime (demanding elements) were promoted. Compared to the EU concept of active inclusion (AI) which proposes the combination of all three elements – sufficient minimum income, provision of active labour market policies (ALMP) and broad access to social services – UB II accomplishes to integrate the redistributive and the activation pillar (and limitedly also the link to social services) of the AI concept.

In order to effectively implement these interlinked measures, a number of institutional linkages between the formerly separated fields of unemployment protection and social assistance were introduced. Here, the local Jobcenters as the benefit providing organisations for UB II-beneficiaries are the most relevant change in the governance architecture. In the majority of the cases², the local Employment Agencies and municipal public authorities jointly govern the Jobcenters. This also leads to closer cooperation of formerly less interlinked actors. A closer collaboration between social partners, chambers, public authorities, Free Welfare Associations and also private providers has been institutionalised via the so-called Jobcenter advisory board. The introduction of social services into the catalogue of labour market measures also requires a closer collaboration of a number of actors at the local level. At the national level, social policy actors such as Free Welfare Association have also achieved to gain more relevance in policy design in the field of UB II.

Another aspect of the Hartz-reforms relates to the internal management structure of the Employment Agencies, and also the (joint venture) Jobcenters. The ‘wave’ of New Public Management (NPM) since the 1980s had indeed shaped public discourses in Germany, and several governance instruments such as controlling, budgeting, annual planning etc. were introduced also in the labour market administration since the 1990s. This process has been strengthened by the Hartz reforms. Also in the field of UB II, management by objectives, benchmarking and peer-reviewing were established and highly influence the everyday work in the Jobcenters.

2.2 Supranational-national relationship within the social inclusion OMC

The introduction of the OMC in Germany took place to a time where social inclusion was not discussed as a specific topic on its own but mainly in the context of labour market exclusion

² Two different forms of organising service and benefit provision of UB II nowadays exist in Germany. In the majority of the cases, the local Employment Agency and the municipality cooperate in the so-called ‘joint ventures’ (*gemeinsame Einrichtungen*). Legal difficulties had to be solved until the option of this joint responsibility was considered as constitutionally. An amount of municipalities (‘accredited institutions’, *zugelassener kommunaler Träger*) were allowed to manage UB II on their own, without sharing the responsibility with the Employment Agency.

and income poverty (Preunkert 2009: 166). This narrow perception of social exclusion and the above outlined institutional and organizational segmentation needs to be taken into account when analyzing the introduction of the OMC Inclusion into German policy making at the national level. Both the institutional and the programmatic fit between the national model to fight poverty and the European model transported via the OMC can be described as somehow rather low by this time due to this organizational segmentation and the narrow perception of social exclusion. However, the path towards higher congruence and therefore an easier adaptation for European social policies after the OMC was already under construction - although not because of European pressure but mainly due to national developments (cf. Aurich/Schüttpelz 2011: 86). Here, the Hartz-reforms (2003-2005) can be mentioned as a crucial milestone. As outlined above, they introduced several governance structures which facilitate the implementation of EU social and employment policies after the Lisbon decade and provide a stronger integrated (but still limited to some extent) approach on social inclusion, more in line with the European model (see also section 6).

However, the question remains which effect the social inclusion OMC had on national policy coordination in Germany. In the literature, we can find the consistent observation that EU influence on substantial policy making and the subsequent reforms can be judged as almost non-existent (Preunkert 2009, Kröger 2008, Büchs/Friedrich 2005). As Weishaupt (2013) discusses it, the *overall negative assessment of the OMC in Germany is explained by three factors: the federal political system, the Bismarckian welfare state structures, and – as a result of these structural conditions – most political actors' resistance to EU-level coordination.* (Weishaupt 2013: 180). Nevertheless, the social inclusion OMC was definitely not entirely irrelevant in Germany. Especially for non-state actors, Preunkert (2009: 180) identifies that the introduction of the OMC led to new cognitive frameworks and increasing multi-level contacts. Several NGOs in the field of social policies criticized the national approach towards social inclusion as being too narrow and lopsided. They made use of the European model in order to underline their position, and also adapted the European arguments on social inclusion by intensively engaging in the political debates on the NAPs (Weishaupt 2013: 189). This led to more integrated national perception of social exclusion rather than the previous focus on monetary exclusion (Preunkert and Zirra 2009, 196). Over the time, a number of Free Welfare Associations and other NGOs achieved to strengthen their multi-level contacts and build up closer collaboration with actors at the European level (Preunkert 2009: 180).

However, although such a reframing of national discourses signifies a relevant effect of the OMC, this did not imply an impact on national policy design and reform processes. Preunkert (2009: 181) points out that inside the administration, the European targets of the social inclusion OMC were used as resources for the development of an own definition of social exclusion in the national poverty- and wealth report. However, this did not have any impact of further political debates and decisions: the implementation of the social inclusion OMC got caught in the administration and failed to enter the political arena.

To sum up, we can state that the social inclusion OMC has achieved to frame discourses and perceptions of social exclusion mainly in the non-state arena. This process took place via the reporting, peer review and benchmarking process, where NGOs and other actors actively participated. Nevertheless, an impact on substantial policy making by the social inclusion OMC in Germany cannot be observed.

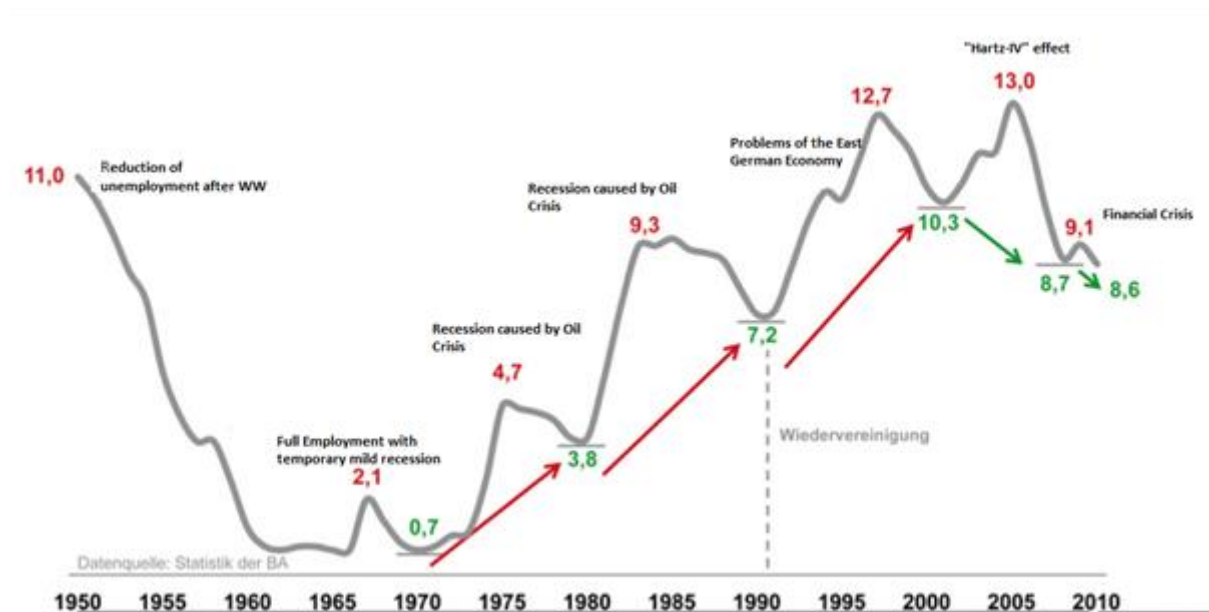
2.3 Problem pressure

After reunification in 1990, the German economy experienced a short boom (GDP growth 5.3% in 1990), which was quickly followed by a strong recession. Unemployment rates skyrocketed due to adjustment problems of the East Germany economy. As a result, claims on the social security system rose strongly. This struggle with 'old' challenges of reunification strongly influenced the socio-economic performance of the following decades. In the course of the postsocialist transition processes of the East German economy, the unemployment rate of the population of the former GDR nearly duplicated between 1991 and 1997 and is still twice as high as in West Germany. Despite a slight recovery in the early 2000s, the problem pressure remained very high, especially with regards to the increasing long-term- and structural unemployment.

The Hartz-reforms 2003-2004 aimed at tackling this increasing (long-term) unemployment by a number of programmatic and organisational changes in labour market policies, as outlined above. However, in a first step, unemployment rates increased due to a statistical effect as a result of the merging of social assistance and unemployment assistance.³

³ A very high number of persons capable of work (according to the criteria of the new unemployment benefits II scheme) had been social assistance recipients before the Hartz-reforms, and therefore not listed as unemployed. After the merging of the two schemes, they were registered as unemployed, which led to the so-called 'statistical Hartz-IV-effect'.

Figure 1: Unemployed in % of the dependent civil labour force in Germany 1950 - 2010



Source: Federal Employment Agency 2011:8

In the Great Recession, the global economic crisis in 2008/2009 impacted negatively on the German export-oriented industry and triggered the worst recession since WW II (2009: GDP - 5.1 %). In the beginning, the unemployment rate rose sharply, especially for youths. However, in contrast to many other European countries, the German economy recovered very quickly (which has perhaps prematurely been termed the German job miracle). GDP growth in 2010 was at 4.2% and a moderate unemployment rate is even decreasing albeit slowly. The employment rate increased by about 5 percentage points between 2000 and 2010 (Eurostat) and has not decreased during the financial crisis; mostly due to instruments like short-time work.⁴ In addition to the focus on short-time work, Germany adopted further measures to face the economic crisis. Mostly, they aimed at strengthening the economic growth by public investments in transport, education, technology and other sectors. Instead of cutting unemployment benefits, the state invested in tax reductions, lower social insurance contributions and better qualification especially for older and low-qualified workers. Austerity was explicitly not the aim for Germany.

⁴ Short-time work is a well-established labour market instrument in Germany since the beginning of the last century. In times of temporary recession, employers can reduce their staff costs by shortening the working hours. Employees suffering from an income reduction due to short-time work are entitled to short-term-work-benefits, paid by the Employment Agencies out of the social insurance scheme. This measure aims at preventing dismissals due to temporary economic recessions. In February 2009, a Federal Law on Securing Employment and stability in Germany was implemented which included a broader scope of benefits' entitlement and duration for short-time workers.

Table 2: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Germany 2007-2013

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
GDP in %	3.3	1.1	-5.1	4.2	3.0	0.7	0.4 (projected)

Source: Eurostat

From a general perspective, this path towards stabilising the employment situation by investments in economic growth was highly successful. Germany experienced only moderate declines of employment rates. However, the success was not only based on internal efforts but as well on Germany's role as a leading export nation. Other states' fiscal policies to stimulate demand turned out to be Germany's benefit. However, the public debts increased, but in a moderate way compared to other Euro countries. Here again, export played a highly relevant role and Germany benefitted from other states' stabilising programmes, which shows the German dependency on world trade (Dauderstätt 2013). Although Germany is still performing very well in the Eurozone crisis, this dependency on export could lead to grave problems.

Furthermore, the exceptional economic performance in the crisis had - in combination with a number of flexibilisation measures in the previous reform process - some serious drawbacks with regard to social conditions (Faik: 18). As Table 3 shows, poverty (risk) and social exclusion are increasing, according to the EU2020 headline indicators. The overall at-risk-of-poverty rates which include all persons with a household net income of less than 60 % of the national median have increased sharply in the past decade from 10 % in 2000 to 15.8 % in 2010 (see Table 4). Almost every sixth person is at risk of poverty in Germany. Until 2006, poverty rates were considerably below the EU 15 and the EU 27 ratios. Since 2007, German poverty rates are slightly above the average.

Table 3: EU2020 indicators on poverty and social exclusion⁵

Year	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	15022	16345	16217	15962	16074	15909
Low Work Intensity	7294	7044	6538	6695	6637	5866
At risk of Poverty Rate	9960	12389	12590	12648	12814	13030
Severe material deprivation	3733	4442	4360	3672	4323	3937

Source: Eurostat

Furthermore, despite increasing employment rates, long-term unemployment is still the most urging challenge for German labour market policies. Although the share of long-term unemployed of the total active population is decreasing since 2006, Germany has with almost

⁵ In thousand persons

45% still a very high share of long-term unemployed among all unemployed persons compared to other European countries (see Table 4).

Table 4: Long-term unemployment as share of total unemployment 1995-2012⁶

Year	Germany	UK	Italy	Sweden	Poland	EU 15	EU 27
1995	48.7	43.5	54.3	20.6	-	47.8	-
2000	51.5	27.8	61.3	30.7	44.6	45.4	46.4
2005	53.0	20.9	49.9	-	57.7	41.9	46.1
2010	47.4	32.6	48.4	18.6	31.1	39.9	39.9
2011	48.0	33.4	51.9	19.6	37.2	42.3	42.9
2012	45.5	34.7	53.0	19.0	40.3	43.9	44.4

Source: Eurostat

On average, every second unemployed person has faced this situation for more than 12 months. The relatively low monthly exit rates of UB II (3.7 %) and the high shares of long-term beneficiaries (68%) (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2012) indicate that the longer unemployed persons are outside the labour market the more difficult it becomes to get them back into work. Furthermore, the number of persons working in ‘atypical’ jobs (short-term contracts, part-time work, agency work, self-employment etc.) has increased significantly. Although this alone is not alarming, analyses show that in-work poverty is on the rise in Germany (BZ-Artikel). High wage inequality is ascribed to an increasing low-paid sector. (Schmid/Stein S: 36ff.) A growing share of UB II recipients is not jobless, but either working in a standard (subject to social security contributions) job with a salary not sufficient for life maintenance or in a ‘Minijob (low working hours, no social insurance contributions). While in 2007, the share of working UB II beneficiaries (of a total of all UB II beneficiaries capable of working) was at 23%, in 2012 it was at almost 30% (see Table 5).

Table 5: Working UB II beneficiaries

	UB II beneficiaries capable of working	Working UB II beneficiaries	working beneficiaries as % of beneficiaries capable of working
2007	5.277.639	1.221.130	23,14
2008	5.011.542	1.324.059	26,42
2009	4.909.122	1.325.519	27,00
2010	4.894.265	1.381.457	28,23
2011	4.615.520	1.354.702	29,35
2012	4.443.094	1.324.443	29,81

Source: Federal Employment Agency

⁶ Long-term unemployment is defined as unemployment with duration of 12 months and more; population aged 15-64

To sum up, Germany's relatively good economic performance during the economic and financial crisis is reflected by comparatively low unemployment rates. However, a relatively high share of long-term unemployment and increasing at-risk-of-poverty rates show a twofold situation, caused by drawbacks of labour market flexibilisation, low-paid sectors and de-facto wage subsidies by the unemployment protection system.

3 An iterative process: the European Semester and anti-poverty strategies

3.1 Europe 2020's genetic moment

In 2010, the topic of "Europe 2020" was debated four times in Germany's national parliament, the Bundestag, and its committees: on March 4-5 after the first presentation of the concept by the European Commission; on March 24-25 during the first consultations of the European Council regarding Europe 2020; on May 19-20 after the Federal Government informed the Bundestag about the results of the meeting of the European Council; on June 9-10 after the 3019th council meeting for Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (ESPCO) that decided about the three poverty indicators. The (non-public) consultations of the parties in the Bundestag with regard to Europe 2020 have been held in the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union (*Ausschuss für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union*). Since this is an integrative cross-cutting committee (*Querschnittsausschuss*) the topic of Europe 2020 have also been discussed in all other relevant committees of the Bundestag, but only the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union prepared a recommended resolution and report (*Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht*, BT-Drs. 17/2015). The position of the Conservative-liberal coalition (CDU/CSU, FDP) being in line with the position of the Federal Government as well as the single positions of the opposition (SPD, LINKE, Bündnis90/Grüne) have not changed during that period. While the Conservative-liberal coalition supported the first three headline targets (employment; R&D / innovation; climate change / energy), it rejected the social dimension (education; poverty / social exclusion) of the Europe 2020 strategy from the very beginning, in particular a definite target of reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate. Furthermore, the coalition repeatedly argued that social policy was and should stay the exclusive competence of the member states (BT-Drs. 17/2015). Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) declared in her government statement on March 25, 2010:

I do not want to conceal the fact that the consultation of the EU 2020 Strategy will have an issue today, to which I will not give any support for a quantitative target. I mean the fight against poverty in Europe. Of course: Everybody wants to fight poverty, no one will accept it. (...) In addition: As far as poverty reduction can be achieved by more growth, it belongs to the new European Strategy 2020. But – that is important to me - poverty reduction is much more than economic growth. It is a socio-political task. This is - I remember the principle of subsidiarity - with good reason a matter of the Member States. We should leave it that way. (Angela Merkel, CDU, government statement, Bundestag, March 25, 2010)

With regard to questions of governance they emphasised to clearly distinguish between the Stability and Growth Pact and Europe 2020. Additionally, the coalition emphasised the at-risk-of-poverty rate as an unsuitable indicator to measure poverty since a reduction of the at-risk-of-poverty rate as a relative measurement would not necessarily reflect an increase of individual incomes. They also complained that this indicator did not consider social services. Hence, the comparability of results across member states could not be assured (BT-Drs. 17/2015). Gabriele Molitor (FDP) underlined this argument in her Bundestag speech on May 20, 2010:

In view of the planned reduction of the number of people at risk of poverty, I can only warn to reflect progress in poverty reduction solely by an overview of the income distribution. Everyone in this House is for social inclusion and combating poverty. (...) However, we, the CDU/CSU and FDP, reject the target of an at-risk-of-poverty rate as proposed by the Commission (Applause from the FDP and the CDU/CSU). An exclusively quantitatively formulated target of poverty reduction target does not say anything about the how of the reduction. The risk of poverty rate ignores the non-monetary social benefits, such as preventive measures for ensuring access to education, childcare facilities and support for single parents. At this point clarity on the formulation of targets is essential; by the way, other Member States see this the same way. Moreover, it is important to ensure that the area of social policy falls within the competence of the Member States. (Gabriele Molitor, FDP, Bundestag speech, May 20, 2010)

Overall, they argued that reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate would not be controllable and would not change the situation of poor people. The latter could only be achieved by social policy focusing on social services like childcare and support for single parents. As a

consequence, the Federal Government contributed to the ESPCO decision of introducing three poverty indicators (at-risk-of-poverty rate, material deprivation, population living in very low work intensity households) instead of one (at-risk-of-poverty rate) (BT-Drs. 17/2015).

In contrast, the opposition (Social-Democratic Party, the Left, the Greens) supported the Europe 2020 proposal of an anti-poverty target at the EU level, also because they hoped that this would entail a national target of reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate. Such a national target would have forced the Federal Government to develop a proper anti-poverty strategy which has always been one of the opposition's demands. Moreover, the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) demanded more ambitious targets with regard to the social dimension of Europe 2020, in particular agreements on minimum wages and precise guidelines to reduce poverty, as well as a more binding character of these targets through control and sanctions which could be assured by a stronger involvement of national parliaments. They argued that the Lisbon strategy had failed because of its non-binding character giving member states the opportunity to justify policies already implemented instead of amending them (ibid.). Eva Hoegl (SPD) underlined in her Bundestag speech on June 10, 2010, the importance of the Europe 2020 headline target of reducing the EU at-risk-of-poverty rate:

Therefore, it is an evidence of incapacity, if the Federal Government still fights against anchoring the combat against poverty as a common goal. I am very pleased that the Federal Government will have a terrific defeat at the European Council; because the European Council will adopt poverty reduction as a target next week. It will decide that the number of people affected by poverty is to be reduced by 20 million. This is a defeat of the Federal Government. The Federal Government has done an unworthy numbers game with indicators. I will appreciate it if the European Council with the support of other Member States adopts a clear commitment to the combat against poverty in Europe. (...)
We want to learn from the mistakes of the Lisbon strategy and do not want to have a bureaucratic strategy again, that no one understands. (Eva Hoegl, SPD, Bundestag speech, June 10, 2010)

The Left (LINKE) complained about the short duration of the consultation process. They demanded a more comprehensive evaluation of the Lisbon strategy and a more ambitious anti-poverty target (BT-Drs. 17/2015). Alexander Ulrich (Die LINKE) referred in his Bundestag speech on June 10, 2010, to the Lisbon strategy as a failed strategy:

The strategy "Europe 2020" is the continuation of the failed Lisbon strategy. The consultations of the last weeks and months have shown: The Federal Government and its supporting parliamentary groups are not able and not

willing to gain knowledge from the failure of the Lisbon Strategy. For what was the Lisbon Strategy? That was the flexibility of labour markets, more precarious employment, privatization and deregulation. (...) It was Franz Müntefering [Federal Minister of Social and Labour Affairs 2005-2007, SPD, N.P.] - I mention it again - who has declared the Agenda 2010 and Hartz IV as measures in the context of the national implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. I am relatively sure that this Federal Government will declare the austerity package this week again [one third of it, 80 billion €, concerned the budget for social and labour affairs, N.P.] to a measure of the national implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. Therefore, it is not by accident that you cannot get involved with targets of poverty reduction. After all, who drives a strategy, where things are further cut for the poorest of the poor, cannot stand up at the European level and say, we want to combat poverty. (Alexander Ulrich, Die LINKE, Bundestag speech, June 10, 2010)

The Greens (Buendnis '90/Gruene) also pronounced themselves for a longer consultation process and a more comprehensive evaluation of the Lisbon strategy. They complained about the absence of guidelines for the implementation of the national Europe 2020 targets (BT-Drs. 17/2015). Manuel Sarrazin (Buendnis '90/Gruene) also welcomed the introduction of the overall Europe 2020 anti-poverty target:

The strategy is not as ambitious as it should be, but it is still streets ahead of you. (...) Ms. Hoegl [SPD, N.P.] stated that you had to suffer a defeat regarding the target of poverty reduction. We are delighted that you had to accept this defeat. Even with regard to the education target you had to give way to some extent. We expect that at this point measures are actually taken to satisfy the European demands. (Manuel Sarrazin, Buendnis '90/Gruene, Bundestag speech, June 10, 2010)

Overall, the Federal Government has put efforts in torpedoing the setting of ambitious targets for domestic policies (Interviewee BMAS 2). As a result, the targets for Germany are rather mild, particularly in comparison to those European countries that were affected by the economic crisis since 2007 more negatively than Germany (Interviewee SP1, Confederation of German Employers' Associations). The Europe 2020 strategy consists of five headline targets: promoting employment, improving the conditions for innovation, research, and development, achieving the targets for climate protection and energy, improving educational attainment as well as promoting social inclusion, in particular by reducing poverty. The latter defines the goal to lift 20 million people in the EU out of poverty and social exclusion until

2020. This target entails three indicators from which each member is free to choose the most appropriate one(s) in order to define its/their national Europe 2020 target(s): (i) at-risk-of-poverty rate (threshold: 60% median income), (ii) material deprivation (at least 4 out of the 9 items of the EU-deprivation list), and (iii) share of people living in very low work intensity households (Copeland and Daly 2012: 279-280). The German Europe 2020 anti-poverty target is to reduce the number of long-term unemployed by 330,000 resp. 660,000 persons living in such households. The setting of this domestic anti-poverty target can be interpreted as a strategic choice of the Federal Government to enforce their basic position of not pursuing a strategy directed at reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate, but nonetheless meeting more or less the requirements made by Europe 2020. As mentioned above, the Federal Government had a focus on long-term unemployment resulting from the intention to avoid commitments on poverty reduction and to rather set a concrete target that could be achieved in the medium term of two years. At first glance, the domestic anti-poverty target of reducing the number of long-term unemployed people by 330,000 resp. 660,000 persons living in such households does not correspond to the Europe 2020's third anti-poverty indicator of reducing the number of people living in very low work intensity households resp. in quasi-jobless households⁷. In order to be consistent with this indicator the Federal Government took the term "jobless household" and defined it as a household that have not earned income for the last 12 months and suffer long-term unemployment. In addition, it was argued to conservatively calculate with two persons per jobless household on average. As a result, reducing the number of long-term unemployed persons by 330,000 would mean to reduce the number of persons living in jobless households by 660,000.

3.2 The three Europe 2020 cycles: Planning, reporting, recommending, negotiating

The first cycle: 2010-2011

The first Annual Growth Survey (AGS) in 2011 pointed to the far reaching consequences of the financial crisis since 2007 and concluded that all efforts had to be put into strengthening the recovery in the short-term. Three key measures were identified. First, there was a need for a rigorous fiscal consolidation for enhancing macro-economic stability, e.g. reining public debt and repairing the financial sector. Second, labour market reforms for higher employment had to be initiated, including the reduction of wage taxes, the enhancement of flexibility and the improvement of social protection schemes like retirement schemes and

⁷ The third anti-poverty indicator refers to the population living in very low work intensity (quasi-jobless) households. This includes people aged 0-59, living in households, where working-age adults (18-59) work less than 20% of their total work potential during the past year.

unemployment benefit systems. Third, measures to enhance growth like lowering non-wage labour costs, supporting workforce adaptability and promoting self-employment had to be made. The 2011 AGS also mentioned the progress towards Europe 2020. It was mentioned that the member states had worked on setting national targets and on developing strategies for their implementation (AGS 2011).

The NRP reported about Germany's Europe 2020 targets. As mentioned in section 3.1., Germany translated the third indicator of people living in very low work intensity households into a domestic target of reducing the number of long-term unemployed people by adapting the definition of "jobless household". With reference to long-term unemployment as one of the main reasons for poverty and social exclusion, Germany set the national target to reduce the number of the long-term unemployed by 20 percent until 2020. Using the reference value of 1.63 million long-term unemployed in 2008 the target thus defines a decline of 330,000 long-term unemployed respectively 660,000 persons living in such households (NRP 2011: 7-8). Another important Europe 2020 target has been to foster employment. The national target of Germany lies above the overall EU target of an employment rate of 75 % among persons aged 20-64, not least because Germany already in 2009 had an employment rate of 74.8 %. Thus, Germany set a national target of an employment rate of 77 % for persons aged 20-64 and additionally decided to increase the employment rate of older persons (aged 55-64) up to 60 % and the employment rate of women up to 73 % by 2020 (ibid.: 5). Instead of focusing on reducing the national at-risk-of-poverty rate which is not even mentioned in the 2011 NRP, the national anti-poverty strategy mainly consists of improving the institutional conditions for labour market integration in order to reduce unemployment rates and to increase employment rates. The 2011 NRP lists several measures undertaken in the past to increase the labour market participation of women, especially single parents, and of population segments at the margins, particularly long-term unemployed, migrants and disabled people (ibid.: 23-25; 39-45). It furthermore mentions that additional qualitative targets to combat poverty have to be considered, like improving educational opportunities and opportunities for social inclusion of vulnerable children and young people, preventing old age poverty and fostering social and labour market integration of migrants (NRP 2011: 8). However, no suggestions or guidelines are provided detailing these targets.

Particularly the representatives of the Free Welfare Associations (FWAs) and the national network of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) confirmed that the domestic Europe 2020 targets regarding the social dimension, especially the national anti-poverty target, are

not ambitious at all⁸. Hence, no further strategies have to be developed in order to reduce the number of long-term unemployed persons by 330,000 because the policies already implemented are sufficient to achieve this aim:

These trifles with 330,000 long-term unemployed, this rate of school leavers which they want to cut by only ten percent which is not ambitious at all. There are no particular efforts made in order to achieve these targets. On the one hand, long-term unemployment which is regulated by itself because 300,000 is not a number (...) But I do not know what is cause and what is effect. I do not think that measures are implemented to achieve these [Europe 2020] targets or that the definition of these targets induces any action, but it is done anyway and has to be done anyway, more or less successful. And that's why these targets were selected because there is absolutely no great ambition by this government to combat poverty. (Interviewee FW5)

The European Commission also criticized that the aim of reducing the number of long-term unemployed only covered “a very small fraction of the 16.2 million people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion” and that it was not very ambitious since in-work poverty is increasing in Germany (SWP 2011: 16). Furthermore, the Commission pointed out that even though the number of long-term unemployed people had decreased significantly since and due to the introduction of the Hartz reforms, Germany still faced persistent long-term unemployment and had difficulties with labour market integration of this group (ibid.: 15). It was recommended to improve “equitable access to education and training systems and by taking further steps to reduce the high tax wedge in a budgetary neutral way and improve work incentives for persons with low income perspectives”, to increase the number of childcare facilities and all-day schools as well as to reduce tax disincentives for second earners (CSR 2011: C212/12).

The second cycle: 2011-2012

The AGS 2012 stated that economic recovery has come to a standstill. Compared to 2011 some progress has been made with regard to fiscal consolidation and labour market reforms, but progress with regard to growth-enhancing measures has been slow. It identified five priorities for 2012: pursuing differentiated growth-friendly fiscal consolidation, restoring normal lending to the economy, promoting growth and competitiveness for today and tomorrow, tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis, and modernising

⁸ Most of our interviewees at the national level were not able to give detailed statements on this issue since ministries, social partners and parties have units specialised on affairs of the EU. Our interviewees were primarily chosen to give account on aspects of national minimum income protection.

public administration (AGS 2012: 3). Moreover, the national targets set by the member states were assessed as insufficient to meet the five Europe 2020 headline targets.

In 2012, Germany reported that the number of long-term unemployed people had already decreased by 15 percentage points respectively 240,000 persons in 2010 which came along with increasing employment rates. In detail, the employment rate for persons aged 20-64 has risen to 74.9 %, the figures for older workers to 57.7 % and those for women to 69.6 % by 2010 (NRP 2012: 8, 12). The NRP accounts a number of actions done in the prior year. The Act to Improve the Chances of Integration in the Labour Market gave Jobcentres greater scope for integrating the long-term unemployed. The second Labour Market Instruments Re-Orientation Act in 2011 introduced instruments of active labour market policy that had been evaluated and re-designed in order to make them more efficient and effective. It was furthermore stated that “the Federal Government and the Laender developed various strategies and concepts to promote social inclusion and combat poverty, especially among children, young people, women, single parents and elderly people” and that “integration into the labour market is an essential element of these initiatives” (ibid.: 40). This refers to the qualitative targets of combating poverty of most vulnerable groups by labour market integration mentioned in the 2011 NRP. These concepts include the National Action Plan (building on the 2007 National Integration Plan) describing how to facilitate the integration of migrants into the labour market and the National Action Plan entitled “Our Path to an Inclusive Society” (*“Unser Weg in eine inklusive Gesellschaft”*) implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ibid.: 41). In addition, the report makes reference to the new calculation method of UB II standard rates.

The Commission commented that not all labour market groups could benefit equally from these positive labour market developments, in particular low-wage and low-skilled workers, migrants as well as persistent long-term unemployed. Referring to the Labour Market Instruments Reorientation Act of 2009 that entailed cuts of federal funding, in particular for labour market programs and instruments for long-term unemployed, the Commission demanded that Germany had ensured that this would not diminish the chances for labour market integration of the remaining long-term unemployed (SWD 2012: 16). Moreover, they criticised that the share of female full-time employment was rather low and that the lack of all-day childcare facilities and schools did impede the improvement of full-time employment among women with children. Furthermore, the forthcoming introduction of the childcare allowance “*Betreuungsgeld*” (child care subsidy), which is given to parents that take care for dependent children under the age of 3 years at home instead of giving them to a childcare facility, was identified as an additional disincentive for labour market participation of parents

(ibid.: 13-14). The Commission recommended to “maintain appropriate activation and integration measures, in particular for the long-term unemployed”, to take measures helping to raise educational achievements of disadvantage groups and to increase the availability of fulltime childcare facilities and all-day schools (CSR 2012: 10).

The 2012 National Social Report (2012) mainly includes what is already reported in the 2012 NRP. Long-term unemployment is identified as the main reason for poverty and employment as the master key to combat poverty. It presents the quantitative Europe 2020 anti-poverty target of reducing the number of long-term unemployed people as well as the qualitative aim of tackling poverty and social exclusion of women and the most vulnerable groups (young and old age persons, migrants, disabled people). The report mentions certain measures and programs implemented in the past that can help to achieve these aims, e.g. measures and programs improving activation and access to vocational training, giving special support for single parents, young and old people as well as increasing the number of childcare facilities (NSR 2012: 13-18). It states that the share of people being dependent on minimum income protection has diminished from 9.8 % to 8.9 % resp. by 800.000 persons from 2007 to 2011 (ibid.: 12). Although the report does not contain any information about the concrete at-risk-of-poverty rate or indicators of inequality, it notices that the at-risk-of poverty has remained “more or less constant” and that the increase of income inequality has halted since the introduction of UB II in 2005 (ibid.: 4). Furthermore, the NSR addresses the issue of in-work poverty by describing measures for its reduction, i.e. amounts of exemption for UB II in-work beneficiaries lifting their income above the social minimum threshold and the existence of minimum wages for certain branches (ibid.: 18).

In contrast to the NRPs which were assessed by an interviewee as “more progressive in certain parts” (excluding the part of the report with regard to social policy) (Interviewee BMAS 2), the National Social Report (NSR) can be seen as a “statement of accounts” (Interviewee BMAS 2) that does not provide a national strategy for future action in order to combat poverty, but that reports about what domestic social policy has done in the past.

The emphasis of the report has strongly been on the past. In other words it always says what has been done, but it does not contain what is about to be done. (...) Otherwise it only states, as I have already said, measures that have happened in the past, but it states no future plans. (Interviewee FW4)

The European Anti-Poverty Network commented that “the concept of social inclusion is not fully pursued” as long as Germany focused only on labour market integration of long-term unemployed people (EAPN 2012: 63). It was recommended that fostering employment had to be combined with “existence-securing wages and obligation to contribute to social insurance”

(ibid.: 7). Moreover, the EAPN suggested to provide a more comprehensive approach to measure poverty by including more information on participation and periods spent in the labour market as well as considering further factors like the at-risk-of-poverty rate and material deprivation. Finally, the social integration of disadvantaged groups had to be improved by making more financial means available (ibid.).

The third cycle: 2012-2013

The 2013 AGS assessed the five priorities recommended in the 2012 AGS as fruitful and suggested continuing that strategy at the national and the EU level in 2013. These priorities should focus on delivering jobs and growth with a special emphasis on fairness. It was furthermore underlined that the EU labour market situation, in particular the high level of youth unemployment, called for an urgent response (AGS 2013).

In 2013, Germany declared that it had reduced the number of long-term unemployed by 27 percentage points between 2008 and 2011 and thus exceeded its national Europe 2020 target of promoting social inclusion and reducing poverty. This was particularly explained with the Labour Market Instruments Reorientation Act of 2009 which gave greater leeway to the local level in order to provide tailored labour market services that meet individual needs (NRP 2013: 25). In addition, the employment rate for persons aged 20-64 has increased to 76.3 %, the one for older persons to 59.9 % and the one for women to 71.1 % by 2011 showing that Germany has almost accomplished its Europe 2020 targets regarding fostering employment (ibid.: 17). Besides meeting the quantitative target of reducing the number of long-term unemployed persons, it was stated (as in the 2011 and 2012 NRPs) that Germany “is also working towards several qualitative goals to reduce the risk of poverty” (NRP 2013: 26) like improving social inclusion for children, disabled and old-age persons as well as migrants. Single parents were highlighted as a group that is strongly affected by poverty. The Federal Government therefore initiated special programs aiming at improving or stabilising labour market integration of single parents. The new focus on single parents went back to the Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) who had been the former Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2005-2009) and was especially aware of the specific situation and problems of single parents.

The Commission criticised that “further efforts are needed” to include the remaining long-term unemployed, even though the commissioners acknowledged that Germany had done better in integrating them into the labour market (SWD 2013: 16-17). All in all, the comments again pointed to the fact that some groups were excluded from the positive developments of the labour market; including the rising wages.

Overall, the national reporting has been the same over the three cycles. They informed about the achievements regarding the Europe 2020 targets and listed several related measures implemented in the past. We found no evidence that the recommendations by the Commission led to any changes in the subsequent reporting.

4 EU2020: actor participation and integrated actions to combat poverty

4.1 Actor Participation

Several actors have been involved in the preparation of the NRPs and NSRs. While the NRPs are developed under the lead of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie, BMWi), the NSRs are at the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, BMAS). The governments of the federal states are involved in the preparation of both reports, either via the federal states' Committee of the Conference of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and Conference of Ministers of Health, in the case of the NSR, or via the federal states' Conferences of Specialised Ministers and Joint Science Conference, for the NRP.

The BMAS invited several actors involved in the making and implementation of social policy to a hearing in order to discuss the preparation of the 2012 NSR-NRP. Since it was the first time that such a hearing took place it was an improvement to the situation in 2011. For the preparation of the 2013 NRP the BMAS continued this kind of stakeholder involvement. There is no official document giving reasons for the inclusion of such a hearing in the process of preparing the NRP-NSR in cooperation with several actors. A similar procedure known as "Social Monitoring" (Sozialmonitoring) is institutionalised at the domestic level. Twice a year the BMAS as representative of the Federal Government meets the FWAs to discuss and identify unintended and unwanted (reciprocal) effects of legislation in the field of social policy as well as to prepare solutions. Meeting the suggestions of Europe 2020 the hearing involved further stakeholders besides the FWAs. The involved actors have been the municipalities (German Association of Districts, German Association of Cities, German Association of Towns and Municipalities), the social partners (Federation of German Trade Unions, Confederation of German Employers' Associations), welfare organisations (Federal Association of Non-statutory Welfare, German Association for Public and Private Welfare) and the national network of the EAPN (NAK) (NSR 2012: 6). Furthermore, these actors were invited to comment the draft report. The same procedure of commenting applied to the preparation of the NRPs. The following actors were asked to give statements on the draft

NRP: the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, the Confederation of German Trade Unions, the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts, the Federation of German Local Authority Associations, the Federal Association of Non-Statutory Welfare, the National Anti-Poverty Conference, the German Association for Public and Private Welfare and the Joint Science Conference (NRP 2011: 4; NRP 2012: 4; NRP 2013: 33).

However, the involvement of stakeholders is not seen as a true cooperation in order to prepare those reports. First, most of the comments are not considered in the final version of the reports.

Two lines (of the comments) were taken. They were like: "The welfare associations also work with their social services on integrating long-term unemployed into the labour market." That's it. That we wanted to do much else and to remodel the whole [NSR], they did not mention at all. (Interviewee FW4)

Second, the deadlines for preparing comments are too tight to make an useful contribution. Furthermore, the Federal Government is not really interested in what stakeholders like the Free Welfare Associations (FWAs) remark in the hearings with regard to the preparation of the reports.

We are invited to comment and this participation is compulsory [because of Europe 2020, N.P.] (...) But, as a matter of fact, we criticize this for years because it is a pseudo process, because the deadlines set for us are too short, and because the hearings are kind of "Thank you for your opinion – Goodbye" (...) that is not a form of true cooperation. (Interviewee FW5)

Moreover, the involvement of stakeholders is formalised since the preparation of the reports is seen as a duty to fulfil ("*pro forma*"). For example, the preparation of the national Report on Poverty and Wealth, a report on the social and economic situation of German citizens the Federal Government has to prepare every legislative period, is much more relevant than writing the NSR. Finally, for small stakeholders it is more difficult to get involved. A representative of a FWA gives account how the BMAS seems to decide about the involvement of certain stakeholders:

And the BMAS says: "Well, the year the national Report on Poverty and Wealth is made, we can forget the [NSR]. Anyway, that's only pro forma for the EU." That means, we regularly have just formalised involvement processes and this truly collaborative relationship regresses. It regresses the more the weaker the corresponding organisations are. Which means Diaconia, Caritas [two of the biggest FWAs, N.P.] and DGB [Confederation of German Trade Unions, N.P.],

these are great players that have their people in all parties. They are still heavily involved, but there are also smaller welfare associations that accordingly have difficulties. That means there is the question of how to get invited to talks and how to get involved. (Interviewee FW1)

This is also in line with what was reported by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) (EAPN 2012: 68-69). Overall, according to our interviewees the Federal Government only involves stakeholders because there are meant to. As a result, some stakeholders refuse to keep on commenting the reports.

Over the last years (...) we have made suggestions and comments in this regard and this year we will not comment it for the first time, because we always make the same suggestions and comments and we do not want to continue this ritualised form of a pretended participation. (Interviewee GWA)

The assessment of the NRPs (2011-2013) and the 2012 NSR does not vary widely among the several stakeholders. The six FWAs are organised in the Free Welfare Consortium (FWA Consortium; *Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege, BAGFW*). It prepared statements on the NRPs and the NSR in which it welcomed that the BMAS organised a hearing and invited representatives of the FWAs. Notwithstanding they criticised that the involvement of stakeholders does not meet the requirements suggested by Europe 2020. Furthermore, instead of just focusing on long-term unemployment the FWA consortium proposed to consider persons with experiences of persistent long-term unemployment that face multiple barriers to employment. The NRP-NSR would not provide information on developing concrete measures fulfilling the needs of this group of people. Moreover, the NRP-NSR should include a more detailed analysis on how to combat child poverty, consider in-work poverty, find measures to avoid “creaming” effects and inform about prevention of old-age poverty and effects of an increasing low wage sector (BAGFW 2012a, 2012 b, 2013). The FWAs, the Confederation of German Trade Unions (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB*) as well as some self-help organisations are member of the national network of the EAPN. The statements of the national network of the EAPN on the NRP-NSR reflect basically the same as the ones of the FWA Consortium. They particularly criticised that the domestic anti-poverty target was not ambitious enough and that it would need targets for all three poverty indicators in order to be able to comprehensively combat poverty (NAK 2011). The DGB complained in its statements that stakeholders only had had a few days to prepare statements. In the opinion of the DGB the NRPs have been full of self-praise for the Federal Government. It suggested keeping problems of poverty in perspective to find solutions instead. The DGB criticised that the Federal Government underestimated social inequality and

that it did not consider consequences of in-work poverty and a rising low-wage sector. Finally, the DGB assessed the indicator of reducing long-term unemployment as insufficient since it did not consider poverty and anti-poverty strategies (DGB 2012, 2013). The Confederation of German Employers' Associations ("*Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände*", BDA) agreed in its statements that unemployment was the main reason for poverty. However, they demanded a higher target of reducing long-term unemployment (BDA 2012a, 2012b, 2013). The German Association for Public and Private Welfare (GWA; Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge) which functions as the "institutional expression of public-private partnership in social service and policy planning" (Zimmer et al. 2009: 30) generally welcomed that the NRP-NSR considered qualitative indicators besides the anti-poverty target of reducing long-term unemployment. Although the GWA identified long-term unemployment as an important reason for poverty, it suggested setting targets for all three indicators in order to reflect the heterogeneous character of poverty in Germany (GWA 2011, 2012, 2013). Besides giving statements on the draft NRPs and NSR, we found no evidence that national actors make use of or refer to Europe 2020 poverty targets in domestic interactions.

Summing up, relevant policy makers are involved in the preparation of the NSRs and NRPs. In addition to giving statements to these reports, stakeholders have been invited to annual hearings of the Federal Government since 2012. On the contrary, smaller stakeholder organisations have not been considered in this process. However, this involvement cannot be seen as a true cooperation between stakeholders and the Federal Government because deadlines for preparing statements are too short and comments do not have a visible effect on the contents of the final versions of reports.

4.2 Policy integration

The leading ministries (BMAS: NSR; BMWi: NRP) sent the reports to all other federal ministries in order to come to an agreement. This interdepartmental coordination („Ressortabstimmung“) is a formal, institutionalised process which ensures that the ministries study and evaluate those sections of the reports that are relevant for them. This process also finds application when it comes to drafting the Federal Government's Poverty and Wealth Report which informs about the economic and social situation of German citizens every legislative period since 2001. Thus, all federal ministries participate in drafting the reports.

The ultimate ambition of German anti-poverty policy is integrating people into the labour market because "increasing gainful employment is the main key to poverty reduction" (NSR 2012: 9). As mentioned above, the decreasing numbers of long-term unemployed were

explained with positive developments of the labour market related to the Hartz reforms and the Labour Market Instruments Reorientation Act 2009 that enabled flexibility of the labour market as well as individualised and tailored support for the unemployed. Hence, as shown in section 3, the German anti-poverty strategy presented in the NRP and NSR is strongly connected to improving the institutional conditions to reduce unemployment and to increase employment. Else the NRPs and the NSR did not consider any effects on poverty of other policy measures (e.g. austerity cuts, measures to stimulate growth). The Federal Government's ability to actually develop an interdepartmentally coordinated anti-poverty strategy is assessed as weak. The reports are rather prepared in order to carry out one's duty, than to develop concrete measures. On the contrary, as already mentioned above, the report is about past actions.

The Federal Government is rather poorly positioned [to coordinate the development of a strategy among the entire Federal Government, N.P.]. They faithfully write the report every year, but nothing else happens. And this report essentially presents what is done anyway, without explicitly tailoring measures. (Interviewee P3, The Greens)

Overall, the NSRs and NRPs are drafted on the basis of interdepartmental coordination which is a formal, well institutionalised process. Nonetheless, it is not used to commonly develop a national anti-poverty strategy because the preparation of these reports is rather seen as a duty that has to be fulfilled than as an opportunity to develop new policies.

5 Europe 2020 and the local dimension of anti-poverty policies

As already outlined above, national policies tackling social exclusion mainly exist in the framework of labour market/activation policies. The Hartz-reforms established a new governance architecture in the framework of unemployment protection and activation, and achieved to link more closely the formerly separated arenas of social and employment policies. Although this led on the one hand to certain decentralization, it also linked on the other hand social policy actors such as Free Welfare Agencies, other NGOs or local public authorities more closely to the nationally dominated employment policy scheme. Having this increased multi-level integration in mind, one could expect that local actors might face a relative strong link to also European social inclusion policies. As already depicted in section 4.1, subnational actors have been increasingly involved in drafting NRPs and in other 'Europe-related' issues. However, when it comes to the implementation of European policies, the German peculiarity of the various politico-administrative levels becomes relevant. The

two constitutionally defined governmental levels in Germany are the federal level and the regional level (the *Länder*, NUTS 1). The NUTS 2 level is a subdivision of the *Länder* (Regierungsbezirke) with minor administrative relevance, while the NUTS 3 level, the German districts (Kreise), is an intermediary level between the municipalities (Gemeinden) and the *Länder*. The municipalities are the smallest administrative level, and we refer to this administrative level when we speak of the ‘local level’.

Unemployment benefits II, social assistance and also the majority of the social services are provided at the municipal level. The Jobcenters as UB II-providing organisations have (in the majority of the cases) established a closer interaction between the national-, the *Länder*-, and the municipal level. However, when it comes to the involvement in EU-related issues (such as NRP drafting, funding boards and administration or direct interaction in the context of EU policies towards regional and local authorities, it is in almost all cases actors at the NUTS 3 level - or even the *Länder* - who participate. Local NGOs, social partners, chambers and public authorities have representations at higher administrative level who are mainly involved when it comes to such procedures. Exceptions can happen in the case of competence overlappings, e.g. in the case an actors has municipal and district competences.

This low institutional link between the local and the European level is also reflected by the findings in the local case study (Dortmund). The EU-2020 strategy or any kind of EU-set targets for reducing poverty are not perceived as relevant by all interview partners. None of the interviewees were directly involved in working with the National Reform Programmes or the National Social Reports. As the only EU-related issues in the field of anti-poverty policies were mentioned European fund for local anti-poverty initiatives and programs and poverty-driven migration from southern Europe and EU-funds.⁹

Although it is not a direct impact of EU2020, migration was mentioned by almost every interviewee when asked about the role of EU in the anti-poverty policies in Dortmund. Some even name this topic as a dominating issue in the debates on poverty in this city. “*Poverty-driven migration in the EU from Bulgaria and Rumania is a huge issue*” (DSP2). At the same time all interviewees clearly point out to the fact that they expect the poverty-driven migration to have severe negative consequences in Dortmund: “*Europe is an issue, a big issue, as we expect an enormous immigration from southern Europe, Rumania, Bulgaria. That will severely affect quite a few cities in the Ruhr Area like Dortmund*” (MA3). An interviewee

⁹ Since the instruments of the local case study in WP6 were in the majority not designed to analyse the *effects* of Europe2020 in general but only give insights on the role the EU plays for local actors, we will briefly analyse our empirical material of WP6 regarding the *relevance* of the EU at the local level.

describes referring to the example of the Northern City District these consequences and states that the poverty-driven migration has already set in: *"In 2006 95 persons from Rumania and Bulgaria were registered in the Northern City District. 2007 there were 100. Currently we have about 1800. And these figures only refer to the Northern City District. An increase from 95 up to 1800. And if we take into account that probably each registered person comes with about three not-registered persons, we can assume that about 10 to 15 percent of the population in the Northern City District are poverty-driven migrants; with all consequences, decaying houses, moonlighters, prostitution and theft"* (LM4).

Although local actors are not involved in national decision making, a legitimating usage of the responsibility of the EU in the context of poverty-driven migration can be stated. These actors use (expected) problems caused by poverty-driven migration as political resources to justify own attitudes. However, the political strategies behind this usage differ. On the one hand, it is quite obvious that anti-poverty actors in Dortmund blame the EU for having caused this problem. They accuse the EU of neglecting a problem that could have been anticipated and they name the implementation of the freedom to move as the origin of the problem. As the example of an interviewee from the municipal administration demonstrates, some interviewees go as far as to expect, the poverty-driven migration flows or respectively their detrimental consequences to weaken the common consent to the EU in general: *"We are a destination of the European poverty-driven migration; mainly from Rumania and Bulgaria. Therefore we have to deal with this topic. It is tangible in this city what that means, what the big poverty disparities within the European Union what they mean. It's about the free movement of workers (...). In fact, 80% of all these persons arriving in Dortmund lack qualification. In this regard the EU has an enormous regulation deficit. That was clear, that that would be going to happen but on the European level this is widely neglected. We are the ones who have to regulate that now, and I predict that if Europe is going to carry on like this, debates are going to distance themselves from Europe more and more. Well, despite the positive developments like for example the funds or the European idea and so on, we are going to ask in this city: 'If that is Europe, then what is the point? What's the hidden purpose?'"* (MA1). In this context, we can observe that actors strategically make use of the issue in order to legitimate resource mobilisation: *"From next year on, we have the freedom to move. The migration will increase und we are not going to cope with this problem without additional resources. We need support from the EU. As Rumania and Bulgaria joined the EU, well, Europe should have known they were doing. But they only had political considerations as they accepted the accession. That's why the federal government and the EU should not leave us alone in finding solutions for this problem. We strongly hope for EU-funding.*

Because, the people, they are going to come. (...) I think we need social employment policies on the EU-level that accompany such migration flows in one way or other and that provide some kind of support” (MA3).

While this strategy of legitimating usage mainly focuses on the negative impact and perceives the local actors as ‘victims’ of decision taken at the higher levels, other actors use the discourse on poverty migration to place their attitudes towards social policies: *“In my opinion, that [i.e. the poverty-driven migration] is a huge challenge for European social policies calling for harmonisation. (...) In my view, there has to be a commonly coordinated social policy in the EU, just right the way we have a common economic policy” (LM1).*

The second dominating topic concerning the role of the EU is the importance of EU-funding. EU-funding is even more present than poverty-migration. All interviewees are informed about the existence of the funds, and the majority is involved in EU-funded projects or has applied for funding: *“Of course we make use of the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Funds and so on. We are very active in this area. (...). Especially regarding anti-poverty measure, the European Social Fund is of paramount importance” (SP 2).* Applying for EU-funds, especially ESF and ERDF, is well-established in Dortmund. Making use of the financial resources takes place in a very strategic manner. Resource mobilisation is the driving factor: *“I have seen some figures referring to the last year, showing that we receive considerable ESF-funding. Well, that’s kind of an economic sector, given all the millions we are receiving. We shouldn’t underestimate that. The money secures jobs and fosters, as I would put it, employment and qualification of unemployed persons” (LM1).*

However, many interviewees describe the role EU plays in this field as rather ambivalent. While they stress the importance of EU-funds like the ESF, they highly criticise the big effort one has to undertake in order to apply for EU-funding. On the one hand, the necessary co-funding (Dortmund is a Competitiveness-and-Employment region with a normal co-funding rate of 50%) was mentioned as being a burden, especially for smaller organisations. On the other hand, it is the administrative effort which has to be done in order to apply for the funds and to administer funded projects which causes serious problems for some actors. Without having further empirical evidence in Dortmund, we can observe that these obstacles seem to handicap smaller organisations when it comes to the usage of EU-funds, which might cause a change in the provider landscape: *“I have to be honest and say that, in fact, because of the financial reporting and the implementation of the projects the EU requires, fewer and fewer say, we are going to do that. Hardly anybody in private economy, actually nobody, is willing to run such projects. There are only the global players who are still doing that. The trade*

unions don't run such projects any longer. We don't have the capacities to doing that. (...). You know, by now the EU-programs have such an organisational complexity that we all have to say, we are losing our interest. We are not participating any longer. Regardless of how much money the EU has, they have to put in place conditions that don't allow us to bring the effort you need in order to benefit from these funds" (LM2).

Interestingly, we can state that public actors are also very active in this policy field. The city aims at supporting the application for EU-funds in order to increase the number of EU-projects. The municipality recently created a special office, based at the Jobcenter where all EU-funding related topics are to be coordinated. Its main task is to provide comprehensive information about the various possibilities of EU-funds: *"We have, coordinated by the Jobcenter, created a job with the only task to keep an eye on in which EU-programs the Jobcenter or the municipality is involved, what's going on there and last not least, how these programs subserve the municipal employment strategy. We are presently at the beginning. We have recruited someone last autumn and now she is about to evaluate the situation. (...) We have to cluster that, have to have a look at what we need; not only at what we are doing but also at how we can structure our efforts so that we are able to benefit from the added value. Or if we run projects: 'Whom do we need involve in order to foster sustainability?' We are trying to reorganises ourselves, to make sure that our efforts in the field of labour market policies are no longer random, but follow a strategy are part of a puzzle"* (LM2).

This institution building can be seen as a direct impact of EU-funding on the local level, which itself facilitates the usage of the financial resources by local actors. However, whether the strategic usage of these financial resources comes along with an adoption or appropriation of cognitive resources such as EU-argumentative strategies and ideas could not be analysed in this context. Generally spoken, we can state that in Dortmund the EU, and EU-policies in the field of active-inclusion, are perceived as something rather distant that does not have big consequences for the local situation: *"Well, we are struggling with maintaining a connection to the federal level. And, well, this is much more complicated regarding the European level"* (MA3). Interestingly, an interviewee expresses the opinion that EU-policies should trickle down to the local level as this is level is crucial for the Europe: *"If Europe does not reach down to the municipalities and is lived out there, Europe can't work"* (MA1).

Although local actors seem to be confronted with Europe 2020 targets in their everyday life via the Europe funds, funding is perceived as separated from political strategies. The European Social Fund is not perceived as an instrument set out to support the Europe 2020 strategy but as rather decoupled. This might be caused by the design of EU-funds implementation and the decentralised administration structures in Germany: usually, the funds

administration, and the entire planning process (including the monitoring committee) are settled at the NUTS I level, while the funds are mainly used by local authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders at the NUTS II and NUTS III level, which usually show little interaction with the NUTS I level. The European political strategies and rules linked to the funds might therefore be ‘filtered’ at the NUTS I level, and the actors at the local level are not involved in complying processes and debates. Here, further research at the higher administrative levels would be necessary. Furthermore, having in mind the extensive usage of the funding by the relevant actors, further research on the impact of this usage with regard to different dimensions could be of crucial interest.

6 Europe 2020 and the fight against poverty: Towards a multi-level, multi-stakeholder and integrated arena

In the previous chapters, the landscape of national adaptation and implementation of European anti-poverty policies and the related governance framework has been depicted for the case of Germany. Although the main focus laid on the launch and the three cycles of Europe 2020, a literature review on the period of the social inclusion OMC was also completed in order to address the temporal dimension of prospective EU-induced change. Furthermore, we provided some insights on the local dimension of anti-poverty policies against the backdrop of Europe 2020. Alongside the above mentioned hypotheses, the analyses accomplished in this report aims at identifying both procedural (i.e. in the governance and policy making process) and substantive effects (on national legislation, ideas, discourses...) in Germany resulting directly or indirectly out of the Europe 2020 strategy.

As should have become clear in the report, both the Open Method of Coordination in the field of social inclusion and the three cycles of Europe 2020 are of little relevance for domestic anti-poverty policies in Germany. The social inclusion OMC was at least able to reframe discourses and perceptions of social exclusion in the non-state area. Here, a more integrated (i.e. cross-sectorial) understanding of social exclusion and the fight against it was adopted especially by Free Welfare Associations and other NGOs. This was somehow in contrast to the narrow approach towards poverty and social exclusion in the German legislation by this time. However, the influence of the OMC on non-state actors did not have any political impact, and the OMC-process remained mainly in the administrative sphere as a ‘reporting-duty’ towards the EU.

With the ‘genetic moment’, the launch of Europe 2020, this changed to some extent and the European social agenda in Europe 2020 was extensively discussed in the parliament and several committees (c.f. section 3.1). However, here becomes clearly visible what is probably the most relevant finding of the analyses accomplished in this report: European social policies might have entered the political arena, but they remain clearly separated from domestic policies. The implementation of Europe2020 is of certain relevance nowadays and has achieved to establish greater stakeholder participation (and to a limited extent also policy integration), but these changes are mainly decoupled from national policies towards combatting poverty. This is also visible in terms of the ‘Europeanisation’ of the organisational structure of involved stakeholders. Like in public administrations, almost all relevant stakeholders (social partners, chambers etc.) have a ‘Europe office’, a ‘Europe commissioner’ or a similar institution within their domestic organisational structures. Although European issues of course are as well discussed in the specialised departments und committees (e.g. social and employment affairs) and the different ‘Europe-institutions’ are designed as cross-cutting department, European social policies are still an ‘extra’ policy field, only limitedly interlinked with domestic fields.

Together with a still existing aversion against European interference in domestic social policies and the conviction that Germany does not need any support since it has a well-designed and good working scheme to combat poverty (Weishaupt 2013), this institutional and discursive decoupling might be the reason for the low relevance of the EU as an actor in domestic anti-poverty policies.

However, as mentioned above, this does not mean that there is no effect at all caused by Europe 2020 in Germany. This is especially visible with regard to the procedural dimension. When we compare stakeholder involvement during the OMC-period and during the three cycles of the European Semester, it is obvious that participation increased over time. Especially actors in the field of social policies (mainly Free Welfare Associations) and representations of subnational actors (e.g. German Association of Districts) are more closely involved in the planning and reporting process. They are now in a better position to reclaim participation and express their opinion, also building on their reframed positions within the OMC. The institutionalised participating in terms of the hearing in 2012 and 2013 can as well be seen as a significant step towards greater stakeholder involvement. Nevertheless, the practical relevance of this involvement remained limited, as outlined in section 4.1. It was more a pro-forma performance with European duties than an effective participatory process.

When it comes to policy integration, the procedural effects are very limited. Although we can observe increasing cross-sector cooperation in the field of social- and employment policies in

Germany during the 2000s, this process cannot be ascribed to any European influences but results out of domestic developments in the context of the Hartz-reforms (section 2.1). However, these domestic structures helped to increase policy integration within the implementation of Europe 2020 in contrast to the social inclusion OMC. This is also the case for instruments such as benchmarking, reporting, annual planning, management by objectives etc., which were strongly enhanced in the German system with the Hartz-reforms. Furthermore, Hartz enhanced a multi-level cooperation, since it linked more closely nationally driven employment policies with locally dominated social policies (cf. section 2.1).

We can therefore state that the Hartz-reforms set up a governance architecture for social policies which is more congruent with the European framework than the previous model, and therefore facilitates the implementation of Europe 2020. However, this also makes the above described ‘duty-performance’ easier: a low adaptation pressure enables an administrative fulfilling of European duties on the basis of domestic structures, but without shaping these domestic patterns considerably but creating a somehow decoupled sphere of ‘European issues’.

Due to this decoupled sphere, no substantive changes in the field of national legislation, ideas or discourses can be stated. Although we can observe that poverty and social exclusion issues have increasingly reached public discourses and were more salient since the mid-2000s, there is no evidence that this is caused by European influence. Although during the genetic moment (cf. section 3.1) we can observe a strong and controversial political debate on European anti-poverty policies (and especially the indicators), this is to be seen more as a political skirmish between government and opposition than an effective agenda setting, issue salience or idea-shaping by European policies. Since the government at this time was less in favour of enhancing a ‘social model’ (cf. section 3.1), this made idea-shaping and discourse-framing more complicated. The nationally defined Europe 2020 target of reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion for Germany has been assessed as not very ambitious. Especially due to Germany’s relatively good economic performance during the economic and financial crisis these targets could be fulfilled without developing new reforms. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the national reforms indeed led to higher congruence with the European governance architecture and to some extent also with the programmatic dimension (e.g. integration between minimum income and labour market services), but it cannot be argued that this process was influenced by European policies. However, the national model to combat poverty lacks an integrated perspective, since the focus is still more or less exclusively on labour market integration.

To sum up, we can state that despite some moderate procedural effects caused by the social inclusion OMC and Europe 2020, both the role of the EU as relevant actor in domestic policy making and the changes induced by EU policies are in large parts irrelevant for domestic anti-poverty policies in the case of Germany. Almost all changes remain within a somehow decoupled ‘European sphere’ and do not tackle domestic policies:

1. Compared to the OMC-Lisbon phase, the Europe 2020 strategy indeed achieved to make the issue of anti-poverty policies more salient in the political sphere, at least for a short period (the genetic moment). However, this did not lead to agenda shifts or results in reforms/legislations but got finally lost in the bureaucratic process.
2. We can observe increased policy integration when comparing the social OMC-period with the Europe 2020 phase. However, there is no evidence that this is caused by European influences but can be ascribed to the Hartz reforms. When it comes to stakeholder involvement in the governance process, there is no step backwards but increasing participation observable. While a broader stakeholder involvement is caused by organisational reforms in the context of the Hartz-reforms (which brought together more closely actors of social and employment policies; cf. section 2.1), a more narrow involvement of especially non-state actors and subnational representatives has happened within the implementation process of Europe 2020.
3. When we compare the three cycles of Europe 2020, we can indeed observe increasing participation of stakeholders and of government levels in the drafting, reporting and recommending process. While stakeholders were not consulted in an institutionalised manner in 2011, this changed in 2012 and 2013. However, as outlined in section 4.2, this seems to be still more a pro-forma consulting than a real participation. The bureaucratic implementation process does not leave enough room for participation which really impacts on the outcome of the NRP. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the increasing participation resulted out of higher problem pressure.

In a nutshell, we can state that especially hypotheses one and three, but to some extent also hypothesis two can be verified with regard to the procedural effects on the implementation processes of the social OMC and Europe 2020. However, these effects do not spill over to other arenas of policy making but remain in a decoupled ‘European sphere’, and therefore affect only very limitedly domestic anti-poverty policies. The European Union is not a relevant actor in the field of German anti-poverty policies, and European anti-poverty policies influence only to a very small extent domestic policies.

Reasons for this limited influence and relevance can be found both in the institutional design and in political attitudes towards European anti-poverty policies – respectively in a combination of both aspects. As already outlined, the increasing institutional fit of the German model (coordinating social- and employment policies, linking the national and the local level, introducing NPM-instruments) made the implementation of active inclusion more easier than it was at the launch of the OMC. However, this fit did not make fundamental changes in the governance architecture necessary, which would probably have caused a greater political debate, but enhanced the bureaucratic usage of existing structures in order to comply with European duties. This led to a less politically motivated (and to a large extent decoupled from domestic policies) implementation of EU-issues.

7 Conclusions

The overall findings outlined in this report point to a rather weak relevance of the European level for developing and implementing anti-poverty policies in Germany. Despite its crucial role at the European floor especially in economics, Germanys affection towards European social policies as a trigger for domestic policies seems to be very low. Social security, social exclusion or the fight against poverty are perceived as very own national policy fields. This low acceptance is reflected in the effects EU anti-poverty policy has on German policy making. As we could show in the report, there are some procedural effects, such as increasing stakeholder involvement in the implementation process of Europe 2020. However, we could not identify substantial effects on legislation, ideas or discourses. Furthermore, the implementation of EU policies seems to remain in its own – rather decoupled from domestic policy making – sphere.

Since the governance architecture of the minimum income scheme for jobless people capable of working shows a relative high congruence to the propagated European framework, there is no or very little misfit. However, we can still observe a narrow perception of poverty and social exclusion, mainly focusing on labour market integration as a means to combat poverty while ignoring other relevant factors. European anti-poverty policies did not achieve to change this perspective during the last years, despite an increasing problem pressure by raising in-work poverty rates and a large wage gap.

Section B: The peer review meetings

1. Introduction: short outline of the selected peer review meeting

The peer review “Building a Coordinated Strategy for Parenting Support” was hosted by the French General Directorate for Social Cohesion and took place 6-7 October, 2011 in Paris. Representatives and experts from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy and Malta. Besides member states’ delegates, a representative from the European Commission’s Directorate General on Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, two stakeholders’ organisations (the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE) and Eurochild) and a representative of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofund) participated at the meeting. Most of the countries’ delegations consisted of an academic as well as a person from the relevant ministry (Interviewee thematic expert). The French State Secretary for the Family attended part of the meeting and the advisor to the Minister attended the whole peer review. The policy designs of parenting support vary widely across European countries. Thus, the peer review mainly aimed at an exchange of knowledge about different national structures and approaches (Daly 2011a: 6-7). The empirical basis of this report consists of an analysis of relevant documents and evidences from three interviews conducted with one representative of the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*; BMFSFJ), the thematic expert and a representative of the European Commission who all three attended the meeting. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed following the guidelines of qualitative content analyses (Mayring 2007).

2. The peer review in “context”: the links with European and domestic agendas

2.1. Description of the policy/practice under review

Parenting support is a relatively new policy idea which has its origin at the local level. It “refers to a range of information, support, education, training, counselling and other measures or services that focus on influencing how parents understand and carry out their parenting role.” (Daly 2011: 1) The main character of this service provision varies from universal to targeted and from prevention to intervention. Thus, the aim of parenting support ranges from general support to behavioural change of parents (ibid.: 7). Not surprisingly, one lesson of the

peer review meeting has been that parenting support is a very heterogeneous policy field across Europe. In the end, these services shall help to improve the situation and development of children and young people.

French parenting support policies emerged in the late 1990s and have developed from locally and private initiated actions to one of the foci of national level family policy. In France, “parenting support means the various actions in place to help support parents in their parental roles” (host country report: 1). It has a universal character and is oriented at prevention. These voluntary services are delivered at the local level and offered to all families in order to prevent crisis and to avoid a stigmatising effect of making use of them. At present there are five relevant schemes. The “Parental Support and Guidance Network” (*réseaux d’écoute, d’appui et d’accompagnement des parents*, REAAP) unites 8,000 actions (status as of 2009; Daly 2011: 11) that support and assist parents in their parental role. The 450 “Family Information Centres” (*Point Info Famille*, PIF) aim at helping families accessing information as well as giving guidance for everyday life. The scheme “Resolving Family Conflict: Family Mediation“ provides conflict management for families in difficult situations, especially for children with divorced or separated parents. The “Academic Support Local Contract” (*Contrat Local d’Accompagnement à la Scolarité*, CLAS) is a mentoring program for children at school age which tries to tackle problems linked to special needs. The “Solidarity Networks” are also a type of child mentoring targeting children in isolated families (Host country report: 2-4; Daly 2011: 11-13). With regard to aims and coverage the French approach to parenting support has been judged by the thematic expert as “novel and broad-ranging” (Daly 2011:14). In particular, the voluntary participation of parents, the diverse ways of provision of services, the awareness of need for coordination between different types of actors, the sensitivity of these policies to concrete demands from parents and the relevance of the topic at the national level have been underlined as main strengths of French parenting support policies (ibd.). However, due to an overlap of programmes and a lack of coordination a reform of French parenting support policies had been initiated that was on-going at the time of the peer review (see Section 3.1. for more details).

2.2. Relevance of the topic at the EU level

The topic of parenting support is less relevant at the EU level because it is a very specialised and novel practice in the EU (Interviewee thematic expert). Although the EU does not have any competence in the field of family policy several policy areas more and more try to consider the importance of a well-functioning family life. Thus, parenting support is relevant

on a more general level (Interviewee thematic expert). Four key elements of the EU policy and institutional framework address issues related to the idea of parenting support. First, children's rights and the condition of children as expressed in the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and the 2006 Communication 'Towards a European Strategy on the Rights of the Child' have become an essential element of EU activities. Second, early years' provision has been put on the agenda under the Lisbon Strategy by agreeing on targets that aim at reducing disincentives to female labour force participation and at improving the provision of childcare. Third, the quality of family life in terms of well-being of children, reconciliation of work and family life and childcare is addressed by the 2007 funded European Alliance for Families. Finally, there have been several family-oriented EU activities in the past that concerned the quality of family life and the improvement of children's rights (Daly 2011: 2-3). Consequently, the related EU discourse is not directly linked to parenting, but to family life and children's development (ibid.: 3-5).

Parenting support policies address three of the Europe 2020 targets. First, it is related to the aim of reducing poverty and social inclusion. Since parenting support aims at giving children a good start in life it tackles and breaks on-going processes of intergenerational poverty. Second, it contributes to meeting the target of reducing the number of school leavers. Third, since parenting support can help enhancing employability, it helps meeting the Europe 2020 employment target (Interviewee European Commission representative). Additionally, supporting children's development in terms of "creativity, resilience and self-confidence (...) are qualities needed to produce social innovation (...) which is at the core of the Europe 2020 strategy." (Short report: 6) Parenting support as policy to "reduce inequality at a young age by investing in early childhood education and care" (COM 2013: 6-7) is also mentioned in the Commission Recommendation "Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage" which was in the making at the time of the peer review and later included in the Social Investment Package.

Overall, the topic of parenting support is not very relevant at the EU level due to its novel and specialised character, but on a more general level it is considered as relevant, especially for processes around child poverty and deprivation.

2.3. The domestic context (Germany)

In Germany, parenting support as part of family policy is strongly prevention oriented and has a universal character. It is directed at supporting all parents in various situations (e.g. child raising, conflict situations within the family) and thus addresses families with children under the age of 6 years as well as children at school age. Hence, the spectrum of parenting support

services which are regulated under the Eighth Social Code “Child and Youth services” (SGB VIII) can be considered as very broad. It includes family education services, advisory services concerning questions with regard to raising children and their development as well as services offering leisure time. Further content and extent of these services are regulated by federal states’ laws and vary accordingly. Moreover, services of parenting support are provided by a broad range of organisations (municipal youth departments, the church, charitable organisations, child protection groups and other local initiatives), who are mainly funded by the municipalities (Wiesner 2011). One example for German parenting support is the national program “Parents’ chance is children’s chance” (“Elternchance ist Kinderchance”) which started in 2012 and ends in 2014. This program aims at accompanying parents with regard to the learning and educational development of their children. It funds 100 local facilities with qualified companions for parents and also tests the coordinating structures of these companionships.

In general, parenting support in Germany can be assessed as a basic part of family policy. Even though statutory benefits like childcare are at the centre of the political debate when it comes to family policy, parenting support fulfils the important function of preventing negative effects regarding child-raising and family life:

When it comes to family policy, statutory benefits are above all at the centre of politics. (...) Parenting support is indeed a bit crosswise to it (i.e. statutory benefits such as childcare). This is not a monetary benefit for families, but it allows a positive togetherness [in families, N.P.]. Good children's lives ensure the well-being of children. Insofar, (parenting support) is part of the basic melody of family policy. If you see what parents actually need, you can say they need a contact person and they need places locally where they can turn to in times of crisis, when they need advice: “How can I manage my money?” And: “How can I optimize my time structures?” Or quite simple: “What can I do with my child?” (Interviewee German representative)

All in all, parenting support in Germany is universal and prevention-oriented. It includes a broad range of services which are provided by several types of organisations. Although it is not at the centre of the political debate, parenting support is a fundamental part of German family policy. At the time of the peer review, no reforms or debates concerning the domain of parenting support were going on in Germany.

2.4. Participating country mix

Besides representatives of the host country France, representatives of nine other European countries attended the peer review: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Malta and the Czech Republic. Hence, the relevant welfare regimes were represented at the meeting: the Conservative-Continental (Belgium, France, Germany), the Post-Communist (Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia), the Social-Democratic (Denmark) and the Mediterranean countries (Italy, Malta) (cf. Esping-Andersen 1990). The UK that did not attend the meeting could have been a further contributor to the peer review topic since the UK is the country that has done most around parenting support (Interviewee thematic expert).

The countries' approaches towards parenting support were very dissimilar (Interviewee thematic expert). **Belgian** family policies are universal and provide specific strategies for families at risk of poverty. Although **Bulgaria** has developed strategies and measures in the past decade which aim at protecting children and empowering parents, many families do not make use of these services. In **Croatia**, there is a public debate on how the relationship between parental authority and children should be improved in order to strengthen the rights of children. The **Danish** family policy focuses on intervention and promoting inclusion of poor families by providing them with resources they need. The family policy of **Estonia** particularly concentrates on evidence-based programs that aim at the reunification and aftercare of families from which children once have been removed. **Italy** foremost provides preventive, evidence-based family policies that support parents in difficult situations. In **Malta**, family policies contain universal, supportive and preventive services as well as targeted and more interventionist services. Programs of family policy in the **Czech Republic** aim at building up links between parents, but many parents do not participate since they do not see how to benefit from these services (Minutes of the peer review: 11-12).

3. The participants: motivations and expectations

3.1. The drivers behind the organisation of the meeting: host country's motivations and expectations

Although the French model to parenting support can be described as advanced, the "multiplication and overlap of programmes and actions and the lack of coordination of the whole system" demand a reform, which was already pointed out by the national court of auditors in 2009 (host country report: 6). At the time of the peer review France was going to change its legislation on parenting support to improve coordination and integration of

different services implemented by different types of organisations and different levels of government (ibid.: 1). In order to succeed with the reorganisation and reform of parenting support policies, the peer review was used by France as opportunity to learn about other countries' experiences with problems and solutions:

at that time France was reviewing [its legislation on parenting support] (...) the aim was to arrive to a more integrated approach among the different services because they had a variety of tools and they didn't know how (...) They were wondering if they were going in the right direction and they wanted an opinion from other countries, they wanted to know how other countries were addressing those problems. (Interviewee European Commission representative)

In 2010, the 'National Parenting Support Committee' ('Comité national de soutien à la parentalité', CNSP) was founded in order to "improve the organisation of existing parenting schemes" (ibid.: 6) in terms of coordination and cooperation. It also prepared the parenting support reform. The fact that some of the French peer review participants have been members of the CNSP is a further indicator that France used the results of the peer review for changing its legislation. Two meetings of the 'restricted committee' of the CNSP which were held before the peer review underlined that the "French participation to this exercise of international comparison will represent a support for the running of parenting policies" (Minutes of the meeting of the 'restricted committee' of the CNSP held on 18th of March 2011: 1-2; our translation from French) and that "the works of that two days will enrich the work of the national committee" (Minutes of the meeting of the 'restricted committee' of the CNSP held on 13th September 2011; our translation from French). Most of the issues discussed during these meetings correspond to the main issues discussed during the peer review (see Section 4.1.). In the closing remarks of the peer review meeting, the French representative Hélène Paoletti, General Directorate for Social Cohesion, confirmed that the comparison of the French approach with the other countries' approach to parenting support will be part of the discussions with regard to this domestic reform (Minutes of the peer review: 26). Besides several documents produced by the French administration which referred to the peer review, results of the meeting (e.g. the problem of evaluating parenting support policies) were subject to discussions of the plenary meeting of the CNSP on 10th November 2011.

3.2. Germany's motivations and expectations

Germany's motivation to attend the peer review resulted first of all from their regular, mutual exchange regarding family policy issues with the host country, France. Secondly, Germany

judged it as useful for domestic family policy to exchange knowledge about parenting support with other European countries.

It is not a systematic process in the sense that we said we would like to have a peer review on this subject, otherwise we would have indeed initiated one, but France has selected the subject of the peer review, because (...) they said that it was a field of action that was not yet established at the European level, but is on the rise. (...) Then they considered whom to invite, and because we compared notes with our French partners regarding family policy, we thought (parenting support) was a field where coordination - or at least a knowledge exchange since it was not about coordination - can be expedient. (Interviewee German representative)

The management of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*; BMFSFJ) decided to attend the meeting. The German representatives at the peer review, one representative from the BMFSFJ and a professor from the Free University of Berlin as national expert who had been in close contact with the ministry for several years, were not selected on the basis of tendering, but due to an informal process coordinated by the ministry's division responsible for European family policy.

Prior to the meeting, the participants already knew about the huge variety across Europe when it comes to parenting support. Thus, expectations were not directed at developing and coordinating a common strategy to parenting support at the EU level, but rather exchanging information about domestic policies which - for the German case - were assessed as relatively advanced. The German participants prepared their participation on their own without having an extra preparatory meeting (Interviewee German representative). While the national expert drafted the comment paper, the representative from the ministry prepared detailed questions about the development, contents and effects of parenting support policies of participants' countries in order to get to know more about the European variety of this policy field as well as to benefit from the experiences in the other countries.

Turned out that the field of parenting support is a very heterogeneous field where not much has happened on coordination in Europe which is probably difficult because there are very different national policies. So my expectation was that, first, I can inform about what Germany does in this field, because in our point of view we are very advanced if you want to talk in categories of progress, we are very advanced in terms of parenting support and family education. Furthermore, I wanted to know what others think about (parenting

support) and thus I have prepared certain questions for the meeting, for example, (questions concerning) the degree of professionalization in the field of family education, the degree of support by the top level, thus the national level, questions concerning the involvement of volunteers in the field of family education (...), how family education emerged in countries which determines what services can be offered currently, and knowledge about effects (of services) and how to reach families. (Interviewee German representative)

All in all, Germany's motivation to attend the meeting resulted from their close contact to France in the field of family policy. Furthermore, the German participants have been curious about other countries' experiences of parenting support. Thus, expectations were not directed at developing and coordinating a common strategy at the EU level, but at a knowledge exchange.

4. The peer review meeting

4.1. Agenda and main issues discussed

The first day of the meeting started with a welcome by Sabine Fourcade from the General Directorate for Social Cohesion, France, and some introductory remarks by Emanuela Tassa, Directorate-General on Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. This was followed by a general introduction to the topic of the peer review and a presentation of the French policy including a question and answer session. Then the discussion paper was presented by Mary Daly from the School of Sociology, Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK, and intensively discussed by the participants. Afterwards French participants gave insight in how French policy work in practice. The first day ended with a presentation of evidences of a study on parenting support and education across Europe by a member of the Eurofund research project which dealt with that topic. This was commented by the stakeholders COFACE and Eurochild. The second day of the meeting was mainly spent on presentations and discussions of the peer countries' parenting support policies. It finished with a section on the relevance of the Peer Review for the Europe 2020 strategy and its social dimension and key learning elements (Minutes of the peer review). The situation of parenting support at the EU level was not much discussed because of the little relevance of that topic at that level. In contrast, most attention was focused on the French case and equally on the situations in the peer countries (Interviewee thematic expert).

During the meeting several issues were discussed. First, the discussions showed that there was a need for **defining parenting support**, its needs, aims and outcomes in order to establish a

distinct field of policy. This was also related to the question about what ‘good’ parenting support should look like. Another issue concerned the **possible duplication of services**. Because of its origin at the local level parenting support services sometimes overlap. This could only be avoided by a better integration of services and a determination of the responsible governmental level (national/federal, regional, local). The participants furthermore expressed that there was a need for **putting parenting support in a broader context**. This particularly addressed questions about reasons for the emergence of parenting support (e.g. as substitute for state services cut due to the financial crisis), the link to other policy areas (e.g. anti-poverty policies) and effects of domestic political constellations on parenting support services (e.g. effects by a particular government in power). Moreover, the question arose whether parenting support should be **universal or focused**. The variety of services ranges from ‘light’ support that is voluntarily taken up by all parents to targeted services for most vulnerable families. Although universal approaches were characterised as the ideal since they addressed all families by providing low access thresholds at the same time, it was indicated that they sometimes did not meet the needs of the most vulnerable as targeted approaches did. A further subject of discussion was the **normative view of ‘good parenting’**. The participants said that there could be the danger of providing services based on such a normative view that crossed the public/private faultline by trying to change parents and their roles to a certain type of a good parent. This would especially concern which degree of intervention was still appropriate. One of the main points of discussion was **defining, identifying and evaluating successful models of parenting support**. All participants agreed that there was a need for evidence based parenting support programmes. The question was whether such evaluations should be quantitative or qualitative in order to ensure the effectiveness of policies. The **relationship between parenting support and childcare protection** was another discussed issue. All participants agreed that parenting support should be kept separate from childcare protection since it benefits from its less regulatory and more voluntaristic character. The **cost implications of parenting support** were also an important topic. In particular, in times of the financial crises affording the provision of these services could become problematic. It was discussed who should take responsibility in case of reduction of funds: the state, the local authorities or the parents themselves. Finally, there was a discussion about the **relevance of parenting support for the Europe 2020 strategy** (Minutes of the peer review; Daly 2011a: 19-22). As described in section 2.2., this type of parental support addresses three Europe 2020 targets.

4.2. “Tenor” of discussions and roles played by participants

Besides the more formal character of the meeting when the host country, France, presented its policy design, the discussions were marked by an open atmosphere that enabled a mutual exchange between the participants.

In the presence of the Minister the discussion was, of course, more formal. Later, there was a less formal exchange, which is also the goal and meaning of these peer reviews, that you do not execute a formal agenda, but that an actual exchange takes place. Of course, that was less the case when the French presented their example. That was a frontal situation, but later it was a mutual exchange. (...) Insofar, it was quite helpful for categorizing family education. (...) This was an open atmosphere that was marked by appreciation. That means one has tried to understand what the others are doing, why they do it that way. (...) One must also say that countries have very different initial conditions. (Interviewee German representative)

The participants showed lots of interests in the French example, especially because of its bottom-up approach. All participants were very active and made many contributions to the discussion (Interviewee thematic expert). Due to the great variety of approaches to parenting support among the participating countries and the interest of mutual learning it is not possible to identify a ‘tutors/learners divide’. Thus, all peer countries can be considered as both, tutors and learners (Interviewee thematic expert).

4.3. Main conclusions of the meeting

The main conclusions of the meeting have been that parenting support is a very heterogeneous field across Europe, that the EU has no competences on taking action in this field and that it is therefore difficult to assess which domestic policy designs have a higher positive effect on the situation and development of children than other designs.

The quintessence of this meeting was that there are very heterogeneous approaches in Europe, that Europe has no mandate to take action in this field, that it is difficult to investigate the effect (of single parenting support policies) (...) Thus, you cannot say “This has an effect and this not.” You cannot reduce it to a common denominator. (Interviewee German representative)

The great variety of national structures and approaches concerning parenting support reflect the missing interfaces with regard to contents.

It turned out that the interfaces with regard to contents are not that big in the field of parenting support (...) Overall, the result of the meeting has been that there are different approaches and structures in the area of family education. For example, the Danish colleagues have explained that their approach is based on the issue of child endangerment. This means they do not have a universal preventive [as in Germany, N.P.] but a selective approach. (...) They have programs that appear more interventionist. (Interviewee German representative)

Due to this heterogeneity and lack of interfaces the basis for developing a common strategy is also missing.

In my point of view, the (peer review) has shown how different the systems of the countries are, and that one will hardly find a common denominator. (Interviewee German representative)

The discussion described in section 4.1. led to several conclusions. First, all participants acknowledged that parenting support has become an important policy domain. They furthermore agreed that there is a need for the coordination of parenting support services and for responsibilities of programmes. Moreover, policy and provision should span the entire continuum of parenting support, from universal to targeted. Nonetheless, it should be complemented by other programmes for child protection, health and education services since the provision of parenting support alone was assessed as insufficient. In particular, the relationship between parent support and child protection should be carefully managed in order to get both kinds of services work in tandem by keeping both independent from each other. In addition, defining the aim of reaching low-income or vulnerable families was a main result of the meeting. Finally, the participants concluded that local and national action needed to be balanced (Daly 2011a: 23-25).

Furthermore, a few recommendations came out of the peer review. First, programmes should aim for empowerment which means that services should be ‘normalised’ in order to avoid that parents feel at fault because of making use of them. Second, a long-term support for programmes is needed because this allows for more flexibility and experimentation. Third, children’s and parents’ rights should be the leading principles for designing and implementing services. Fourth, the peer review identified that early support was vital. Finally, all participants recommended the evaluation and further research of parenting support (ibid.: 25-26).

4.4. The peer country delegation: attitudes and overall opinion about the meeting

All in all, the peer review was judged as very interesting by the German participants. They learned about the different conditions in the participating countries and concluded that developing a coordinated strategy cannot and should not be the aim of following activities.

For us, it was certainly interesting to see what there is in other countries (regarding parenting support). Whether the heading "Building a coordinated strategy of parenting support" can be the agenda, I would doubt. That there will be actual coordination and a common strategy I would put into question, simply because there are different initial conditions in the countries which one cannot and should not neglect in my point of view. (Interviewee German representative)

The discussion paper which included a systematization of dimensions of parenting support structures and approaches was appreciated very much by the German participants. Moreover, the peer review was regarded as have been too short to discuss all issues in detail, especially with regard to effectiveness and intentions of policies. Overall, it was a first meeting where the participants learned about different European approaches (as, for example, the interventionist approach in Denmark that is very different to the German universal, preventive approach).

I found this system which was prepared by Ms Daly very expedient and inspiring. She says there is a wide diversity of family education programs and approaches in Europe. She has tried to systematize it. This was interesting since one cannot make a comparison as regards content (of parenting support programs in Europe). Unfortunately, there was no detailed discussion at the peer review - about what would be helpful, what would be expedient, what works locally - due to the short period of time. One would probably need a conference with three four days to discuss, where the scientific part is also much more present. (...) Insofar, from my point of view, it has been a first meeting showing how much interventionist it can be by any government and which approach, which image of the family, is the basis of the measures, and how much money is possibly invested in (these measures). (Interviewee German representative)

To sum up, the peer review showed that the national structures and approaches regarding parent support are very heterogeneous. The open atmosphere allowed discussing how to reach families with different socio-economic backgrounds as well as how to evaluate policies. As

expected the meeting did not aim at developing a common strategy, but it was useful for a first insight into experiences of other European countries.

5. The “consequences” of the meeting

5.1. Outcomes at the EU level

The findings of the peer review have been sufficiently disseminated at the EU level. First, some of the peer review participants were members of the working group that prepared the Recommendation on child poverty. Although they did not make a reference to the peer review, parenting support was a topic of the recommendation. However, the SPC ad-hoc group that assisted the European Commission for this recommendation mentioned the peer review twice in their final report. Furthermore, the European Platform for investing in children recently quoted the thematic expert paper and the host country papers in a policy brief (DG Empl. 2013: 11-17). In addition, a representative of the Eurofund project who attended the meeting quoted the peer review several times in a project report about parenting support. Finally, there has been one event that could be considered as some kind of follow-up at the European level. The peer review „Early Intervention and Prevention in Family Support”¹⁰ took place in Belfast, Northern Ireland on 30 May – 1 June, 2012, and was organised by Eurochild (one of the stakeholders of the French peer review). Some of the persons attending this meeting had also participated at the French peer review. However, representatives of the German Federal Government did not take part at this peer review. Furthermore, the synthesis report of the French peer review was mentioned in the synthesis report of that peer review (Ramage 2012: 13-14). In addition, the thematic expert contributed to the dissemination of the results of the peer review by publishing several journal articles on that topic and by making five to seven different presentations to academics and policy makers on that subject (Interviewee thematic expert).

There are also some evidences that the results of the peer review were used to carry out the French reform on parenting support. First, in the plenary meeting of the CNSP on November 10, 2011, the matter of evaluating ‘parenting’ and ‘parenting support’ was addressed by referring to the peer review documents. Second, the CNSP provided a shared definition of parenting support on December 20, 2012, by quoting the peer review and particularly the

¹⁰Although, this event was called ‘peer review’ and replayed the scheme of a typical peer review meeting, this was not a peer review meeting funded by the PROGRESS programme.
Link to the website of that event:
[http://www.eurochild.org/en/events/details/index.html?tx_ttnews\[pS\]=1398087647&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4826&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=287&cHash=99ff9880a4e1ac8f2db3731432318933](http://www.eurochild.org/en/events/details/index.html?tx_ttnews[pS]=1398087647&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4826&tx_ttnews[backPid]=287&cHash=99ff9880a4e1ac8f2db3731432318933)

contribution of the thematic expert. Third, the peer review was mentioned in two footnotes in the 2012 report of the Centre for Strategic Analysis ‘Helping parents to be parents’ which also looks at other countries’ practices with regard to parenting support. Fourth, in a plenary meeting of the CNSF the discussion during the peer review meeting was judged as very useful in order to define the notion of ‘parenting support’(Minutes of the Plenary meeting of the CNSF held on 20 December 2012). Finally, the results of the peer review were used for an evaluation of French parenting support policies in 2013. All in all, the findings of the meeting have contributed to the French debate on the reform and to the domestic process of change.

5.2. Outcomes at the domestic level (Germany)

The information about the peer review meeting including its results has only been disseminated in the responsible ministry, i.e. the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). It has not been distributed or used outside the ministry. Directly after the meeting the German participants stayed in contact with a few peer review participants to exchange some more detailed information on the German case. The thematic expert that prepared the discussion paper for the peer review meeting was furthermore invited to present main developments and trend of parenting support policies in Europe at a congress of the ministry that dealt with the above mentioned parenting support program “Parents’ chance is children’s chance” (“*Elternchance ist Kinderchance*”). Finally, the peer review did not initiate that German parenting support policies will be more connected to the intentions of Europe 2020:

If we have (to prepare) reports (i.e. NRPs and NSRs, N.P.) and perhaps have to include something (in the reports), we will mention that we have now launched a new program in the field of family education [the above mentioned national program “Parents’ chance is children’s chance”, N.P.] that aims at the reduction of educational poverty, which indeed is of use for social participation, but we do not design policies as a result of the (Europe) 2020 strategy. (Interviewee German representative)

Due to the novel and rather specialised character of the practice under review as well as due to the fact that the peer review was more directed at knowledge exchange the German participants had no reasons to disseminate the results outside the family ministry. This prevented that the documents and results were used by domestic policy makers which consequently reduced their impact on domestic social policy.

Taken together, the peer review did not have a visible influence at the domestic level because results of the meeting have not been disseminated outside the ministry. Furthermore, it did not

strengthen the link between Europe 2020 and developing domestic programs regarding parenting support.

6. Concluding remarks

The peer review “Building a Coordinated Strategy for Parenting Support” presented a practice that is very specialised and novel in the EU. Although, parenting support itself is less relevant at the EU level it becomes more and more important on a general level for other policy areas trying to support the well-functioning of family lives. The presentations of the participating countries showed that parenting support policies vary widely among them. This heterogeneity given we identified all peer countries as both tutors and learners. The French approach to parenting support can be characterised as advanced, but the overlap of programmes and a lack of coordination demanded a reform. While learning from other countries’ experiences the peer review was an opportunity for France to prepare the reform on parenting support successfully. Germany’s participation at the peer review resulted from the close contact and exchange between Germany and France regarding family policy. The whole meeting was marked by an open atmosphere and very active participants. The results of the peer review were sufficiently disseminated at the European level. Nonetheless, due to the nationally varying structures and approaches of parenting support policies the meeting was directed at a knowledge exchange. As a consequence, the German participants have not disseminated documents and results of the meeting outside the responsible ministry. Thus, they were not used by domestic policy makers which reduced their possible impact on domestic social policy.

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