

14th Conference “Social Monitoring and
Reporting in Europe”:
Weakening Social Cohesion in Europe?
Indicators, Analysis and Policy
Implications

Introduction

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Social Cohesion...

- rooted in the sociological theory of Emile Durkheim...
- but still a relatively new concept, firstly promoted during the 1990s
- characterized by a certain vagueness as well as a variety of notions and definitions
- Paul Bernard (1999): 'quasi concept'

Degree of cohesiveness = result of two different and contrarily working sets of impacting factors:

➤ Forces / qualities potentially threatening social cohesion:

e.g. inequalities, disparities, fragmentations, cleavages

➤ Forces / qualities potentially enhancing and fostering social cohesion:

e.g. social relations and ties, fairness, collaboration, sense of belonging and identity, inclusion, trust, participation

- Currently negative forces and pessimistic views seem to prevail
- Concerns are raised regarding risks to social cohesion within as well as between European societies
- According to a recent survey of the Allensbach polling institute two out of three Germans aged 30 to 59 perceive the cohesion (Zusammenhalt) of German society as weak and only 18 % think it is strong. (FAZ, 12.9.19)

Among most frequently mentioned factors considered to be driving forces of a declining cohesiveness within societies, we find

- growing income inequalities
- processes of large scale immigration
- progressively increasing feelings of relative deprivation by various population groups
- ethnic, political and religious divisions and tensions

emerging in numerous European societies.

In recent years also more and more indications of a reduction or an easing of the cohesiveness of the European Union, such as...

- the formation of an East-West as well as a North-South division
- the BREXIT process
- strong political disagreements in migration policies, disputes and conflicts around the Euro and fiscal policies

From social monitoring and reporting perspective important to measure and analyse the cohesiveness of societies!

CfP invited contributions addressing different aspects of social cohesion, e.g.

- the differences in levels and trends of social cohesion across European societies
- driving forces and risks – objective and subjective – of a declining cohesiveness within and across European societies
- the measurement of social cohesion, including its dimensions and related indicators