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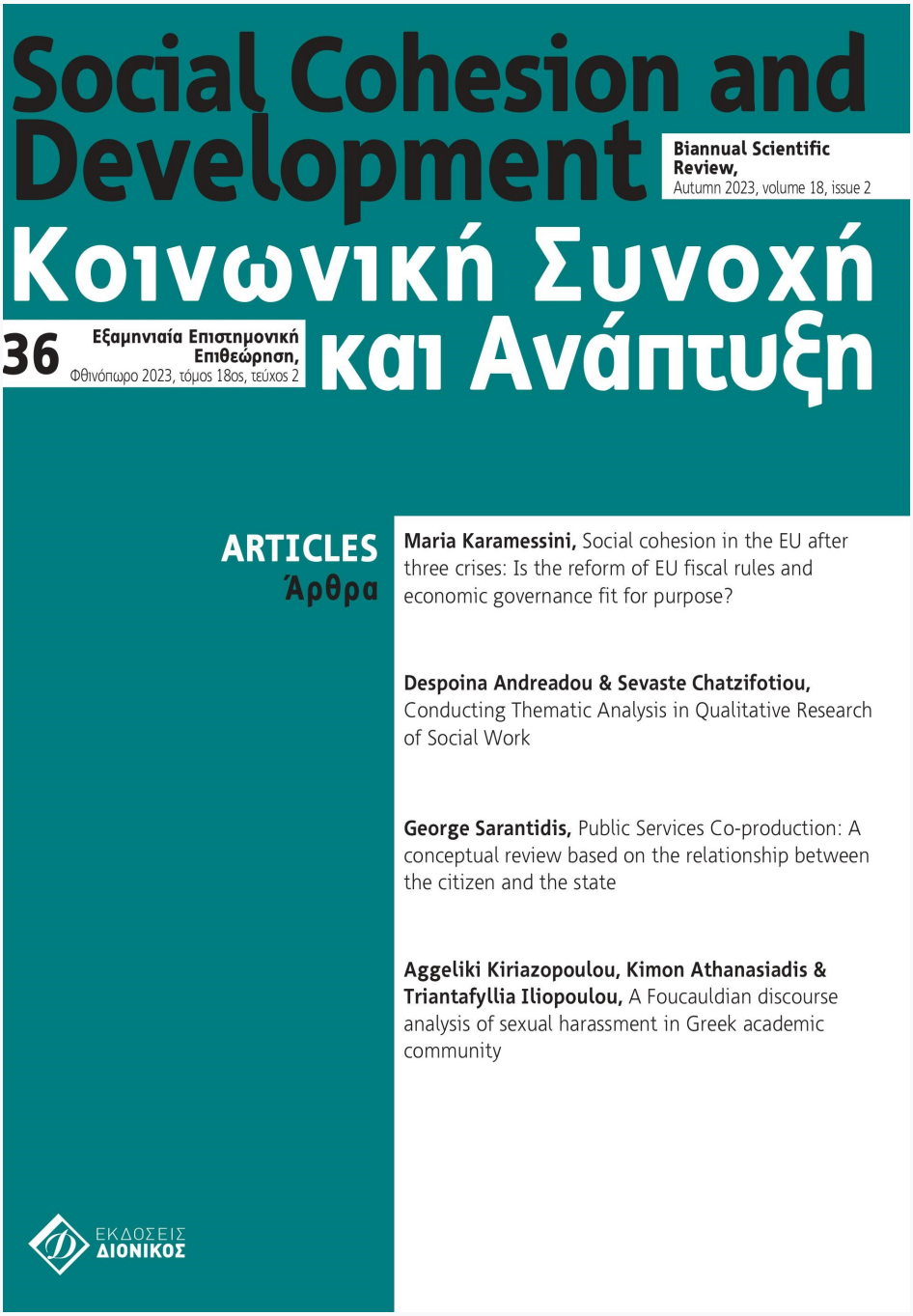

Social Cohesion and Development

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Φθινόπωρο 2023, τόμος 18ος, τεύχος 2

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ΟΔΗΓΙΕΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΕΙΣ

Τα κείμενα υποβάλλονται στα ελληνικά ή στα αγγλικά. Οι συγγραφείς δεσμεύονται ότι δεν έχουν δημοσιεύσει ή υποβάλει προς κρίση τα άρθρα τους σε άλλο έντυπο. Σε περίπτωση δημοσίευσης παρόμοιου άρθρου, αυτό δηλώνεται από τον συγγραφέα. Υποβάλλονται τέσσερα ταυτόσημα κείμενα και ένα σε ηλεκτρονική μορφή στην επόμενη διεύθυνση του εκδότη.

Θεόδωρος Σακελλαρόπουλος
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Τα άρθρα αξιολογούνται από δύο τουλάχιστον ανώνυμους κριτές. Το όνομα και τα άλλα στοιχεία του συγγραφέα, καθώς και ο τίτλος του άρθρου πρέπει να υποβάλλονται σε ξεχωριστή σελίδα από το κυρίως σώμα (τίτλος, κείμενο, βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές). Τα υποβαλλόμενα άρθρα πρέπει να συνοδεύονται από δύο περιλήψεις, όχι μεγαλύτερες των 100 λέξεων, και πέντε λέξεις-κλειδιά στα ελληνικά και τα αγγλικά. Η έκταση των άρθρων πρέπει να κυμαίνεται μεταξύ 6-8.000 λέξεων, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των περιλήψεων και αναφορών. Τα χειρόγραφα των άρθρων που απορρίπτονται δεν επιστρέφονται.

Για τις αναφορές χρησιμοποιείται το σύστημα Harvard. Οι αναφορές στο κείμενο περιλαμβάνουν το επώνυμο του συγγραφέα και το έτος έκδοσης της δημοσίευσης, π.χ. (Esping-Andersen, 1990, Kleinman and Piachaud, 1993). Οι άμεσες αναφορές πρέπει να δίνουν και τον αριθμό της σελίδας ή των σελίδων, π.χ. Ferrera et al., 2002: 230. Σε περίπτωση περισσότερων αναφορών του ίδιου συγγραφέα για το ίδιο έτος, πρέπει να χρησιμοποιείται η διάκριση με α, β, γ κ.λπ. για το έτος. Οι βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές (όχι βιβλιογραφία) καταχωρούνται αλφαβητικά στο τέλος του κειμένου. Παρακαλούνται οι συγγραφείς να επιμελούνται την ακριβή αντιστοίχηση των αναφορών του κειμένου με τον αλφαβητικό κατάλογο των βιβλιογραφικών αναφορών στο τέλος του κειμένου και το αντίστροφο. Η αναφορά σε βιβλία πρέπει να δίνει το όνομα του συγγραφέα, το έτος έκδοσης, τον τίτλο του βιβλίου, τον τόπο έκδοσης και την επωνυμία του εκδοτικού οίκου. Π.χ. Scharpf F., (1999), *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Η αναφορά άρθρων σε περιοδικά πρέπει να δίνει τόμο, τεύχος, σελίδες, καθώς και τον τίτλο του άρθρου σε απλά εισαγωγικά. Για παράδειγμα: Atkinson A.B., Marlier E. and Nolan B., (2004), "Indicators and Targets for Social Inclusion in the European Union", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42: 47-75. Αναφορές σε κεφάλαια συλλογικών τόμων καταχωρούνται με τον τίτλο του κεφαλαίου σε απλά εισαγωγικά, ακολουθούμενο από τον συγγραφέα και τον τίτλο του συλλογικού τόμου. Π.χ. Leibfried, S. and Pierson, P. (1995) "Semisovereign Welfare States: Social Policy in a multitiered Europe", in: Leibfried S. and Pierson P., (eds), *European Social Policy: Between Fragmentation and Integration*, p.p. 43-77, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Οι τίτλοι των βιβλίων και περιοδικών γράφονται με πλάγια γράμματα. Συνιστάται οι επεξηγηματικές σημειώσεις να είναι οι ελάχιστες δυνατές. Εάν κρίνονται απαραίτητες, τότε πρέπει να αριθμούνται στο κείμενο και να παρατίθενται στο τέλος του άρθρου. Επίσης, στο τέλος παρατίθενται και οι τυχόν ευχαριστίες. Άρθρα που δεν συμβιβάζονται με τις παραπάνω οδηγίες επιστρέφονται στον συγγραφέα για την ανάλογη προσαρμογή.

Τα **προς κρίση-παρουσίαση βιβλία** αποστέλλονται στην Μαρίνα Αγγελάκη, στη διεύθυνση του εκδοτικού οίκου.

Η Επιθεώρηση **Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη** κυκλοφορεί δύο φορές τον χρόνο, την άνοιξη και το φθινόπωρο.

Εκδίδεται από την **Επιστημονική Εταιρεία για την Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη**, εκτυπώνεται και διανέμεται από τις Εκδόσεις Διόνικος, Γραβιάς 9-13, Αθήνα, 10678, τηλ./φαξ: 210 3801777, e-mail: info@dionicos.gr.

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Η σημερινή οικονομική κρίση επαναφέρει επιτακτικά προς συζήτηση τα ζητήματα της κοινωνικής πολιτικής και του κοινωνικού κράτους. Ο παρών τόμος, αν και σχεδιάστηκε πρωτίστως ως διδακτικό εγχειρίδιο, αποτελεί μια κριτική και συνολική εισαγωγή στα θέματα αυτά. Πολυεπίπεδες προσεγγίσεις εξετάζουν τις κύριες έννοιες, το περιεχόμενο και την εξέλιξη του σύγχρονου κοινωνικού κράτους. Παρουσιάζονται οι επιμέρους κοινωνικές και δημόσιες πολιτικές, όπως η απασχόληση και οι εργασιακές σχέσεις, η κοινωνική ασφάλιση, η υγεία, η κοινωνική πρόνοια και ο κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός, οι πολιτικές για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες, η εκπαιδευτική πολιτική. Κοινωνικοί κίνδυνοι, κοινωνική προστασία, κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη, κοινωνικά προβλήματα, κοινωνική συνοχή είναι οι άξονες γύρω από τους οποίους δομούνται αυτές οι πολιτικές. Οι οριζόντιου χαρακτήρα κοινωνικές πολιτικές επικεντρώνονται στο φύλο, στην τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση, σε υπερεθνικό και ευρωπαϊκό πεδίο, στην κοινωνική οικονομία και στην επιχειρηματικότητα. Τέλος, αναλύεται ο ρόλος των βασικών πυλώνων και εργαλείων άσκησης και εφαρμογής κοινωνικών πολιτικών, όπως αυτός της κυβέρνησης, των συνδικάτων, της κοινωνίας πολιτών και των επιχειρήσεων. Τα κεφάλαια του τόμου, γραμμένα απλά και κατανοητά από έμπειρους πανεπιστημιακούς και ειδικευμένους στο αντικείμενο ερευνητές, προσφέρουν μια συνολική και περιεκτική εικόνα των αντίστοιχων πολιτικών, της εξέλιξης και της εφαρμογής τους.

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Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη 2023 18 (2), 5-26

Social cohesion in the EU after three crises: Is the reform of EU fiscal rules and economic governance framework fit for purpose?

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Η κοινωνική συνοχή στην Ε.Ε. μετά από τρεις κρίσεις: Μπορεί να συμβάλει η αναθεώρηση των δημοσιονομικών κανόνων και της οικονομικής διακυβέρνησης της Ε.Ε.;

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ABSTRACT

The paper studies social divergences between and within EU members states (MS) over the past fifteen years and assesses whether the reform of the new EU fiscal rules and economic governance, which is currently proposed by the European Commission, can complement EU's cohesion policy in stemming the erosion of EU's social cohesion that was produced by the three major crises of the period and their political management. Finally, we present alternative proposals by governments, academics and the European Trade Union Confederation.

KEY WORDS: European Union, social cohesion, social divergences, fiscal rules, economic governance, EU social policy

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο μελετά τις κοινωνικές αποκλίσεις μεταξύ και εντός κρατών μελών (ΚΜ) της Ε.Ε. τα τελευταία δεκαπέντε χρόνια και αξιολογεί την πρόταση της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής για την επικείμενη μεταρρύθμιση των δημοσιονομικών κανόνων και του πλαισίου οικονομικής διακυβέρνησης της Ε.Ε. Προσπαθούμε να απαντήσουμε στο ερώτημα εάν η προτεινόμενη αναθεώρηση μπορεί να αντιμετωπίσει τη διάβρωση της κοινωνικής της συνοχής της Ε.Ε., που προκάλεσαν οι τρεις μεγάλες κρίσεις της περιόδου και οι πολιτικές διαχείρισής τους, δρώντας συμπληρωματικά με την πολιτική συνοχής της Ε.Ε. και παρουσιάζουμε εναλλακτικές προτάσεις μεταρρύθμισης από κυβερνήσεις, ακαδημαϊκούς, και τη Συνομοσπονδία Ευρωπαϊκών Συνδικάτων.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση, κοινωνική συνοχή, κοινωνικές αποκλίσεις, δημοσιονομικοί κανόνες, οικονομική διακυβέρνηση, κοινωνική πολιτική της Ε.Ε.

1. Introduction

The global financial crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis have significantly deteriorated the working and living conditions of workers and popular classes across Europe and are still affecting their wellbeing. At the same time, during the 'permacrisis' of the past fifteen years economic and social divergences have increased both within and between EU Member States (MS) undermining social cohesion and the legitimacy of the project of European integration. Rising inequalities have eroded social cohesion across the EU, including in the countries of its "core", while economic and social divergences between MS have gone hand in hand, with contrasting trajectories of the old and new "periphery" of the EU.

The starting point of our paper is that fostering upward social convergence and tackling social inequalities across the EU is not only a fundamental challenge for the future of EU integration and the main way for preventing further escalation of far-/alt-right forces, but it is also a precondition for the success of the ecological and technological/ industrial transformation and the restructuring of European economies i.e., the green and digital transitions and strategic investment promoting 'open strategic autonomy'.

We argue that, although the European Pillar of Social Rights constitutes an important basis for political initiatives intended to reverse the trend towards the erosion of worker and social rights in the EU, it is impossible to build a socially cohesive Europe only through directives defining minimum social standards for MS, Council Recommendations and EU social policy actions, however important these may be. Upward social convergence of EU MS lagging behind is strongly associated with their upward economic convergence while tackling social inequalities within Member States requires, at the national level, well-functioning collective bargaining and social dialogue as well as anti-discrimination and redistributive fiscal and social policies which are costly and need fiscal space.

In the following months, the Council and European Parliament will have to agree on the final proposal by the European Commission for the reform of the EU economic governance framework, which provides MS with greater leeway to use their fiscal policies and preserve public investment than they had before under the Fiscal Compact. Although the proposal is clearly a positive development, it falls short of creating a sufficient fiscal space for MS at the national level to deal with the great economic, social and environmental challenges they face in the current juncture of 'polycrisis', and more so for MS that are far from/diverge from the EU average and need to converge. It should be clear, though, that sufficient fiscal space at the national level cannot address the problem of the great differences in the borrowing capacity of MS. More fiscal capacity at the national level should be thus supplemented by the extension of EU fiscal capacity and its just distribution to MS through the EU Structural and Investment Funds.

We start our analysis by examining economic and social convergence/divergences and inequalities between and within EU Member States from the beginning of the 2008 global financial crisis to date, to establish trends in the reinforcement/weakening of social cohesion in the EU (section 2). We then assess the reform of the EU fiscal surveillance and economic governance framework proposed by the European Commission is "fit for purpose" also from the social convergence and cohesion angle, which is not usually taken on board in most assessments of the Commission's legislative proposals (section 3). Finally, we present alternative reform proposals, such as the adoption of the "golden rule" for social investments and the establishment of a single EU governance/coordination framework of the economic and social policies of the MS. This puts the economic and social objectives on an equal footing, is combined with the expansion of the EU's fiscal capacity and allocates European resources to MSs according to economic and social convergence and cohesion criteria (section 4).

2. Economic and social convergences/divergences between and within EU Member States: the contrasting trajectories of the 'old' and the 'new' periphery

From the foundation of the EEC in 1957 to date, the ideas of shared prosperity and economic convergence have gone hand-in-hand with that of European economic integration, while economic convergence has been considered as the fundamental mechanism and precondition for achieving socio-economic cohesion (Alcidi 2019).

Although cohesion policy was not designated by the Treaty of Rome as a field of Community intervention, the harmonious development of EEC economies through the reduction of regional disparities and of the backwardness of the less favoured regions was mentioned in its preamble as one of the specific goals of the EEC. The European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund established in 1958 and 1975 respectively allowed for the funding of joint policies to reinforce the social cohesion of EEC Member States and reduce regional economic and social disparities.

In the 1980s, the enlargement of the EEC with Greece, Spain and Portugal produced a divide between the MS of northern Europe who had strong and stable industrial bases and the less-developed and industrialized southern European periphery. As a result, the Single European Act of 1986, which revised the Treaty of Rome in order to complete the internal market by 1st January 1993 also officially established the EEC's Cohesion Policy to address disparities between regions in GDP per capita and the unemployment rate. This would be achieved by equipping poorer regions with tools and resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds to realize investment and institutional reforms that improve productivity and boost their potential growth, promote employment and prevent social exclusion. The combination of cohesion policy and the internal market was expected to drive upward economic convergence by allowing the poorer Member States to grow faster and catch up with the richer ones.

The Maastricht Treaty (1992), which established the E.U. and launched the EMU, set the criteria for "nominal" economic convergence, which the EU Member States had to meet in order to adopt the euro. These concerned price and exchange rate stability, long-term interest rates, the government deficit and debt. The espousal of the EMU was accompanied by the decision to increase the resources that would be distributed through the European structural funds the less developed MS/regions of the EU. The purpose of the decision was to compensate through the strengthening of the EU cohesion policy the anticipated negative effects on the less developed MS/regions of the EU from the operation of the Single Market and the austerity policies that the MS would have to implement in order to meet the EMU membership criteria.

Social convergences/divergences between and within EU MS depend firstly on "real" economic convergence/divergence trends in the EU. Fundamental economic variables, such as GDP per capita, productivity and the employment rate are main determinants of the levels and trends in main social indicators, such as real disposable income per capita, wages or the unemployment rate. Secondly, social convergences/divergences depend on (re)distributional and (anti) discrimination processes and policies at the national and EU levels. Wage determination systems and practices as well as employment and social policies account for the levels and trends in the wage share, social expenditure per capita or as % of GDP, income inequality and poverty, employment, wage and income differentials between different social groups etc.

In this section we first examine the trends of economic convergence/divergence in the EU from the mid-1990s to the end of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, before focusing on social convergence/divergence trends between 2008 and 2022, i.e., the period of "permacrisis". Covering the entire period is important in order to (a) draw conclusions about how EU member states have weathered the three major crises of the last fifteen years, if and how well they have been able to protect their citizens' well-being during the recessions and improve it during the recoveries compared to their neighbours and partners (b) gauge the upward convergence effort required by the EU member states which are below the EU average in various economic and social indicators and assess the problem and challenge of social cohesion in today's Europe.

2.1 Economic convergence/divergence trends in the EU: literature review

Research on real convergence within the EU has been the subject of several studies in the past. The findings of individual authors vary according to the applied methodology, the analyzed period, and the statistical indicators used. GDP/ income per capita is the chief variable used to examine economic convergence/divergence and we indicatively present below the findings of selected studies on the long-term trends, in order to demonstrate the different approaches in the convergence/divergence literature.

For instance, Cavenaile and Dubois (2011) evidenced an income convergence process within the EU (27 countries) between 1990 and 2007 but also found that the EU was showing significant heterogeneity. Namely, the convergence of Eastern and Central European MS with those of EU-15 was much stronger than that of the countries belonging to EU 15. In contrast, Celio et al. (2020) have painted a different picture of the trends than the above during the two decades before the 2008 financial crisis. They have maintained that, during these decades, the deregulation of goods, labour and capital markets which shaped the direction of the European integration process, halted the process of convergence in the EU and led to a structural divergence between the core and its southern periphery which incurred deindustrialization and 'poor' tertiarisation. Such divergence was partly hidden in the first period of the EMU, i.e., between 2000 and 2008, by massive financial flows to the countries of Southern Europe. The same authors have also attributed the strong growth of Central and Eastern Europe to the huge flow of foreign direct investment which transformed the economies into an essential source of intermediate goods for the German industry. They have argued that the foreign control of production decisions, innovation processes and markets has made it extremely difficult for Eastern MS to undertake an independent, less unbalanced development path (Celio et al. 2018).

It should be kept in mind though, that the pre-financial crisis catch-up process of Eastern Europe was not confined to the Visegrád countries that belong to the "central European manufacturing core" whose heart is Germany (Stehrer & Stöllinger 2015), but included all the former communist countries that are now members of the EU. Andor (2019) has underlined that in spite of their rapid economic catch-up with the countries of the core, especially since 2004, the upward income convergence of the Eastern EU MS has not been coupled by a similar social convergence while their strong economic performance has been accompanied by internal socio-economic polarization.

The global financial crisis of 2008 reversed the general trend of convergence of the 1990s and 2000s both between countries and between EU regions. During the austerity phase (2010-2015) there was a divergence between EU countries, while the divergence between regions started in

2008 and lasted until 2015, when the coefficient of variation of GDP per capita had recovered at the level of 2000 (Alcidi 2019). Economic divergence during the austerity phase of the 2008 crisis resulted from the recessions produced in the southern European MS by tough fiscal consolidation plans. The recessions destroyed much of the productive capacity of most southern European countries (Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Cyprus), while the internal devaluation strategy implemented as part of the economic adjustment programs overseen by the Troika to boost cost competitiveness left untouched their structural weaknesses (Wigger 2023).

Finally, Abrhám and Vošta (2022) have analysed convergence/divergence trends between EU MS in GDP per capita (measured in purchasing power parity units) during the most recent period of 2016-2021, which they have divided in a pre-pandemic period of growth (2016-2019) and in the pandemic years of crisis (2020-2021). They have found convergence of GDP per capita in the EU during the pre-pandemic period and divergence during the Covid-19 years. Convergence during the 2015-2019 period stemmed from the rapid recovery of the German economy that pulled the eastern periphery along with it (Celio et al. 2020) while the economic divergence between EU MS during the Covid-19 pandemic was caused by a lower decline in GDP per capita in the more than in the less developed EU countries (Abrhám and Vošta 2022).

Table 1 data on EU MS's GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) units relative to the EU-27 average confirm the above analysis for the EU as a whole, but also illustrate opposing trends between the old and new periphery of the EU. Namely, all Southern European MS (except Malta) have incurred a downgrading in their relative position in the ranking due to the toll that the sovereign debt crisis took on their economies and their poor growth performance across the whole period relative to the EU-average. Italy's, Spain's and Cyprus's GDP per capita in PPP was above the EU-average in 2008; it is now below and it has been surpassed by that of some new MS. Portugal's below-EU-average position in 2008 has also deteriorated. Greece's GDP per capita, which was slightly below the EU average in 2008, is now at the second lowest position of the EU by 2022, after the long austerity cure imposed on its economy from 2010 to 2018, which initially produced the collapse of GDP. The table also illustrates that all new MS (except Cyprus and Slovakia) have converged with the EU-27 average from a below-average starting point. The old MS of the core also converged, starting from above the average.

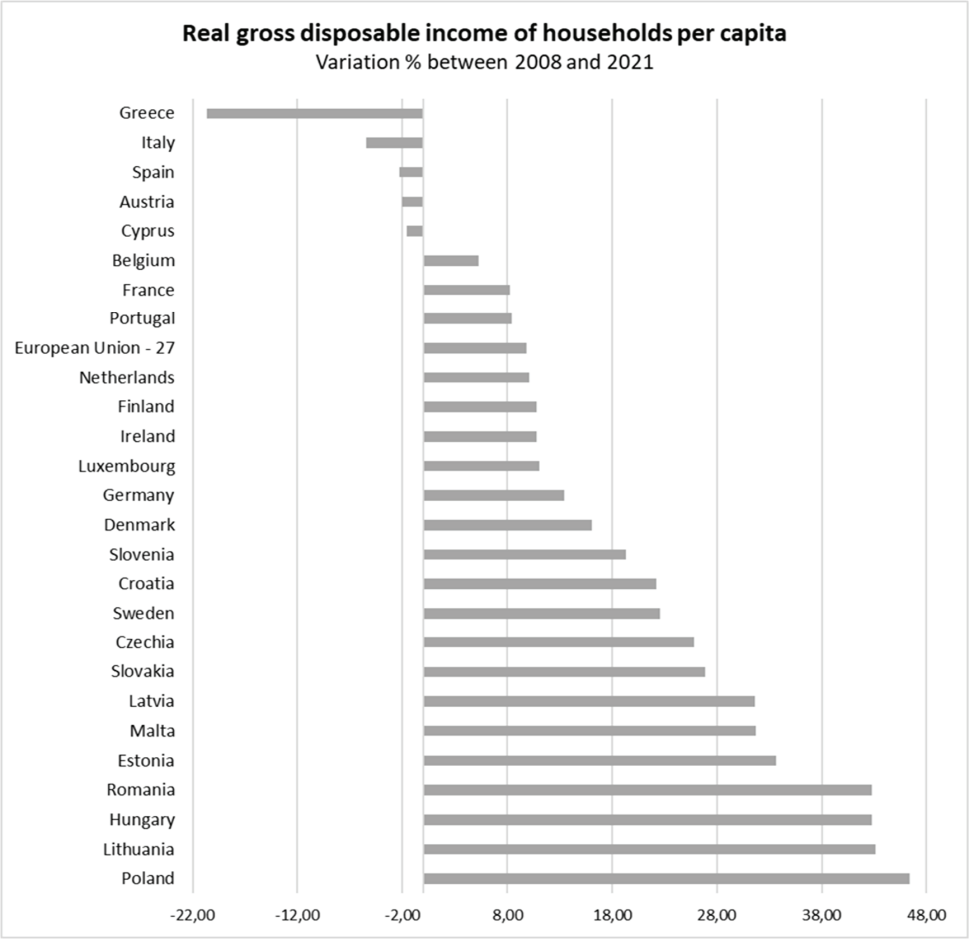
Table 1: **GDP per capita relative to EU-27 in PPP**				
EU-27 = 100				
	2008	2015	2019	2022
Luxembourg	279,0	282,0	251,3	261,3
Netherlands	142,5	131,5	126,9	129,3
Ireland	135,4	180,8	189,4	233,9
Sweden	129,4	128,4	118,9	118,8
Austria	126,9	130,5	125,9	125,3
Denmark	126,8	128,2	126,2	136,6
Finland	123,1	111,1	109,2	109,0
Germany	118,0	124,5	121,0	116,8
Belgium	116,3	120,8	117,6	119,9
Italy	108,4	97,3	96,5	95,6
France	107,8	106,7	105,8	101,5
Cyprus	106,9	83,4	92,8	91,9
Spain	102,1	91,3	90,9	85,2
European Union	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Greece	94,7	70,0	65,7	67,8
Slovenia	90,9	82,7	88,7	92,4
Czechia	85,5	88,6	93,2	91,0
Portugal	81,9	77,5	78,6	77,2
Malta	81,4	97,8	103,6	102,2
Slovakia	72,5	78,6	70,5	68,1
Estonia	69,9	76,4	82,3	87,0
Croatia	64,4	60,9	66,5	72,8
Hungary	63,6	70,1	73,0	77,7
Lithuania	63,6	75,4	84,2	89,8
Latvia	60,1	65,3	69,4	74,1
Poland	56,2	69,3	72,9	79,5
Romania	51,5	56,5	69,6	77,1
Bulgaria	43,3	48,1	53,0	58,7
*Purchasing power parity.				
Source: AMECO database online (accessed on 14.10.2023).				

2.2 Social convergence/divergence between EU MS during the 'permacrisis'

After having examined the main trends in economic convergence/divergence between EU MS from the mid-1990s to the end of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, we will now focus on social convergence/divergence in the E.U. over the 2008-2022 period by studying the trends in the following variables: gross disposable household income per capita at constant prices, employment rate, real wage/remuneration per employee.

Real gross disposable income of households per capita: Between 2008 and 2021, the real per capita gross disposable income of households grew by 10% in the EU on average. The mean dissimulates extremely large country differences in the values of the variable, ranging from -21% in Greece to 46% in Poland, which reflect the legacy of the global financial crisis; the latter hit EU MS in different ways and with varying intensity.

Graph 1



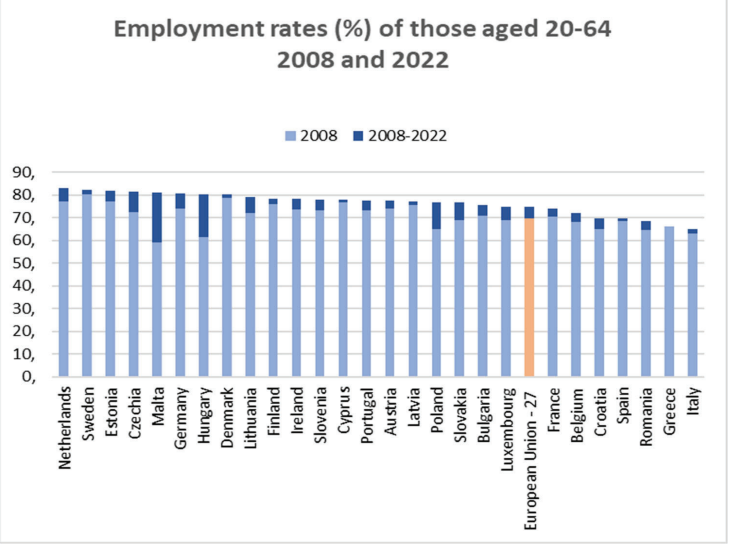
If we measure convergence/divergence in the real gross per capita disposable income of households by comparing dispersion of the values of the variable around the mean in 2008 and 2021, then the coefficient of variation (0.573 in 2008 against 0.568 in 2021) shows that the dispersion was roughly the same in 2021 as in 2008. However, measuring dispersion at the start and end years of the period does not take into account the convergence/divergence trajectories of individual countries or groups of countries towards/from the EU-average trend over the period, as captured by Graph 2.

Graph 1 illustrates that **twelve out of the thirteen "new" MS** that joined the EU with the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargements - all except Cyprus - were those that registered spectacular increases of real per capital household income - between 19% and 46% -thus converging with per capita household income of older MS which displayed as a whole smaller increase. Among the latter, Sweden, Denmark and Germany are the best performers, while **most of the southern EU countries** (Greece, Italy, Spain and Cyprus) along with Austria registered a reduction in per capita disposable household income.

Convergence/divergence trajectories of the individual countries around the EU-average trend in real disposable income of households per capita is chiefly accounted for by differences in the evolution of the employment rate, real wages and social benefits.

Employment rate: The right to work is a fundamental social right and having access to a good job is the precondition for earning a decent market income and for the well-being of workers and their families. Per capita household income rises at the micro level with the number of labour income earners in the household and, at the macro level, with an increasing employment rate of the working age population. A key effect of the 2008 global financial crisis was the fall of the employment rate of those aged 20-64 years in the EU from 69.5% in 2008 to 67.5% in 2013. The six-year growth period that followed brought this rate to 73% in 2019, well above the 2008 level. After its contraction by one p.p. in 2020, the strong rebound of the EU economy after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, was accompanied by a surge in the number of new jobs while employment also grew during the cost-of-living crisis. In 2022, the EU-average employment rate of the population aged 20-64 years was at 75%, 5.5 p.p. above its 2008 level.

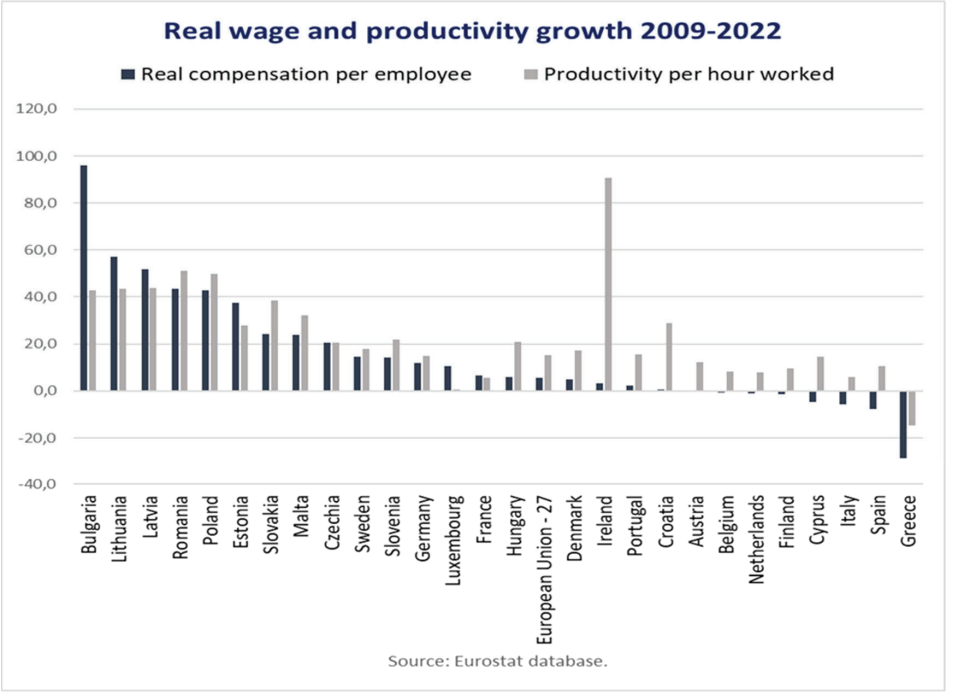
Graph 2



Convergence and divergence trajectories of individual countries to the EU-average between 2008 and 2022 can been seen on Graph 2. All **southern European countries** that endured sizeable recessions and important net job losses due to the implementation of harsh fiscal consolidation programmes during the sovereign debt crisis years (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus and Italy) saw no or very small increases in their employment rate. Starting with a below-EU-average employment rate in 2008, Greece, Spain and Italy further diverged from the EU-average while Portugal and Cyprus converged since their employment rate was above the EU-average in 2008.

In contrast, a significant increase in the employment rate took place in **almost all the 'new' EU MS** across 2008 and 2022. The rise was spectacular in Malta, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (mainly) due to (very) high job growth rates across the period. Starting from a below EU-average employment rate in 2008, the above four countries initially converged by climbing towards and subsequently landed above the EU-average in 2022. However, in all the remaining countries of the group, the observed increase in the employment rate was entirely/mainly due to the reduction in the working wage population due to low fertility and out-migration flows.

Graph 3



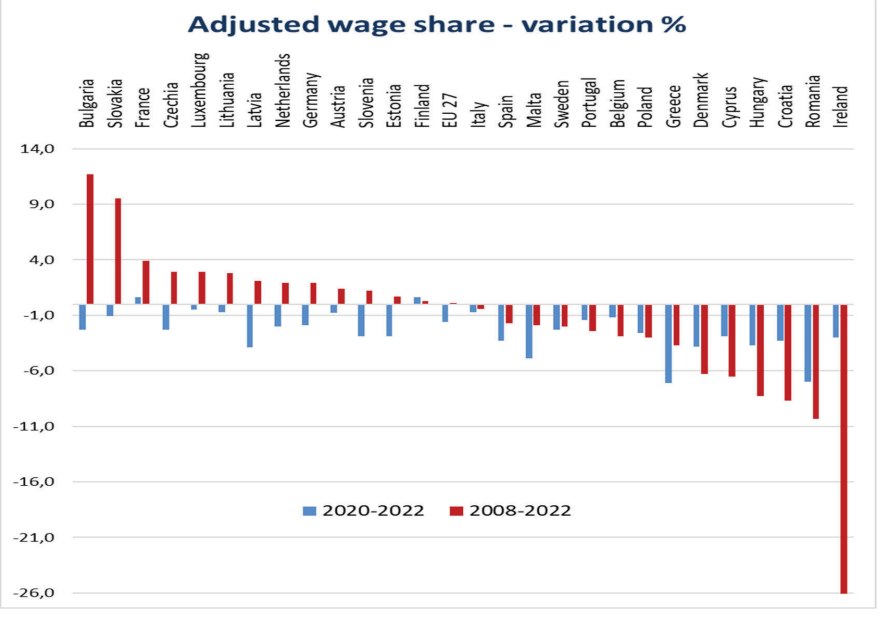
Real wage/compensation per employee: Between 2009 and 2022 real wages in all eastern European countries except Hungary strongly converged to the EU average and diverged in all southern European ones, except Malta. This is the outcome of the huge differential of wage growth rates between these two groups of countries (Graph 3). In most 'new' EU MS (Bulgaria, the Baltic states, Romania, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Malta and Slovenia) real wages rose steeply, mainly due to repeated increases in minimum wages by governments and to the contraction of unemployment, which increased the bargaining power of employees. To the contrary, real

wages decreased in most southern EU MS (Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Spain and Italy) during the austerity period of the financial crisis. The initial phase of real wage contraction, was followed by a moderate increase during the 2014-2019 period, which yet did not succeed in bringing the purchasing power of wages in these countries to their peak 2009 level. Besides, in Greece, Cyprus and Spain real wages decreased more than in the EU on average in 2022, i.e., during the cost-of-living crisis, adding to the divergence trend of 2009-2021.

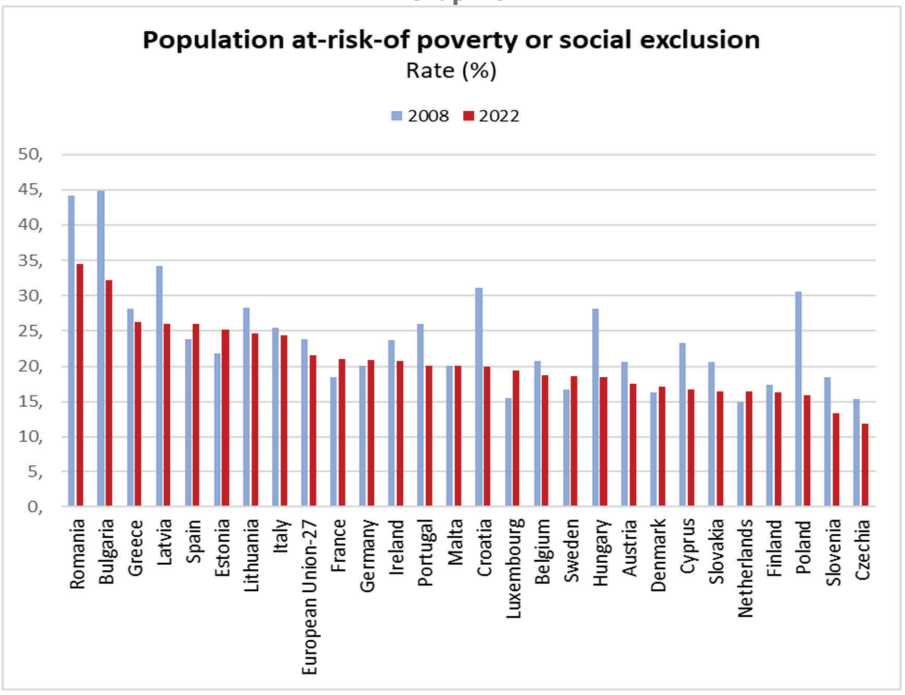
For 'core' EU MS wage developments have been diverse. Real wages in Sweden, Germany and Luxembourg saw a significant increase – from 10 to 15% - between 2009 and 2022, while France, Denmark, Ireland and Portugal witnessed real wage growth rates that ranged from 2% to 7% over the same period. Finally, in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Finland real wages decreased between 2009 and 2022, but this has not undermined their position among the EU countries with high wages.

To some extent, real wage growth divergences between EU MS over the period under study have reflected discrepancies in labour productivity developments. Most of the countries of the 'core' of the EU, with the exception of Sweden, Germany and Ireland, seem to be stuck in a low productivity-low wage growth equilibrium whereas in most 'new' MS the spectacular rise in real wages seems to be driven and accounted for by an equally remarkable productivity growth. However, labour productivity growth is not the only determinant of real wage variation. The bargaining power of labour and the income policies pursued during the three crises are the main determinants of the outcome of the distributional conflicts between capital and labour across the EU, as captured by the change in the wage share. Graph 4 shows that, between 2008 and 2022, this increased in the majority of 'new' MS, diminished in all Southern European MS and followed different directions in the MS of the 'core' while during the cost-of-living crisis it collapsed across the EU (Janssen and Lübker 2023).

Graph 4



Graph 5



Poverty and social exclusion: The at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate has decreased in the EU as a whole between 2008 and 2022 with the most important reductions having been noted in the new EU MS (Graph 5). As these were also the MS with the highest at-risk-of poverty and social exclusion rates in the EU, the reductions led to their convergence towards the EU-average rate. Of equal importance is the increase in the poverty and social exclusion rates in France, Germany, Luxembourg, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, which is a clear sign of erosion of social cohesion in the countries of the 'core' of the EU between 2008 and 2022. Finally, in the case of the southern European EU member states, the reduction in relative poverty, indicated by the trend shown in the chart for the rate of at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion to shrink between 2008 and 2022, fails by definition to capture the impoverishment of very large population strata due to the economic and social effects of the policies of harsh austerity and internal devaluation they implemented.

Given the above trends, there are still great differences between EU countries re the extent of poverty and social exclusion and the pattern is similar to that described for income inequality. Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltic States, Greece, Spain and Italy are the countries of the EU with the highest rates of population in poverty or social exclusion. However, eastern and southern European countries are internally divided between the low and high poverty/social exclusion ones. The internal divide can be explained by the different institutional and political settings, and social and political coalitions that shape distributional outcomes in each country.

From the analysis of social convergence/divergence trends between EU MS on the basis of the cross-country variation of four selected social indicators over the 2008-2022 period cover-

ing the three successive major crises that the EU recently experienced, we can conclude that the "new periphery" comprising the MS from Eastern and Southern Europe that joined the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013 converged with the MS of the "core" with regard to real wages, the real disposable income of households per capita and the at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate. Moreover, due to the strong job growth that took place in Malta, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, in 2022, the employment rate of the above four countries had surpassed the EU average, while in 2008 it was much below the latter. The social convergence of the "new periphery" is associated with economic convergence based on higher GDP and productivity growth than in the EU-15 countries. On the contrary, the "old periphery" of the EU (including Italy and excluding Ireland) has experienced social divergence on the basis of all three indicators: the real disposable income of households per capita, the employment rate and real wages. The social damage caused in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy by the harsh austerity and internal devaluation policies imposed by the troika (EC, ECB IMF) during the sovereign debt crisis, was compounded with the negative effect of the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crises on incomes and wages.

2.3 Inequalities within Member States: cross-country disparities

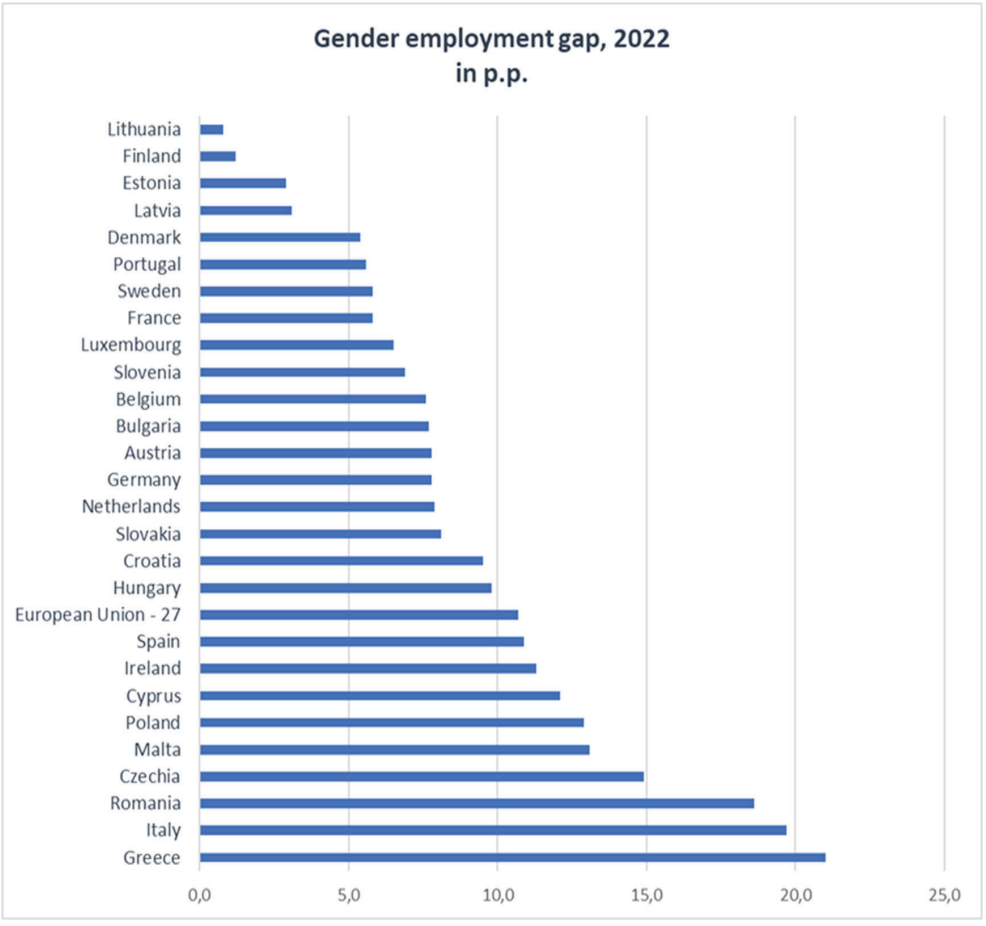
In this subsection we analyse inequalities in employment, income and access to basic social services within EU MS, in order to identify those that need more fiscal space at the national level and assistance from the European Structural Funds in order to tackle them. To compare EU countries, we use the following variables/indicators: the gender employment gap, the income quintile share ratio, and the out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare. Cross-country disparities in the at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate have already been analysed along with trends in social convergence/divergence of MS.

Inequalities in employment: The gender employment gap, measured as the difference between the male and the female employment rates, is a key indicator of inequalities in employment. The EU-average gender gap shrank from 13.4 pp. in 2009 to 10.7 p.p. in 2022. Up to 2013, this reflected the greater negative effect that the global financial crisis had on male than female employment whereas the narrowing of the gap is negligible from 2014 onward pointing to an almost gender-equal job growth during the subsequent years. Nevertheless, country differences remained huge in 2022, ranging from 21 p.p. in Greece to 0.8 p.p. in Lithuania (Graph 6). All southern European countries, except Portugal, alongside Romania, Poland and Ireland are the MS with the greatest gender inequalities in access to employment in the EU.

Income inequality: The income quintile share ratio S80/S20, measuring the ratio of the total equivalized disposable income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income (top quintile) to that received by the 20 % of the population with the lowest income (lowest quintile) is a key indicator of income inequality in a country. According to this indicator, income inequality in the EU was the same in 2022 as in 2008; after having increased during the global financial crisis, it narrowed in the following years and recently returned to its 2008 level. However, there are very large discrepancies in the degree of income inequality between EU MS (Graph 7).

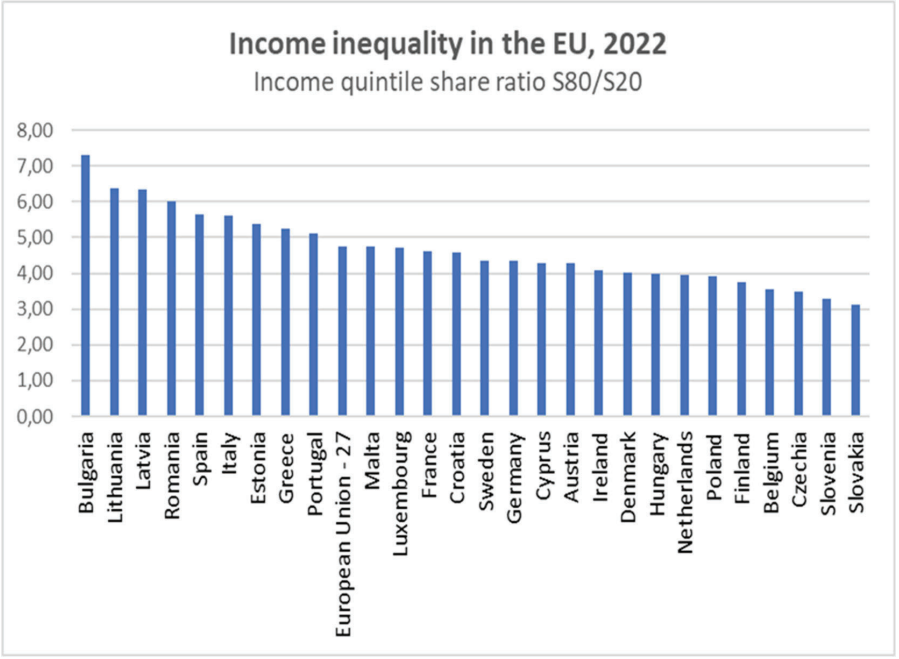
Although half of the eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Romania and the Baltic States) and the largest southern European ones (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) are the most unequal countries in the EU with regard to the income distribution, the Visegrád countries and Slovenia are among those with the lowest income inequalities, while Cyprus has lower income inequalities than the EU on average.

Graph 6

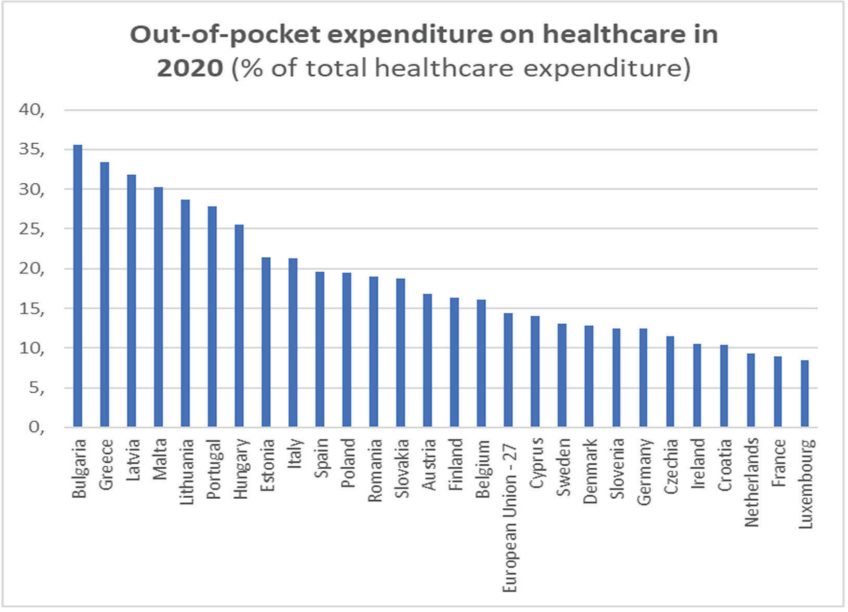


Inequality in access to basic social services: Free access to good quality healthcare proved of fundamental significance for European societies in their attempt to cope with and minimize the number of deaths from the Covid-19 pandemic. The latter brought to the fore the importance of public healthcare to ensure basic social rights as well as the vulnerability of citizens and societies from the rampant privatization of the healthcare sector in the past decades. The out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare is the main indicator measuring the degree of privatization of healthcare services in the different EU MS (Graph 8). According to the most recent available data, the top thirteen ranks of the list of the EU MS according to out-of-pocket expenditure as a percentage (%) of total healthcare expenditure are occupied by eastern and southern European countries. Among the recent EU MS, only Croatia, Czechia and Slovenia appear to have robust public healthcare systems and to keep private healthcare expenditure at low levels.

Graph 7



Graph 8



2.4 Social convergences/divergences and social cohesion in the EU: the big challenge of South Europe

Some general conclusions can be drawn from the examination of social convergences/ divergences between and within EU MS in the above paragraphs. First of all, with respect to cross-country differences on the basis of GDP per capita, the literature review points to income convergence of EU MS between 2000 and 2009 (pre-crisis period and first years of financial crisis), divergence between 2009 and 2015 (austerity phase and exit from financial crisis), convergence between 2015 and 2019 (between-two-crises growth period) and divergence between 2019 and 2021 (pandemic crisis). It seems that the crisis periods were detrimental for the social cohesion of the EU.

Second, our analysis of trends over the 2008-2022 period on the basis of main social variables-indicators has proved that all "new" MS from the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargements of the EU, except Cyprus, have converged towards the older MS as regards the real per capita household disposable income and real wages while most of the southern EU MS (Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Spain) have diverged.

Third, southern and eastern EU MS are heterogenous groups when it comes to within-country income inequalities and poverty/social exclusion rates, but most of the southern European countries and half of the eastern European ones are those with the highest scores in income inequality and poverty/social exclusion rates in the EU. Southern Europe is also much more homogenous than Eastern Europe and 'new' MS as regards gender inequalities in access to employment – southern European countries appear among the EU MS with the lowest female employment rates and the largest gender employment gaps, while most of the eastern European countries have above EU average female employment rates and below EU average gender employment gaps. However, southern and eastern European countries are 'united' and internally homogenous in having the more privatized healthcare systems in the EU.

All in all, southern Europe is diverging from the EU-average in all main indicators of social well-being and cohesion, while 'new' MS are converging though from low starting points re per capita income and wages. At the same time, old EU MS of the 'core' and Scandinavian countries do not follow the same trend. Most of them display rising income inequality and poverty and social exclusion rates and are stuck in a low productivity-low real wage growth or reductions nexus. This means that social cohesion is a big stake for both the EU and the Member States, while social divergences between MS over the past fifteen years are strongly associated with economic divergences triggered by the successive crises and the pre-2008 pattern of EU economic integration.

The divergence of the European South is by far the biggest challenge, given that the Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish governments are overindebted and will have to implement restrictive fiscal policies from 2024 onwards. In the next section we assess whether the reform proposals of the European Commission are fit for addressing the issues of economic and social convergence and cohesion in the EU.

3. New EU fiscal rules and economic governance: More but insufficient fiscal space to face major challenges - tighter control of compliance

In April 2023 the European Commission presented its final legislative proposals for a comprehensive reform of the EU economic governance framework (European Commission 2023). The European Parliament and the Council will have to agree on these proposals for the new framework to start being implemented in 2024 and fully from 2025 onwards. Hereafter we first explain the reasons and present the main features of the reform and then proceed to its assessment.

The debate on how to reform the EU framework of economic policy coordination and surveillance was initiated in 2015, as a response to the global financial crisis and the euro area sovereign debt crisis and gained momentum with the launch of the European Green Deal and the Covid-19 pandemic. For the proponents of the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact, more leeway in fiscal policies was needed to allow EU MS address two challenges (a) stabilise their economies, preserve public investment and their production capacity and protect the society in the face of shocks, long-lasting economic crises and major health crises, and (b) finance the necessary investment for the green and digital transitions without leaving anyone behind. The above debate evolved in parallel with the one on whether and in what form a common fiscal capacity should be established in the euro area and possibly in the EU (Theodoropoulou 2023).

3.1 The Commission's reform proposals

The Commission's proposed reform seeks to respond to the significantly higher levels of public debt in the aftermath of the pandemic by taking on board the lessons from the EU policy response to COVID-19. The key objective of the reform of EU fiscal rules and economic governance is to offer to the MS with high public debt the opportunity for a **smooth fiscal adjustment** that will allow them to **promote growth** through public investment and reforms and, at the same time, **improve debt sustainability**.

The legislative proposals introduce a **new fiscal surveillance process** for the coordination of MS economic policies, to be integrated in the European Semester. The new process makes EU economic governance simpler, places greater emphasis on the medium-term but also strengthens the power of the Council and the Commission to enforce compliance of MS with EU criteria for structural reforms and investment.

In the new process, MS will have to bring together their fiscal, reform and investment commitments into a **single medium-term fiscal-structural plan** setting out their fiscal, reform and investment policies over the course of four years. Fiscal surveillance under the European Semester will now focus on a **single operational indicator**, namely the MS's multi-year **net expenditure targets,** as endorsed by the Council, that will serve as a basis for carrying out annual fiscal surveillance over the lifetime of the MS's medium-term fiscal-structural plan.

The fiscal surveillance of MS with a government deficit above 3% or public debt above 60% of GDP will be based on fiscal policy commitments under their national fiscal adjustment paths i.e., on their net expenditure paths, spreading over four to seven years. The initial reference adjustment path for each MS will be informed by the **Commission's debt sustainability analysis** to ensure that debt is put on a plausibly downward path or stays at prudent levels at the end of the adjustment period, and that the deficit is brought and maintained below 3% of GDP in the

medium term. For the MS in breach of the 3% deficit rule, a fiscal adjustment of 0.5% per annum will be required. For those with debt below 60% and deficits below 3%, the Commission will issue guidance based on the structural deficit to ensure that this remains the case.

The **European Semester** will remain the key channel for the Council to endorse the set of reform and investment commitments proposed by MS after an assessment by the Commission against clear common criteria set out in EU legislation (growth-enhancement, debt sustainability, common EU priorities and targets, CSRs); and for the Commission to monitor the delivery of investment and reform commitments contained in MS recovery and resilience and medium-term fiscal-structural plans. The reforms and investments of the medium-term fiscal-structural plans should prevent or correct imbalances detected under the **Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure**.

3.2 Assessment of the proposed reform

The new fiscal surveillance process has positive aspects which are welcome: (a) the abolition of the 1/20th debt-reduction rule; (b) the replacement of the unobservable and unmeasurable structural deficit by the net expenditure as implementation indicator; (c) the differentiation of fiscal adjustment paths between countries by taking into account their size of their public debt challenges. This provides the most indebted EU MS, among which all the southern European ones, with greater leeway to use their fiscal policies and preserve public investment than they had before.

However, concerning the formation, approval and implementation of medium-term adjustment plans, there is a trade-off between enjoying a tailored and, hence, context-appropriate fiscal policy, on one hand, and vesting non-transparent and potentially unaccountable power in the Commission, on the other (Sweeney and Canelli 2023).

In reality, the positive aspects of the reform are mitigated by the following downsides:

a) The **extent of fiscal leeway** will depend on t**he debt sustainability analysis** which will be informed by the Commission and negotiated with MS; the assumptions for the analysis cannot avoid **political assessments**.
b) The reform offers to indebted MS very **little additional room for manoeuvre** in exchange of a **tighter control** by the Commission and the Council **of their compliance** with **EU criteria for investment and reforms** in the framework of the European Semester. For Member States that face substantial public debt challenges, departures from the agreed fiscal adjustment path will by default lead to the opening of an excessive deficit procedure and **stricter sanctions**.
c) The reform **does not guarantee a sufficient**, or sufficiently even, **fiscal space** across MS to support the green and digital transitions and industrial policy, provide quality public services and tackle social inequalities;
d) The reform is **not coupled with** the extension of existing or the establishment of new European fiscal capacity instruments to assist MS to deal with the common challenges lying ahead and more so the MS with limited fiscal space and the greatest need for **economic** and **social** convergence.
e) The reform does not provide for an **integrated governance framework** that puts the attainment of economic, social and environmental policy goals on an equal footing.

4. The new EU economic governance framework, EU cohesion policy and the social cohesion challenge: alternative proposals

The EEC/EU has a long record of promoting social convergence and cohesion between and within MS mainly through its "cohesion policy" and the European Structural Funds, but also through directives setting minimum labor and social standards and, in recent decades, through the coordination of employment and social policies. Income is redistributed through the EU budget between the MS that are net contributors and those that are net recipients[1]. The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has been a catalyst for innovation. The SURE program allowed MS to protect the jobs and income of workers and the self-employed, while EU cohesion policy was strengthened by a) the creation of the Just Transition Fund, to prevent/address the social problems created in specific regions from transition to climate neutrality and b) NextGenerationEU which favoured the allocation of resources to the MS most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Since the late 1990s, the coordination of Member States' employment and social policies has also had some influence on social convergence and cohesion along with setting key objectives and targets for the EU as a whole. In 2017, the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights triggered an ambitious social policy agenda at EU level.

However, as we saw in the previous section, EU regional and social policy did not prevent the deterioration of EU social cohesion between 2008 and 2022, mainly due to the economic and social divergence of southern Europe during the eurozone debt crisis but also due to the deepening income and social inequalities in many "core" countries. Tackling the later in Member States requires well-functioning collective bargaining and social dialogue, as well as redistributive fiscal and social policies that need adequate funding, especially in the countries with the greatest inequalities. Finally, it is now clear that the green and digital transitions are doomed to exacerbate social inequalities in the absence of public funds not only to invest in up/re-skilling and new jobs but also to provide income compensation to workers made redundant. Furthermore, funding from NextGenerationEU will be available until 2026 and that from the Just Transition Fund is insufficient. In the near future, MS will have to increase their own resources in order to prevent the deepening of social inequalities and protect social cohesion.

For all these reasons, the EU member states need sufficient fiscal space at the national level and thus we focus on three alternative proposals to those of the European Commission for the reform the EU's economic governance framework and beyond:

First, comes the idea of an **integrated governance framework** that puts the attainment of economic, social and environmental policy goals on an equal footing. In order to strengthen the social dimension of the European Semester, promote upward social convergence and reduce inequalities, the Belgian and Spanish governments have proposed at the Porto Summit in 2021 to integrate into the European Semester a '**Social Imbalances Procedure**' (SIP) that would identify, prevent and address the social imbalances in EU countries that hamper the convergence of MS towards the common EU social policy targets and the overarching objectives of upward social convergence. The procedure would include an alert mechanism and the issuing of Country

1 Looking at the net positions of the 27 EU MS relative to gross national income (GNI), Busch et al. (2022) have estimated that the largest net contributors to the EU budget in 2021 were Germany with 0.58 percent of GNI, Netherlands with 0.48 percent, Sweden with 0.46 percent and France and Denmark with 0.43 percent each. In terms of net recipients of the EU budget, Croatia leads the way with 3.08 percent of GNI, followed by Lithuania and Hungary with 3.05 and 2.89 percent, respectively, Bulgaria (2.84 percent), Latvia (2.76 percent), Estonia (2.76 percent), Greece (2.57 percent), Slovakia (1.84 percent), Romania (1.76 percent), Portugal (1.54 percent) and Czechia (1.37 percent).

Specific Recommendation for social imbalances in a critical situation. Fiscal and macroeconomic recommendations should not hamper the correction of social imbalances identified. On the contrary, they should support it by adequate investments and appropriate financial resources for policy response. However, there was no mention to the provision of additional EU funds to MS with critical imbalances to help them correct them.

In July 2022, the Spanish presidency asked for the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on the SIP, which was favourable. The EESC (2023) also recommended that existing rules for funds allocation (ESIF, RRF and others) should become more flexible after negotiations so that they are quickly adapted to correct the social imbalances of countries in critical situation, identified through the SIP. However, the EESC did not recommend enhanced targeted EU financial support to the countries in need and with great divergence.

Given that the Member States were divided on the possible added value of the SIP, the Employment and the Social Protection Committees (EMCO and SPC) were mandated by the French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies to explore ways in which to reinforce the social dimension of the European Semester. The EMCO and SPC submitted in May 2023 a joint proposal to the European Council to introduce a "**Social Converge Framework**" in the European Semester (Council of the European Union 2023). The new framework will be meant to foster a shared understanding of challenges to upward social convergence and improve the pertinence of country-specific recommendations addressed by the European Council to the Member States that make little progress towards the attainment of the EU headline employment and social policy goals through the preparation and publication by the European Commission of "Social Convergence Reports" for the above Members States. These will be based on the findings from the Social Scoreboard indicators and in-depth analysis of qualitative information. This an even more watered-down version of the SIP proposal than that of the EESC.

Another proposal is that '**social investments' should be discounted from the deficit and debt rules** (Hemerijck and Huguenot-Noël 2022)[2]. This is a variant of what other economists call a 'targeted golden rule' whereby public investments should not be counted toward deficits or debt when deemed to benefit the next generation (e.g., investment in education and training, greening the economy etc.) (Bofinger 2022, van den Noord 2023). Last but not least, ETUC (2022) proposes a general application of the golden rule: all net public investments should be financed by debt and excluded from balanced-budget rules. This however requires the elimination of the debt brake from national constitutional legislation that demands that investment by Eurozone countries be funded by current tax revenues rather than bond issues (Schmidt 2023).

ETUC (2023) has recently proposed a more comprehensive alternative:

- An **EU sovereignty fund for just socio-ecological transition** to finance important projects of common European interest;
- A **European pact for employment and investments** which would include (a) a benchmark for public investments that keeps Europe ahead of key global competitors (b) minimum quantitative benchmarks on public investment growth and net investment levels (c) a golden rule for investments (d) an EU-debt financed budget for investments;

2 Hemerijck and Huguenot-Noël show that expansive European welfare states investing in their citizens, from early childhood education and care to active ageing, have engendered virtuous circles of employment and productivity enlarging the revenues on which they depend while the social-investment paradigm, they argue, proved the 'unsung hero' of the Great Recession, cushioning the big welfare states in particular through the credit crunch and the eurozone crisis. They also maintain that the climate crisis should not now imply a turn away to 'hard', infrastructural investment since 'resilient welfare states are the sine qua non for a "just transition".'

- A **social convergence procedure** that detects and removes social imbalances (SIP) with the possibility for social partners to submit negotiated CSRs;
- A permanent **instrument for stabilizing employment** on a revised SURE model.

The above alternative proposals are welcome but there are not exempted from critique. For instance, the golden rule for public/social investment is not so important for over-indebted countries which mainly need additional EU transfers and would therefore benefit from additional EU fiscal capacity financed either from the fiscal base of EU MS or through the issuing of common EU pubic debt. Last but not least, without additional and targeted financial support of MS with critical social imbalances, a Social Convergence Framework may become a disciplinary mechanism for EU MS that do not comply to neoliberal structural reforms recommended by EU institutions.

5. Conclusion

Social convergence/divergence trends and the evolution of inequalities between and within the EU member states over the past fifteen years point to the direction of the erosion of its social cohesion between 2008 and 2022. The increase in income inequalities and poverty in most of the old MS as well as the large income disparities and the inability of the welfare state in most of the Southern European and new MS to provide equal access to basic social services such as healthcare, constitute major challenges that should to be taken into account by the pending reform of EU economic governance. Moreover, in spite of their social convergence, the gap in the disposable income per capita between the new MS and those of the 'core' is still huge. However, the economic and social divergence of southern European countries is by far the biggest challenge for EU cohesion policy, given the size and service burden of their sovereign debt and their inability to adopt a different economic and social development model from the one that proved unsustainable with the 2008 Great Recession.

The new fiscal rules and economic governance framework proposed by the European Commission to replace the Fiscal Compact are an improvement to the existing Fiscal Compact. However, they provide the over-indebted member states with very little additional fiscal room for maneuver in exchange for a stricter control by the Commission and the Council of their compliance with the EU criteria for eligible investments and appropriate structural reforms at the national level. At the same time, the suggested reform is not coupled by a proposal for the (permanent) extension of the EU's fiscal capacity after the end of the NextGenerationEU. This is terribly needed to help on the one hand the MS to cope with the ecological, technological and industrial transformation of their economies, on the other hand the EU to fill the gaps in its cohesion policy and strengthen its social cohesion. The lack of national and European fiscal space is glaring at the current juncture when MS are called upon to implement a restrictive fiscal policy in an international environment of high interest rates.

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Conducting Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research of Social Work

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Διεξαγωγή Θεματικής Ανάλυσης στην Ποιοτική Έρευνα της Κοινωνικής Εργασίας

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ABSTRACT

Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used qualitative data analysis method in social science research offering an accessible and theoretically flexible approach for analyzing qualitative data. This is a discussion paper comprising an analytical overview of thematic analysis, its conceptualization, characteristics and applications. Furthermore, a social work worked example using thematic analysis with data from one of our own research projects – domestic violence and parenthood - is analytically discussed providing a step-by-step guide for the analysis process. We conclude by bringing more light to the importance of the method and advocating it as most useful and flexible for qualitative social work research.

KEY WORDS: Thematic analysis, qualitative research, social work research.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η θεματική ανάλυση είναι μια από τις πιο ευρέως χρησιμοποιούμενες μεθόδους ανάλυσης ποιοτικών δεδομένων στην έρευνα κοινωνικών επιστημών, προσφέροντας μια προσιτή και θεωρητικά ευέλικτη προσέγγιση για την ανάλυση ποιοτικών δεδομένων. Αυτό το άρθρο περιλαμβάνει μια αναλυτική επισκόπηση της θεματικής ανάλυσης, των χαρακτηριστικών και των εφαρμογών της. Επιπλέον, παρουσιάζεται ένα παράδειγμα κοινωνικής εργασίας που χρησιμοποιεί τη θεματική ανάλυση με δεδομένα από ένα ερευνητικό έργο μας (ενδοοικογενειακή βία και γονεϊκότητα). Υποστηρίζουμε ότι αυτή η μέθοδος είναι η πλέον χρήσιμη και ευέλικτη για την ποιοτική έρευνα της κοινωνικής εργασίας.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Παγκόσμια Επισιτιστική Κρίση, Εναρμονισμένος ΔεΘεματική ανάλυση, ποιοτική έρευνα, έρευνα κοινωνικής εργασίας.

1. Introduction

Thematic analysis is the most widely used qualitative analytic method in social sciences across a range of disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, social work, education, psychology, counseling, psychotherapy (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Swain, 2018; Tsiolis, 2018), still its applications in the research analysis process is not always satisfactorily clarified. Braun and Clarke (2006) maintain that thematic analysis is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn as it provides a set of foundational, core techniques and skills that are used in many other methods of qualitative analysis, namely grounded theory, narratives, discourse analysis, content analysis, etc. Also, that it provides a great deal of accessibility and flexibility and can be applied across different epistemological and ontological positions, namely essentialism/realism and/or constructionism depending on the researcher's decisions on the theoretical framework and positions in general.

Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich and detailed account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Researchers who are relatively unfamiliar with qualitative methods may find that thematic analysis can be relatively quick to learn and provides a foundation in the basic skills needed to engage with other approaches (King, 2004). Thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, and a useful tool for forcing the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling even large sets of data, helping them to produce a clear and organized final report (King, 2004). It is widely used in social work qualitative research projects, and along with content analysis seem to be the most popular picked up methods for data analysis. Despite that, it appears well under reported regarding their analysis process and conceptual meaning.

2. Definition, conceptualization and characteristics of thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2013) and should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative data analysis recognized as a method by itself (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since first being named as an approach in the 1970s' (Clarke & Braun, 2013, p. 3), a number of different versions of thematic analysis have been proposed in a variety of disciplines such as psychology (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006), namely thematic discourse analysis (Taylor & Ussher, 2001), thematic decomposition analysis (Ussher, & Mooney-Somers, 2000), reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) etc. In doing so, most methods of analysis have inevitably been connected to the conceptual framework and data process proposed by the thematic analysis in such degree that the later is often considered the basic tool to be used across the different methods. In other words, thematic analysis is the major analytic method to provide the basic core skills to the researcher across the range of qualitative analysis.

Furthermore, thematic analysis is not necessarily linked to a specific theoretical perspective and can thus be applied to a number of theories and epistemological approaches (Clarke & Braun, 2013). It is suited to a wide range of research interests and theoretical perspectives, and is useful as a 'basic' method because: "a) it works with a wide range of research questions, from those about people's experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts; b) it can be used to analyse different types of data,

from secondary sources such as media to transcripts of focus groups or interviews; c) it works with large or small data-sets; and d) it can be applied to produce data-driven or theory-driven analyses" (Clarke & Braun, 2013, p. 3). This flexibility refers to both the general organization around the analysis process as well as the more specific decisions need to be made by the researcher around the types of analysis, the theoretical and epistemological paradigms, the conceptual frameworks, the researcher's role in the analysis and the final report of the work.

Furthermore, this reflexive approach to thematic analysis (or reflexive thematic analysis) adds a new light to the conceptualization of the method, as it stresses the need to be highlighted and be implemented with theoretical knowingness and transparency from the part of the researchers Braun and Clarke (2020). The later strive to be fully aware of the philosophical sensibility and theoretical assumptions informing their use of thematic analysis and these are enacted throughout the analytic process and reporting of the research, rendering the researcher's role in knowledge production to the very centre of the whole process. As the researchers stress out, quality reflexive thematic analysis is not about following procedures 'correctly' (or about 'accurate' and 'reliable' coding, or achieving consensus between coders), but about the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process having the opportunity for a second researcher to be involved in the analytic process so a collaborative and reflexive approach to reading the data can be developed. This is also an activity - among others - which addresses the credibility of the research and in the long run trustworthiness as well (Chatzifotiou, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Braun & Clarke (2020, p. 4) there are six-phases in the process for data engagement, coding and theme development. Their most recent articulation of this is: 1) data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes; 2) systematic data coding; 3) generating initial themes from coded and collated data; 4) developing and reviewing themes; 5) refining, defining and naming themes; and 6) writing the report. Furthermore, they clearly state that this six-phases approach is not intended to be followed rigidly. Still, there is a possibility these can blend together, as the researchers' analytic skill develops more, and consequently, become familiar with the analytic process which in turn becomes increasingly repetitive. Other qualitative researchers, have in the same vein, developed similar stages for thematic analysis influenced by the ones above. For example, Tsiolis (2018, p. 98) has implemented five stages in some of his research projects, advocating the usefulness and flexibility of the method.

The flexibility of thematic analysis as a method, rather than a fully-embedded methodology, means it can be undertaken with quite different guiding theories and using quite different orientations to data, coding practices and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The same authors have developed thematic analysis to be a method characterised by independence from any particular epistemological and ontological base – and this 'flexibility' is partly what makes it distinct from other qualitative analyses (Swain, 2018). This flexibility, alongside its accessibility, makes it particularly suitable even for researchers with little experience to qualitative research (Boyatzis, 1998; Swain, 2018), although they need to know that their data sets have to be well organized and described in detail and the finished product need to be a holistic account of what was done, how was done and why.

3. Generating Themes or patterns in Thematic Analysis

For and foremost, in doing thematic analysis qualitative researchers need to acknowledge on theoretical positions and values in relation to qualitative research, eg - among other things - the "give voice" to the participants is of paramount importance. It is important to consider that determining a theoretical framework – not necessarily a pre-existing one - and methods of analysis means that these should match each other and consequently should influence a number of crucial decisions to be made. For example, which type of analysis the researchers want to do? What claims do they want to make in relation to their data set? Will they go for a more depth or a more horizontal referencing? Will they choose a latent or a semantic level of approach? Do they decide for a bottom-up (inductive) way of analysis, or a top-down (deductive) one? How will they theorize meaning of their data? Will they follow a realist/experientialist epistemological paradigm or a constructionist one? Will they want to have an active role to play during the process of analysis or will they be able to free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments? The route to a credible and trustful thematic analysis via searching across the data set to find repeated themes / patterns of meaning, is very much a decision based process.

The concept of the theme or pattern is an integral part of the method of thematic analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). A theme refers to a particular pattern of meaning in the data. The theme is used as a characteristic concept that organizes a team of repetitive ideas within the text, enabling researchers to answer one of the questions of the study. Sub-themes can also be created focusing on a specific concept which when highlighted makes the theme particularly important. Themes should be the final 'outcome' of data coding and iterative theme development. They can be emerged out of the data as a result of an interpretative level of coding across the whole data set, or of an explicit/semantic level of coding on a specific question area of interest within data. Similarly, themes can be the result of a data-driven analysis (inductive way) with no pre-existing coding frame, or be the result of a theory-driven analysis (deductive way) with a prefixed theoretical framework. Either a more inductive or more theoretical/deductive way, thematic analysis is a situated interpretative reflexive process (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Also, themes are located on two levels: semantic/explicit or latent (Boyatzis, 1998). A thematic analysis typically focuses exclusively or predominantly on one level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "With a semantic approach, issues are identified within the explicit or superficial meanings of the data, and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.13). In this case, the analysis process includes the description, where the data is simply organized to show a semantic content. In this field, the significance of the themes and the broader concepts and their implications are shown and are often correlated with the previous literature (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). In contrast, "a thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualizations and ideologies that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.13).

4. Thematic analysis, qualitative research and social work

Researchers within the field of social work are using qualitative inquiry with increasing rates (Lietz et al., 2006; Padgett, 2004). The social work profession is acknowledging the role that qualitative inquiry has in their field as more and more social workers are turning to qualitative methodology in their research during many last decades (Bein & Allen, 1999; Lietz et al., 2006; Padgett, 1998, 2004).

Considering social work's mission to raise awareness of the needs of underprivileged populations, qualitative research should as closely as possible reflect the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the people who participate in research. In this way, social work researchers prioritize the voice of the participant over that of their own (Lietz et al., 2006). Desiring to give priority to the meanings of participants does not mean that qualitative researchers must deny the process of co-constructing meanings. The postmodern tradition acknowledges the role of the researcher in creating meaning with its participants (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Lietz et al., 2006).

Reflexivity is defined by Horsburgh (2003, p. 308) as 'active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation'. Reflexivity involves deconstructing who we are and the ways in which our beliefs, experiences and identity intersect with that of the participant (Mac Beth, 2001).This reflection occurs both in individual thought and through dialog with others that acknowledges the researcher's own experience and perspectives (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Instead of trying to hide behind the false sense of objectivity, the researcher makes his or her own sociocultural position explicit. Finally, reflexivity is not a point in time event, rather, is a process that occurs throughout the research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Padgett (1998) states, there is an ethical responsibility within social work to uncover voices that have been hindered or to bring awareness to perspectives that have been oppressed. It is through rigorous research activity within qualitative work that we can work to bring awareness to thoughts, ideas and experiences not commonly heard. In order to do this, we must have strategies that will allow us to manage threats to trustworthiness including the ways in which who we are and what we have experienced may keep us from hearing what our participants are saying.

Qualitative research tends to interpret and seeks to understand in depth a phenomenon within it. It seeks to clarify the nature of social practices, relationships and beliefs as well as the concept of human experience on the part of the participants, and requires understanding and compiling of various aspects and data. It aims to understand a particular phenomenon from the point of view of those experiencing it and interpret them from the meaning given by them (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Researchers in the field of social work use qualitative research with rising rates (Lietz et al., 2006). A lot of texts are now available in quality methodology, social sciences as well as social work programs have increased the number of courses in qualitative research (Lietz et al., 2006). The profession of social worker recognizes the role that qualitative research has in our field as more and more social workers turn to quality methodology, their research, to give voice to the underprivileged populations (Lietz et al., 2006) .Taking into account the task of social work to raise awareness of the needs underprivileged of populations, quality research should reflect as much as possible the thoughts, feelings and experiences of people involved in research (Lietz et al., 2006). As Padgett states, there is a moral responsibility in the context of social work to uncover voices that have been hindered or repressed (Lietz et al., 2006). Within the framework of qualitative research, we can bring to light thoughts, ideas and experiences that we do not often hear (Lietz et al., 2006).

The framework analysis of qualitative research is determined by the research approach. In this sense, thematic analysis has a strong point of connection with quality research and social work. Thematic analysis can be an "essentialist or realist method", which reports experiences, meanings, actual behavior, attitudes, or real motives of the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun & Clarke,

2006). "It can also be a contextualist method, sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism, which acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 9). This is the first point of proximity between quality research, social work and thematic analysis, which studies the relationship between the individual and the environment.

As mentioned in previous sections, thematic analysis is not a complex method and has many advantages. In addition, the flexibility of the method allows for a wide range of analysis options, which means that your data may be broaden (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis gives the opportunity to better understand the potential of any issue (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this respect, social work practitioners should be more familiar with the thematic analysis as an independent and reliable qualitative approach to the data analysis. Typically, the method of analysis should be guided both by our research question and by our broader theoretical and epistemological assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). What follows is a worked example of one of our social work research projects where we conducted reflexive thematic analysis.

5. A Social Work worked example using thematic analysis

We will try to present, in a tangible and concise way and using data from semi-structured interviews conducted in the context of qualitative research methodology on a worked research project titled: Domestic Violence and Parenthood: "The experiences of mothers victims of partner violence who sought help from formal services". This was a research project that was successfully evaluated for an MA degree in Social Work to one of the coauthors and constitutes the meta-analysis of its analysis process for the purposes of this paper (Andreadou, 2016).

The presentation of the thematic analysis draws its elements from the influential and pioneering work of Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2012; Clarke and Braun 2013), and the following adaptations by Tsiolis (2018, p. 98-99) stating that research questions have a guiding role for the researcher in the search for the excerpts to be chosen, and that theoretical categories drawn by the researcher during the bibliographic review process, are used as theoretical awareness frameworks in the data coding process. Our version of thematic analysis is further informed by the process of reflexivity and is developed in 6 phases. Namely, 1) transcribing the interviews, 2) familiarizing ourselves with the data and gathering homogeneous excerpts that correspond to research questions, 3) creating initial codes, 4) transitioning from codes to themes, 5) defining core themes, and 6) reporting of findings and reflecting on action/upon research. This is in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2019, 2020) statement that quality reflexive thematic analysis is about the researchers' reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement within the analytic process.

Having the above bibliographical knowledge in mind, we moved on to conducting thematic analysis method to our research project on domestic violence and parenthood and the role of social work counseling. What follows is hopefully a straightforward step-by-step guide to conducting thematic analysis for qualitative social workers:

Phase 1: Transcribing the interviews

According to Cartwright (2020, p. 6), there are two main approaches to transcribing interviews: full verbatim and intelligent verbatim. "Full verbatim transcribing means including everything

that is said by both the researcher and the participant, including all the erms and ums! Intelligent verbatim leaves things like false starts to sentences and all the erms out". As intelligent verbatim does not always let the researcher understand the participant's reluctances to answer or emotional difficulties to respond to a question, we decided to use full verbatim and thus accurately ender the words of the interviewees and the researcher without correcting any mistakes, pauses, interruptions, repetitions, etc.

In this light, the audio recording of the conversation with the interviewees was fully verbatim transferred to a written text as soon as the interview process was completed. This process is widely known as "transcription", that is the transfer of the conversations into written text of the recorded or videotaped verbal interactions, according to defined notation rules (Tsiolis, 2014, p. 269).The notation system we used during the transfer was accommodated by Tsiolis's (2018, p. 100) and an indicative element of it is shown below in Table 1:Full Verbatim.

Table 1: Full Verbatim

Symbol	
(…)	Significant pause: thinking deeply, trying to remember, needs a break etc
[laughter]	Out of speech information reported by the researcher
_____	Emphasis: indicates emphasis <u>through</u> its elevation tone and volume of the voice
	Participant's reluctance to answer
	Emotional difficulty to answer

Phase 2: Familiarizing ourselves with the data and gathering homogeneous excerpts that correspond to research questions

We carefully read again and again the transcribed material, got acquainted with it and identified those excerpts that provided us with information for each research question (and / or sub-question) (Tsiolis, 2018, p. 100). Excerpts from a research question were found and piled up together, although this did not rule out the possibility that relevant excerpts could also be found in other parts of the interview. It was therefore important to read all the material carefully and try to find all the information that corresponds to each of our questions and / or sub-questions.

Two of the research questions asked by the researchers were: (a) What are the effects of domestic violence in mothers victims of domestic violence regarding their role as a parent, and (b) what is the effects of social support provision to the lives of mothers victims of violence? More specifically, reading again and again the material we detected elements, concepts and issues presented in a repetitive pattern of meaning, related to the effects of domestic violence on their parental role and the support they received from various sources of help. By locating and compiling these excerpts together we created homogenous piles of material that corresponded to each research question of the study.

Phase 3: Creating initial codes

This phase involves the production of codes from the data. Codes identify a characteristic of the data (semantic content or explicit) that appears to be of interest to the analyst and refers to the most basic part or element of the first data or information (Brawn & Clarke, 2006). This process also is called coding and the conceptual definitions, which express the meaning that the researcher gives to this data section, are called codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57; Isari & Pourkos, 2015, p. 115; Tsiolis, 2014, p.107). According to Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 61), codes assign and name an attribute (a unit of meaning) that the researchers recognize in some part of their data (eg in an excerpt of the transcript of an interview) and appears be important in answering their research questions.

In the light of the above, we marked the specific excerpts wherever they appeared in the material and matched them with a specific conceptual definition (i.e we gave them a code name). An example of such codes is presented in the following Table 2: Coding Process. Some of the codes generated by the researchers came from the words of the participants themselves or reflected their ideas, while other codes derived from the conceptual and theoretical framework adopted by the researchers based on other similar research that had been appeared in the existing literature (Braun & Clark, 2012; Lapierre, 2010; Letourneau et al., 2007).

Table 2: Coding process

Data extract	Coded For
"... I made too many mistakes, unjustified mistakes, failed, I was charged too many failures over the years ..." (Woman, Div.50)	"Failure and Mistakes"
"I felt guilty, I felt remorse that we arrived here and the children would not live in a quoted normal, say family, the first two weeks mainly ..." (Woman, Div. 35)	"Complaints and remorse"
"... my 12-year-old son is clinging to me, that is, even his very personal one will tell it to Mom ..." (Woman, Div. 50)	"Strong Attachment"
"At that time they were stuck too much and the two of them were afraid of losing me, I do not know what had created that feeling." (Woman, Div. 35)	"Afraid of losing"
"I have given them the freedom to tell me everything even if it is the hardest… I have told them I am willing to help you. That is, communication "(Woman, Div. 50)	"Good communication with children"
"Nevertheless, I was going back to school, I was engaging with children constructively. I had the strength, we did things together, we went along with supermarkets, our walks... "(Woman, Div. 35)	"Dealing with Children"
"I have a good friendship with my friends, which is very good psychotherapy for me, with all these discussions, we are going through very nice.." (Woman, Marr. 55)	"Emotional support from the friendly environment"
"... in the first place, psychological support from my friends was important because they helped me see things a little more cool and not so emotionally and draw some plans, solve problems ..." (Woman, Marr. 44)	"Psychologicalsupport"
"It is definitely and legally supportive, because it did not really know what my moves should be in order to be able to be protected in the future, and this advice was very legal" (Woman, Div. 35)	"Legal Support"

Phase 4:

The transition from codes to themes Phase 4 starts when all the data are initially coded and sorted and we had a long list of different codes that we had identified in our data. This phase orientates the analysis on a wider level of themes, involves sorting the various codes into potential themes, and comparing all relevant encoded data within the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 19). Some initial codes can continue to shape the main themes, others may be sub-themes and others may still be rejected (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 20). The themes are more abstract conceptual constructions and general from the codes (Tsiolis, 2018, p. 109-110). They result from the processing, comparison, merging of the codes and correspond to a repetitive pattern of meaning (Tsiolis, 2018, p. 110.)

In the light of the above, we proceeded to the following process as seen in Table 3: Creating Themes/subthemes/candidate themes Process.

Table 3: Creating Themes/Subthemes candidate Themes Process

Coded data	Potential themes or subthemes or candidate themes
"Failure and Mistakes"I made too many mistakes, unjustified mistakes, failed, I was charged too many failures over the years ..." (Woman, Div.50) "Complaints and remorse"I felt guilty, I felt remorse that we arrived here and the children would not live in a quoted normal, say family, the first two weeks mainly ..." (Woman, Div. 35)	(1) Effects on Parenthood
"Strong Attachment"... my 12-year-old son is clinging to me, that is, even his very personal one will tell it to Mom ..." (Woman, Div. 50) "Afraid of losing"At that time they were stuck too much and the two of them were afraid of losing me, I do not know what had created that feeling." (Woman, Div. 35)	(2) Challenges and Difficulties
"Good communication with children" I have given them the freedom to tell me everything even if it is the hardest… I have told them I am willing to help you. That is, communication "(Woman, Div. 50) "Dealing with Children" "Nevertheless, I was going back to school, I was engaging with children constructively. I had the strength, we did things together, we went along with supermarkets, our walks... "(Woman, Div. 35)	(3) The positive aspects of the mother-child bond
"Emotional support from the friendlyenvironment" Nevertheless, I was going back to school, I was engaging with children constructively. I had the strength, we did things together, we went along with supermarkets, our walks... "(Woman, Div. 35)	(4) Support from the wider friendly and family environment
"Psychological support"... in the first place, psychological support was important because they helped me see things a little more cool and not so emotionally and draw some plans, solve problems ..." (Woman, Marr. 44) "Legal Support"It is definitely and legally supportive, because it did not really know what my moves should be in order to be able to be protected in the future, and this advice was very legal" (Woman, Div. 35)	(5) The Positive Contribution of the institute

Phase 5: Defining Core Themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), some candidate issues are not really themes, as they may merge into each other. At this point, we further defined and named the core themes that we presented in our analysis as seen in Table 4 below. Each theme was presented separately and its content was highlighted based on the particular aspects that emerged during the analysis of the data. Possible differences or variations that characterize each theme can also be highlighted. At this stage, excerpts from the texts of the interviews can also be presented, in order to substantiate the findings and to show in a convincing way how the themes are highlighted (Tsiolis, 2018, p. 122).

Table 4: Defining Core Themes

Candidate themes	Core themes
(1) Effects on Parenthood (2) Challenges and Difficulties (3) The positive aspects of the mother-child bond (4) Support from the wider friendly and family environment (5) The Positive Contribution of the institute	1.The Negative Effects of Domestic Violence on the Parenthood of mothers-victims 2.The positive aspects of the mother-child bond 3. The Impact of Social Support from formal and informal sources

Phase 6: Reporting the findings and reflecting on action

According to Cartwright (2020, p. 4) it is important during any research project to reflect on action. Reflection on action means thinking about what you have done and how you can improve. Good research practice requires that researchers reflect on action throughout a project. It is also important at the end of any research project to evaluate what you have done by thinking about how you can improve what you do in the future and also what you have learned (Whittaker, 2012).

In the same vein, regarding thematic analysis Braun and Clarke (2019, p. 594) support that the final analysis is a product of deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, a rather active and generative process. They emphasised that themes do not passively emerge from data to capture this process, rather than are analytic outputs developed through and from the creative labour of the researchers' coding. The emergence of the themes reflect considerable analytic work and are actively created from the researchers resulting from a cross roads of a) the intersection of theoretical and empirical data, b) the process/es of analysis and c) the researchers' subjectivity. Furthermore, our research skills had been improved as we had learned through experience how power difference can impact the analysis process and research findings per se.

In the light of the above literature, we reflected upon action throughout the whole research, and below in Table 5: Reflecting on Action we provide a selective element of how we applied reflective thematic analysis on our project:

Table 5: Reflecting on action

Quotation from participants	Critical Reflexivity of the researchers
"Nevertheless, I was going back to school, I was engaging with children constructively. I had the strength, we did things together, we went along with supermarkets, our walks... "(Woman, Div. 35) "I have given them the freedom to tell me everything even if it is the hardest… I have told them..I am willing to help you. That is, communication "(Woman, Div. 50)	According to their words, the bond with their children is based on constructive communication, dialogue and freedom of expression. These women can educate or care for their children just like any other parent, demonstrating their resilience and determination. While we expect domestic violence to have many negative effects on women's lives, it is equally important to see women as active agents or actors who, despite huge obstacles, continue to feed their children and build a better life for themselves and their families.
"... I made too many mistakes, unjustified mistakes, failed, I was charged too many failures over the years ..." (Woman, Div.50) "I felt guilty, I felt remorse that we arrived here and the children would not live in a quoted normal, say family, the first two weeks mainly ..." (Woman, Div. 35)	Abused women can feel overwhelmed and constantly try to survive on a daily basis, in difficult conditions. Confidence in their skills and authority as parents can be severely undermined, either directly by their abuse or indirectly as a tactic by their partners, in order to lose control. Domestic violence undermines, and can seriously damage, the mother-child relationship.

6. Conclusion

Qualitative social work research offers rich and compelling insights into the real worlds, experiences, and perspectives of welfare and other social care clients as well as professionals. Thematic analysis method offers a really useful qualitative approach for those purposes and offers a toolkit for researchers who want to do robust and even sophisticated analyses of qualitative data.

This article provides a workable example of the steps involved in the thematic analysis process and describes an approach that demonstrates rigor in a qualitative research. It basically reflects upon previous research conducted by pioneering academics who introduced thematic analysis method into the qualitative data analysis spectrum (Braun and Clarke, (2006, 2020), and successfully applied it to qualitative social work research. In this vein, it can well be said that qualitative research and the approach of thematic analysis is well suited – among other disciplines - to the science of social work as it is the deep understanding of a person's or a group's place within their personal and social environment that is under investigation and methodological attention. Qualitative research and approach of thematic analysis contribute to a deep understanding of both the research question being studied and the context in which it evolves, through the elevation of the respondents, the penetration into their personal sphere and the approximation of their own visual reality.

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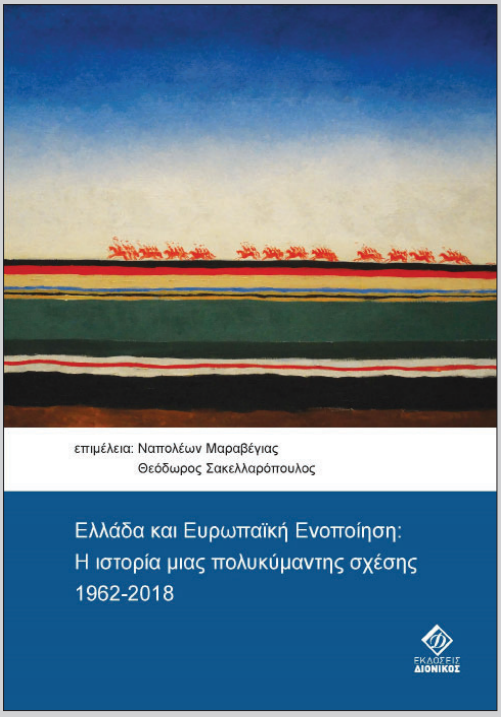

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-επιμέλεια-

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Η υπερ-πεντηκονταετής περίοδος σχέσεων της χώρας μας με την ΕΟΚ/Ε.Ε, που εκτείνεται από τη σύνδεση και τη Συμφωνία των Αθηνών το 1962 έως την εκδήλωση της κρίσης, την υπογραφή μνημονίων προσαρμογής και την ολοκλήρωσή τους τον Αύγουστο του 2018, αναδεικνύει κρίσιμα ερευνητικά ερωτήματα: Τι είδους επίδραση άσκησε η Ε.Ε. σε θεσμούς και δημόσιες πολιτικές της χώρας; Με ποιους μηχανισμούς μεταφέρθηκαν οι επιδράσεις και πόσο και πώς ενσωματώθηκαν σε εθνικό επίπεδο; Ποιες ευρωπαϊκές πολιτικές επέδρασαν περισσότερο στη χώρα μας και για ποιους λόγους; Πόσο ουσιαστική ή/και επιφανειακή ήταν η προσαρμογή σε διάφορα πεδία πολιτικής αλλά και σε ζητήματα νοοτροπιών και συμπεριφορών; Ποιο ήταν το τελικό αποτέλεσμα, θετικό ή αρνητικό, των επιρροών από τη συμμετοχή της Ελλάδας στην Ε.Ε.; Δεκατέσσερις ειδικοί επιστήμονες σε επιμέρους τομείς, καθηγητές και ερευνητές, παλαιότεροι και νεότεροι, ένωσαν τις δυνάμεις τους για να απαντήσουν στα πιο πάνω ερωτήματα και να συμβάλουν στη διερεύνηση όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερων διαστάσεων των επιδράσεων που δέχτηκε η χώρα μας από τη συμμετοχή της στην ευρωπαϊκή ολοκλήρωση κατά την προαναφερόμενη περίοδο 1962-2018. Οι καταγραφές και οι αναλύσεις τους συνθέτουν την ιστορία της πολυκύμαντης σχέσης της χώρας μας με το ευρωπαϊκό μόρφωμα και συνεπώς ενδιαφέρουν, εκτός από τους φοιτητές, όλους όσοι θέλουν να ασχοληθούν με τη μεταπολεμική ιστορία της Ελλάδας από τις αρχές της δεκαετίας του ’60 μέχρι σήμερα.

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Public Services Coproduction: A conceptual review based on the relationship between the Citizen and the State

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Συμπαραγωγή Δημοσίων Υπηρεσιών: Μια εννοιολογική ανασκόπηση βασισμένη στη σχέση μεταξύ του Πολίτη και του Κράτους

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ABSTRACT

Public service coproduction is the term used to indicate the active involvement of the citizen/service-user in the process of design and production of that service. The evolu-tion of the concept of Citizenship into that of Active Citizenship and the role attribut-ed to the Citizen-Coproducer, has led scientists to support the idea of a quasi-renegotiation of the traditional Social Contract into a new context based on principles of the coproduction paradigm. The article argues that Coproduction is no panacea: participation in itself can become the antidote neither to the social inequalities nor the absence of balance between the various social groups.

KEY WORDS: Coproduction, Co-creation, Active Citizenship, New Public Governance, NPG.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ο όρος «συμπαραγωγή δημοσίων υπηρεσιών» χρησιμοποιείται προκειμένου να απο-δοθεί η ενεργός εμπλοκή του πολίτη - χρήστη μίας δημόσιας υπηρεσίας κατά τη διαδι-κασία σχεδιασμού και παροχής της. Η εξέλιξη της έννοιας του Πολίτη σε αυτήν του Ενεργού Πολίτη, αλλά και ο ρόλος που αποδόθηκε στον Πολίτη-Συμπαραγωγό, οδή-γησε ορισμένους επιστήμονες στην διατύπωση της άποψης περί μίας οιονεί επαναδια-πραγμάτευσης του Κοινωνικού Συμβολαίου στη βάση της συμπαραγωγής. Το άρθρο υποστηρίζει ότι η συμπαραγωγή, ωστόσο, δεν είναι πανάκεια: η συμμετοχικότητα δεν μπορεί από μόνη της να αποτελέσει το αντίδοτο ούτε στις δομικές ανισότητες που υ-πάρχουν στην κοινωνία αλλά ούτε και στην έλλειψη ισορροπίας δυνάμεων μεταξύ των διαφόρων κοινωνικών ομάδων.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Συμπαραγωγή, Συνδημιουργία, Ενεργός Πολίτης, Νέα Δημόσια Διακυβέρνηση.

1. Introduction

About four and a half decades ago, Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues from Indiana University formulated their theory of Service Coproduction; a relatively simple but fundamental concept, namely that not only the consumption but also the production of public services may require citizen participation (Ostrom, 1978), giving birth to the concept of coproduction. Its conceptual framework was structured on the basis of the two categories of implicated actors: the "normal" producer

(i.e. the competent Public Service Organization -hereinafter PSO) on the one hand and the "consumer" producer (i.e. the citizen – service user) on the other, each of whom - according to Ostrom – strives to maximize its benefit/cost ratio.

In that respect, coproduction is based on the existence of an active and participatory population of citizens/service-users who are at the same time both producers and con-sumers. In the area where the two sets intersect, the interaction between the consumer and the producer becomes automatically an internal function and the service is provid-ed by a quasi-consortium of producers and users/consumers.

Pestoff (2018) supports that the roles of the actors as well as the very concept of coproduction stand at a crossroads where different administrative models intersect, each of which has its own perspective regarding where, when, and why citizens can (and/or should) participate in the design and/or production of public services. This per-spective is based, to a large extent, on the role that each model assigns to the citizens - users of the services - which in effect forms the basis of the conceptual framework of coproduction being applied by each respective model.

The intrinsic relationship that links the concept of coproduction to that of citizenship automatically places coproduction within a wider political context, right at the center of the perpetual public dialogue/debate taking place since the conception of the State, concerning the ever-changing concept of citizenship and the relationship between the Citizen and the State.

2. From the Citizen to the Active Citizen-Coproducer

Citizen, according to Aristotle, is a person who actively participates in the functions of the State (Aristotle and Lord, 2013). Respectively, for Marshall (1951), citizenship is attributed to a full member of a community whose relationship with that community is governed by a set of mutual rights and obligations. Similarly, the Concise Encyclope-dia of Sociology, by the term "citizenship" refers to the attribute of a person as a member of a political community that is organized as a state at the national or regional level.

Given that each polity defines the content of citizenship in its own way, the concepts of "Citizen" and "Polity" are interweaved, with citizenship varying significantly in di-rect relation to the governance system and the different political traditions that exist, not only between different societies, but also between different historical periods of the same society. Thus, every society, based on the particular institutional and cultural context within which it operates in each historical period, defines the set of values and the (written or unwritten) rules that determine the role of the citizen and consequently the nature and content of the concept of citizenship.

In democracy, citizens actively participate in the management public affairs; have the right to assume public office; and to freely express his/her opinion in public (Aristotle and Lord, 2013). The degree of citizen participation is considered to have a significant impact on the overall health of the governance system and its potential to create value in the public sphere (Bryson et al., 2015).

The need for increased civic engagement in recent years, has brought forward the con-cept of the "Active Citizen" - a term introduced by the British conservative politician Douglas Hurd in the 1980s. The notion of the Active Citizen served as the basis for a series of government initiatives, such as John Major's "Make a Difference" campaign, aimed at promoting voluntarism and increasing citizens' contribution to society. Ac-tive Citizenship is founded on the idea that a society should not focus exclusively on rights, but equally - if not more - on the responsibilities and obligations of its members. In that respect, citizens have the obligation to take care

of themselves, each other, and society as a whole and thus, they should be self-reliant and self-sufficient; willing to voluntarily assist other people in their social network; and last but not least, willing to actively contribute to the improvement of the public services provided to them (van de Bovenkamp, 2010).

From there, emerges a new - significantly expanded - role of the Citizen; one that goes well beyond the Aristotelian notion of political participation, actively involving the citizens in the processes of planning and provision of the public services they con-sume. A role inherent in the concept of coproduction.

3. The evolution of the modern State

Of course, in the Citizen - State relationship, the Citizen consists one side of the di-pole; the other is the Public Administration. Over time, scientists from the field of Public Administration and Management have been observing significant changes tak-ing effect regarding the organization and functioning of the State. This was attributed mainly to governments' efforts aiming to improve the quality of the provided services (and reduction of the associated costs); to enhance the credibility of administrative decisions; and – perhaps most importantly - to increase the legitimacy of public gov-ernance vis-à-vis their citizens (Pe a-L pez, 2001). These changes have been incorpo-rated into the three dominant paradigms or "post-reform models" of Public Admin-istration: Traditional Public Administration, New Public Management, and New Pub-lic Governance (thereinafter TPA, NPM and NPG respectively), each adopting a dif-ferent approach to the State-Citizen relationship.

3.1. The model of Traditional Public Administration

During the first period after the introduction of the modern version of the Public Sec-tor, around the end of the 19th century, the world witnessed the emergence of the administrative model of the Traditional Public Administration, which was destined to become the dominant model of the organization of the State for more than a century. The scientific origins of TPA can be traced in the field of political science, where im-portant academics such as Woodrow Wilson, William Robson and especially Max Weber laid its theoretical foundations. At its core lies the pursuit for a unified func-tioning of the state, through a vertical configuration of the processes regarding policy design and implementation. Therefore, public policy decisions are made "higher up" in the system by democratically elected (and politically accountable) politicians and im-plemented by professional public administration employees. Precisely because of its vertically organized structure, the hierarchy constitutes the "soul" of TPA, while the utilization of production line management methodologies, coupled with on a strong value base built on the civil servant code of ethics (Day and Klein, 1987; Simey, 1988), guarantee the effective supervision and necessary accountability regarding the management of public funds and the provision of public services.

Thus, the processes of public services design, as well as planning, organization and provision (referred collectively with the term "production" thereinafter) are structured on the basis of the above-mentioned hierarchical model, with the State maintaining their ownership while the execution is assigned exclusively to the professional staff of the Public Administration whose competencies, specialized knowledge and skills, to-gether with a high level of professionalism and ethics would (at least in theory) ensure the appropriate quality and quantity of the provided services (Brandsen et al., 2018).

In the context of TPA, the interaction between the State and the Citizen is limited and strictly demarcated: the citizens vote and the State protects their rights and provides them with public services. Accordingly, the Citizen is treated as a passive consumer of public services, whose - occasional and limited - involvement in the service production processes is considered as an add-on or an externality to the normal delivery system, serving the purpose of increasing civic engagement and improving the quality of de-mocracy (Bovaird, 2007; Brudney, 1987; Ostrom, 1999; Pestoff, 2006).

3.2 The model of the New Public Management

Finally, during the 1980s the TPA model came under intense criticism, particularly on the basis of its perceived lack of efficiency - an attribute considered the main ad-vantage of the Market. For this reason, as early as the end of the 1970s, but mainly during the 1980s, the "torch" passed onto the hands of the New Public Management (NPM), with the State being confined to the role of the "navigator" (i.e. designer of the services) and the burden of "rowing" (i.e. the production of the services) was transferred to the private sector (through contracting, public-private cooperation schemes, etc.).

Osborn (2006, p. 7) refers to NPM as "is a child of neo-classical economics and par-ticularly of rational/public choice theory" that "is concerned with a disaggregated state, where policy-making and implementation are at least partially articulated and disengaged, and where implementation is through a collection of independent service units, ideally in competition with each other". According to him, NPM focuses almost entirely on intra-organizational and management processes; emphasizes the economy and efficiency of (independent) functional units involved in the production of public services; and encourages the existence of competitive relationships between the inde-pendent business units that operate within each policy sector. These relationships are defined in the context of a horizontal market, which operates under rules based on a combination of competition, central price setting, and contractual relationships.

In this context, the focus is diverted away from the compliance with strict procedures and rules (as with TPA), towards the radical improvement of the outputs of the ser-vice delivery system. The main goal here is the satisfaction of the citizen/client, with the measure of his/her satisfaction serving as the main indicator of the efficiency of the service production system. Its value base lies in the belief that the market and its functions suffice to provide the appropriate framework for public services production – on the grounds that in the "normal" market competition is considered as the main driver for quality improvement (ibid).

In the years that followed its introduction, NPM came upon heavy criticism on a wide range of issues (as mentioned in works by Drechsler (2014), Dunn and Miller (2007), Farnham and Horton (1996), Ferlie et. al (1996), McLaughlin et al. (2002), etc.), most of which was directed to NPM's almost exclusive focus on the intra-organizational level as well as its adherence to (outdated and inappropriate, according to its critics) management methods derived from the private sector.

NPM prescribed a new role for the citizen, that of the client-consumer; one who would have a choice between various providers of (state-funded) public services that could potentially be produced by either the public or the private (for-profit or not-for-profit) sector of the economy. The adoption of NPM aimed at improving the effec-tiveness and efficiency of public services through the use of market mechanisms, such as "choice", "exit" and "protest" (Hirschman, 2004), reserving for the citizen the role of the consumer of the services –a role very much alike the one held by the citizen in the TPA model as well.

Comparing the two models, TPA can be associated to the political dimension of Pub-lic Administration and Management, with its power derived mainly from its ability to perceive and interpret the complexity and special fabric of the policy design processes. However, as far as the implementation of the policy is concerned, that aspect of gov-ernance is treated as a "black box", in effect avoiding to deal with the complex sub-processes related to the management of the outputs of the political process - i.e. the production of the public services themselves (Osborne, 2006). On the other side, the power of NPM lies precisely in its ability to handle the complexity of the above "black box". Its own, however, "tragic flaw" is a view of the political process, merely as a context within which the processes of public management take place.

Finally, both models were considered limited and one-dimensional in regards to their ability to effectively respond to the complexity of the administration and management of public services, within the multi-factorial and multi-dimensional system of policy planning and implementation of the 21st century (Rhodes, 1997).

3.3. The rising model of the New Public Governance

Over time, serious challenges such as population aging, semi-permanent fiscal austeri-ty, poverty, social inequalities and the marginalization of entire social groups, com-bined with the realization of democratic deficit at the various levels of governance, have pushed many governments to seek new ways in order to involve citizens in the processes both of policy-making and – especially - public services production (Pestoff, 2009).

Within this socio-political environment, the explosive development of ICT and the associated phenomenon of the "Network Society" (Castells and Castells, 2010), acted as a catalyst for the evolution of both TPA and NPM into a more complex and multi-dimensional governance system, that of the New Public Governance (NPG); a model were citizens, both individually and collectively, acquire a more active role as co-creators of service delivery systems and coproducers of the public services they use (Osborne, 2010, 2006; Pestoff et al., 2013).

According to Osborn (2010), NPG is not a new paradigm of an Public Administration and Management system (like TPA and NPM), but rather a theoretical/conceptual model used for the analysis and interpretation of the processes pertaining the planning and implementation of public policies in the 21st century. Its conceptual framework is based on the existence of many independent factors participating in the production of public services (plural state) and multiple processes that co-shape the policy planning and implementation system (pluralist state).

NPG looks beyond the procedures and hierarchies of TPA as well as the efficiency-maximization tendency of NPM and focuses primarily on the – social - impact of the services provided. It is concerned mainly with process governance and inter-organizational relationships (as opposed to the intra-organizational logic of NPM) which are developed through the interaction between partners, regardless of their sec-tor of origin (i.e. public, private or social sector). At its core are the trust and relational capital developed between cooperating partners over time (Bovaird, 2006). At the same time, NPG emphasizes collaboration and negotiation between partners, regard-less of whether public, private or non-profit. Given this focus, user participation and mutual dialog between service users and the staff replaces professionalism or competi-tion as the main guarantee of service quality (Vidal, 2013).

To this end, a key pillar of the NPG paradigm is the development of a cooperative re-lationship between the Citizen and the State, in the context of which the citizens are considered as coproducers of public services. The direct involvement of citi-zen/service-users in the production

of services grants them access to - and sometimes even control over - the service delivery system. That, in turn, facilitates the develop-ment of dialogue and cooperation between citizens/coproducers and the professional staff of the responsible PSO on a number of issues related especially to the quality of service provision.

Thus, in the context of NPG, PSOs are replaced by Service Delivery Systems (herein-after SDS), where the cooperation between a multitude of actors is necessary for the production of services and the achievement of social goals (Osborne et al., 2013).

An example of the above can be identified in the (institutionalized) integrated civil protection plan "IOLAOS" for the delivery of forest protection and firefighting ser-vices in Greece. The SDS set forth by IOLAOS attempts to coordinate of all the com-petent actors: the state's PSOs (Fire Department, Police, etc.), together with the Local Government Organizations (LGOs) at both the municipal and regional level, as well as the registered Voluntary Community Organizations (VCOs). Key parameter to the success of the SDS's goals is the appropriate utilization of the citizen-coproducers op-erating within or in cooperation with all major actors (Fire Dept, LGOs and PSOs).

3.4. On the way to a new Social Contract

The transition between the abovementioned models of Public Administration can be interpreted, on the one hand, as an attempt of the State to adapt to the inevitable changes taking place within society and affecting - directly or indirectly - both the role and position of the State within its political/social/economic environment; and on the other hand, as the tendency of governments to develop a closer relationship with that particular environment.

Given that each model has a different approach regarding the role of the Citizen vis-à-vis the State, Meijer (2016) argues that transitioning from one model to another can be considered as a quasi-renegotiation of the Social Contract. The basic idea behind the traditional Social Contract (associated mainly with TPA) is that citizens provide re-sources (through taxation) and legitimacy (through the elections) to the State, in return for fair and equal treatment. The advent of NPM, which emphasizes the exploitation of tools of the Market in order for the citizen to claim higher quality public services, redefines the Social Contract by considering the State's outputs (i.e. the provided ser-vices) as its new legitimization basis.

Finally, the emergence of NPG introduces a more participatory and interactive model of governance which attempts to involve citizens not only in the political decision-making processes, but also in the planning and practical implementation of State poli-cies (Osborne, 2006). To this end, it is no longer sufficient for the citizens to provide resources and legitimacy, but also to actively participate in the very production of the public services they consume/use (see Alford, 2009; Pestoff et al., 2013).

This, according to Meijer (2016), causes - and at the same time presupposes - a change in the established distribution of roles and responsibilities between the Citizen and the State. A change that ultimately constitutes the introduction of new Social Contract; one that is built on a horizontal relationship of trust and cooperation between the State and the Citizen.

4. The concept of Service Coproduction

In the previous sections the concept of coproduction was linked to wider issues that have been the subject of public debate within both the academic community and the society and are directly related to the role of the Citizen vis-à-vis the State. Below, the concept of coproduction is presented in more detail, starting with a review of its ori-gins and evolvement through time to become a core element of the most advanced public governance systems of the 21st century.

4.1. A brief historical review

Services coproduction isn't something new; it is a concept with quite an extensive "re-sume" of practical application throughout the world: from juries to volunteer militia groups and all the way to forest protection/firefighting. Its conception is attributed to the Nobel Prize holder political scientist and economist Elinor Ostrom and the Labora-tory for Political Theory and Analysis of Indiana University), who in for her monu-mental work "Citizen Participation and Policing: What Do We Know?" (Ostrom et al., 1978), refers to the role of citizens and local communities in the coproduction of secu-rity. Due to Ostrom's endorsement of the principles of TPA, public services coproduc-tion was initially linked to the concepts of citizen participation in public affairs (Bovaird, 2007; Brudney, 1987; Ostrom, 1999; Pestoff, 2006) and of improving the quality of democracy (Alford, 2002; Bovaird, 2007; Ostrom, 2000).

The private sector quickly became aware of the potential of coproduction. So, by the end of the 1990s, the idea of active customer involvement in service provision had gained a dominant position in various market sectors (Ramirez, 1999; Wikström, 1996) e.g. self-service supermarkets, bank ATMs, web banking applications, etc., leading finally to the development of the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) and the theory of Value Co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

In the public sector, after a first wave of attention between the late 1970s and the 1980s, the interest on coproduction started to fade, while at the same time the political spotlight began to shine on the promising new model of NPM. However, the interest in coproduction revived in the 2000s and especially 2010s when - mainly due to the effects of the global economic crisis of 2008 - governments were forced to introduce major cuts in public spending and coproduction was considered as a "decent" way to reduce costs of the public services - sometimes in a desperate attempt to save them from abolition (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2012). Presenting coproduction as a panacea, automatically placed it at the center of an extensive public dialogue that took place internationally at both the ideological and the political level, a typical example of which being the "Big Society Debate" in Great Britain (Ishkanian and Szreter, 2012).

At the same time, a part of the scientific community was examining whether copro-duction actually produces - all or some of - the above outcomes. The results of this undertaking were for the most part inconclusive: Vamstad (2012), for example, based on studies that showed that in Sweden the quality of co-produced childcare services is higher than that provided exclusively by the care of the Municipalities, supports that the coproduction can indeed offer a higher quality of public services. Fledderus (2016), for his part, implies that he did not manage to answer with certainty the ques-tion of whether coproduction can increase trust between citizens and PSOs. Finally, Brandsen & Helderman (2012) and Rosentraub and Sharp (1981) argue that, under specific conditions, the coproduced services may not be equally accessible to all their potential users and also, that the process of coproduction, in itself, may not pro-mote/encourage the participation of all interested citizen/user groups. Thus, the ques-tion remains unanswered – at least with the desired degree of certainty.

Alongside the above research, a large part of the related scientific community focused on the question of what the concept of coproduction really means. It is held that dur-ing the 1970s and the 1980s the term had more economic connotations with a focus mainly on increasing the efficiency of service delivery processes (e.g. Brudney and England, 1983), while after 2000 the emphasis shifted to the direction of a more polit-ical/administrative approach, focusing more on the effort and the resources contribut-ed by the various actors, as well as the dynamics of interactions between them (e.g. Bovaird, 2007).

4.2. Defining Coproduction

The concept of Service Coproduction is being widely addressed in the scientific bibli-ography both in the fields of Public Administration & Management (Alford, 2009a; Bovaird, 2007; Brudney & England, 1983; E. Ostrom et al., 1978; Parks et al., 1981; Pestoff et al., 2013; Rosentraub & Sharp, 1981; Whitaker, 1980, κ.λπ.) and Service Management (Gronroos, 2007; Normann, 2001; Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008; Ve-netis & Ghauri, 2004, κ.λπ.), in order to denote the active involvement of a service's user/consumer in the process of the design and production of that service. In one of the earliest conceptualizations of coproduction, Parks et al. (1981) describe it as the mix of actions/activities implemented by PSOs, together with groups of citizens for the production of public services with the aim of increasing their quality and/or quanti-ty. Much later, in a similar manner, Loeffler (2011) argues that, in the context of coproduction, the public sector and citizens leverage each other's resources and assets with the aim of achieving better results or improved performance.

Ostrom (1996) defines coproduction as a process by which the inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals that do not belong to the same organ-ization. Ramirez (1999), a major thinker on the topic value co-creation, considers coproduction as the value produced by two or more subjects, acting jointly and for common benefit. Joshi and Moore (2004), narrowed down the scope of the concept of coproduction with the term "institutionalized coproduction", by which they defined the provision of public services through regular, long-term relationships between gov-ernment agencies on the one hand and of organized citizen groups on the other, in the context of which both actors make a significant contribution of resources.

Attempting to include non-state actors, Bovaird (2007) defined coproduction as the provision of services through regular, long-term relationships, developed between pro-fessional providers (belonging to any sector of the economy), service users and/or oth-er members of society, in the context of which all participants contribute significant resources – a definition later endorsed also by Osborn and Strokosch (2013).

Finally, Alford (2009) defined coproduction as any active behavior manifested by an individual or organization that does not belong to the competent PSO, which:

a) is either connected/related to the production or (if independent from it) is caused by the results/outcomes of the service;

b) is (at least partially) voluntary; and finally,

c) intentionally or unintentionally creates private and/or public value, in the form of outputs and/or results/outcomes.

From the above, becomes evident that there exists a number of approaches to the con-cept of coproduction which, as the case may be, differ in terms of the role attributed to the citizen-coproducer, the various types and forms of coproduction, the tasks in-cluded in the potential coproduction, etc.

5. The multi-dimensional role of the Citizen-Coproducer

Bovaird (2007) supports that service users and their communities can and should be involved in the planning and production of public services and goes on to list a wide range of relationships that develop between service users and the competent PSOs, which are contingent on the respective role that each actor maintains in the planning and production of the particular public services.

In this context, some typical examples of coproduction include:

a) Members of local communities participating in neighborhood watch groups (Fledderus and Honingh, 2016);

b) Parents involved in the provision of childcare services (Pestoff, 2008; Thom-sen, 2015);

c) Tenants of social housing structures consulting with the competent Municipali-ty on issues regarding the improvement of the relevant infrastructure (Need-ham, 2008);

d) Volunteer caregivers assisting elderly people (Wilson, 1994);

e) Citizens participating in the participatory budgeting process of their Municipal-ity (Barbera et al., 2016),

f) Volunteers assisting in forest protection and firefighting (Pandelidis and Tzi-ritis, 2009), etc.

These examples make it clear that both the role of citizens in the service production process and its relation to the produced values can vary significantly, depending on the specific case of coproduction. Thus, citizen-coproducers, in some cases may enjoy private value (as in the case of neighborhood watch groups), while in other cases their work may be aimed to the production of public value (as in the case of participatory budgeting), or even private value for other people (as in the case of elderly caregivers). The diverse role of the citizen-coproducer is reflected in the relevant scientific bibliog-raphy with terms such as "customer", "consumer", "user", "stakeholder", "citizen", "taxpayer" or simply "the public", while his/her participation is defined, as the case may be, on an individual and/or collective basis.

Voorberg et al. (2015), identify three types of citizen-co-producers, on the basis of their degree/level of involvement:

a) The "co-implementer/co-producer" as in the case of waste management, the participation of citizens is necessary for the sorting of the various types of waste ("sorting at the source") and therefore is limited to the execution of pro-cessing tasks (Ben-Ari, 1990);

b) The "co-designer" where, although the general policy is determined by the PSO, the particular method employed in service provision is selected/designed by the citizens, as for example in cases where citizens participate in the mainte-nance of equipment for outdoor recreation areas after the invitation of the rele-vant Municipality and in that context they plan and organize the implementa-tion of the work by themselves (Wipf et al., 2009); and lastly,

c) The "co-initiator" of an activity that the state - at a later stage - adopts and in-vests in. An example is the citizens' initiative for the restoration of monuments in the historic center of Naples, when it was reopened to the public (Rossi, 2004).

Alford (2002), in the context of his research on the parameters that influence the willingness and/or ability of individuals to participate in public service coproduction activ-ities, distinguishes three categories of participants, Citizens, Customers and Volun-teers, as follows:

a) An individual who participates in a coproduction activity in the capacity of the "Citizen", from the produced service seeks to create public value. The Citizen is part of a collective "we",

utilizing institutional forms of opinion voicing, such as voting, while at the same time, his/her relationship with the State is gov-erned by an integrated set of rights, obligations and responsibilities;

b) An individual who participates in a coproduction activity in the capacity of the "Customer", from the produced service seeks to create private value to be en-joyed by him/herself and/or other individuals related to him/her; and lastly,

c) An individual who participates in a coproduction activity and from the service produced does not enjoy (substantial) public or private value, is considered a "Volunteer".

It is pointed out, however, that the different attributes or roles of an individual, pre-scribed in the above categorization scheme may coexist. More specifically, a person may fall into more than one category at the same time (e.g. the person participating in a coproduction activity may concurrently maintain the status of the citizen and the client).

Focusing on the category of "Customers", Alford (2016), further identifies the im-portant subcategories of:

a) Beneficiaries, who - unlike other customers - do not pay for the public services they use/consume. These, for example, include public school students or resi-dents of social housing structures, etc.; and

b) Obligatees, who are coerced by the State to use/consume certain public ser-vices, regardless of - or even against - their will (such as tax-payers, prisoners, etc.), who through their compliance with the relevant regulatory framework, participate (albeit passively) in the production of the respective service (e.g. the prisoner through compliance coproduces security for the citizens).

According to Alford (2002), each of the above roles (citizen, customer and volunteer) produces different clusters of interests, expectations and stakes which, in turn, largely determine the factors that influence the tendency of people to get initially involved and maintain their involvement in public service coproduction activities.

6. Obstacles and limitations to the implementation of Coproduc-tion

Voorberg et al. (2014), in the context of their research on the causes of the ineffective implementation of coproduction, categorize the causes into (a) those that can be at-tributed to the competent PSO and (b) those that can be attributed to citizen-coproducers. On the side of the PSO, they consider as the most significant causes:

a) The conservatism and/or the lack of a relevant vision and strategy on the part of the political and administrative leadership;

b) The (consequent) lack of the necessary resources (e.g. equipment and facili-ties); as well as

c) The existence of administrative structures and operational procedures that are not suitable for the implementation of coproduction activities.

Accordingly, on the side of citizen-coproducers, they argue that the problems can be mainly link to:

a) the lack of clear motivation and willingness;
b) the lack of the necessary skills; as well as
c) the lack of sufficient social capital in the local society.

Osborn and Strokosch (2013), referring to the reasons behind the reluctance of PSOs to engage in coproduction activities, argue that PSOs may consider that coproduction is time-consuming, requires excessive resources and distracts the professional staff from the "real work" related to the efficient provision of services. PSOs, also express their reluctance regarding the involvement of citizens in the planning and production of public services, mainly due to the belief that the citizen-coproducers may make co-ordination and consensus-building more difficult for the professional staff (Levine and Fisher, 1984).

Bovaird (2007) mentions numerus studies that refer to the existence of problems in the cooperation between citizen-coproducers and the professional staff of the competent PSOs. In that context, he reports on several occasions where a strong resistance was expressed on the part of PSO employees against the delegation of responsibility for the execution of critical tasks by citizen-coproducers or networks/collectives thereof. Their criticism focuses on the potential lack of both professionalism and responsibility in their behavior as well as skills and knowledge required to perform the relevant du-ties. This attitude of the PSOs' staff towards coproduction reflects - and at the same time shapes/reinforces - a corresponding attitude on the part of their political leaders; a fact which, according to Bovaird & Loeffler (2012), is mainly due to their own ten-dency to avoid potential risk of losing their position of power and control.

Frieling et al. (2014) argue that a common criticism regarding participatory activities in general, is that the contribution of citizens is not taken seriously enough by the PSO, as it is considered to be symbolic rather than substantial. This very lack of recognition and appreciation of citizens' contribution, combined with the inherent difficulty of finding tangible evidence for the creation of (individual or public) value for their ben-efit, list among the main factors preventing citizens from getting involved or continu-ing to participate in coproduction activities (Ross and Needham, 2013). Other deter-rent factors are the ambiguity of roles, the phenomenon of "free-riders" as well as the fatigue of citizen-coproducers and local communities from repeatedly participating in coproduction activities (Alford and Hughes, 2008; Bovaird, 2007; Simmons and Birchall, 2005; Taylor, 2003).

Another serious problem related to coproduction are the conflicts that occur among the citizen-coproducers and which are due to a multitude of factors such as a conflict of interests, needs or opinions, and/or differences in values, motivations, etc. (Taylor, 2003). Conflicts, however, may also exist between citizen-coproducers and other members of the local community; as Bovaird (2007) points out, the results of self-organization entailed by coproduction are not always accepted by society - a fact that can also be interpreted as a consequence of the "conflict" or "clash" that is sometimes observed between the private and public values being created through the coproduc-tion activity. Thus, for example, accusations of abusing the role of coproducer for one's own benefit may be expressed (openly or covertly).

Lastly, as Bovaird (2007) claims, coproduction - by its very nature - blurs the line that separates the competencies/responsibilities between the public and the private sector, thus creating conditions that may cause diffusion of responsibilities and cancellation (in practice) of public accountability on the part of the political officials and profes-sional staff of the competent PSOs. This particular issue, as well as other important issues related to the institutional arrangements regarding the implementation of the coproduction model, are of critical importance, as they have the potential to under-mine the overall prestige and value of the coproduction paradigm and therefore are presented in more detail below.

7. Institutional issues raised by Coproduction

Coproduction, as mentioned in previous sections of this document, is based on the undertaking of joint actions on the part of the competent PSOs and their respective clients/service-users, that take place within the framework of standard service provi-sion processes; and as such, the citizen participation - in general - does not seem to re-quire any special legal regulation. In this context, the well-known saying "what is not prohibited is permitted" remains the basic principle that governs the role of citizens within a legal system. However, regarding the participation of citizens in the produc-tion of public services, this rule contradicts the fundamental principle that the provi-sion of public services is the sole responsibility of the State (Szescito, 2018).

In that respect, citizens who coproduce public services inevitably enter the State's area of competence/responsibility, thus raising a host of legal questions as they attempt to perform functions that have been delegated by legislation exclusively to public bodies. For example, the co-planning activity concerning participatory budgeting of a Munici-pality, requires modifica-tions to the budget preparation procedures provided for in the relevant legislation - especially in this particular case where the role of citizens is not limited to advisory but it has a decisive manner as well. Thus, granting citizens the right to co-decide on the budget interferes with the respective exclusive institutional capacity of the competent public bodies; an act the presupposes appropriate adjust-ments to the relevant institutional framework. Thus, it becomes obvious that the par-ticipation of citizens in coproduction activities requires some - at least general - legal basis. Despite the fact that the law is not necessary (probably not even possible) to provide an institutional framework that will cover each and every case of coproduc-tion, nevertheless some basic provisions should be made to that effect. These, may in-clude the allocation of powers and responsibilities to the participants in the service production process (citizens and PSO officials), as well as a clear legal authorization covering the allocation of any type of public resources to the respective coproduction activities (ibid).

Along these lines, Meijer (2016), in view of the new situation taking shape in the pub-lic space as a result of the implementation of the coproduction paradigm, detects an incompat-ibility between the existing institutional structures, on the one hand, and the new distribution of roles and obligations in the Citizen-State dipole, on the other. Therefore, he argues that the application of the coproduction paradigm poses serious challenges to the existing institutional structures, forcing the State to perform corre-sponding adjustments of the respective legal frame-work in various policy areas, such as for example, the provision of legal protection to citizen-coproducers (Aubin and Bornstein, 2012).

Furthermore, for Joshi and Moore (2004) it is clear that coproduction blurs accounta-bility schemes based on precise boundaries that separate the public from the private. Along these lines, Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff pose the question: "(...) who can the users hold accountable when the users themselves are part of the production pro-cess?" (2013, p. 618). The fact is that coproduction in no way relieves the institutional responsibility of the State for the provision of public services; thus, the participation of citizens cannot be used as an argument on the part of competent PSO in the event of failure to provide public services in the quality and/or quantity defined by the law.

According to Szescito (2018), another element related to the legitimization basis of co-production is the safeguarding of the basic values of the service delivery system. The provision of public services is governed by basic principles that ensure universal and equal access to all citizens. And despite the fact that there is no inherent attribute of coproduction that contradicts

the preservation of the above principles, numerous references to relevant problems are made in the respective scientific literature. For ex-ample, there have been references to the fact that the majority of the participants in coproduction activities come from wealthy communities, are themselves well-off, ed-ucated, and belong to non-minority groups of the population. They are, therefore, in an advantageous position to take charge of the participatory decision-making process or to enjoy services that require greater user involvement (Verschuere et al., 2012).

Addressing the issues raised by the principles of universality and equality must be tak-en very seriously into account when legislating in the field of public service provision. Especially in the case of coproduction, any political or legislative initiatives aimed at the implementation of public service coproduction activities should always be accom-panied by a relevant social impact assessment study. Thus, any negative consequences in respect of the universality and equality regarding service provision will be identified and addressed a priori, so that all the necessary regulatory measures are taken in time to manage the relevant risks.

8. Epilogue

Concluding, it should be noted once more that the paradigm of coproduction, not-withstanding its virtues, is to be considered by no means a panacea, capable of healing all the maladies and shortcomings of the administration systems worldwide. It does have a "dark" side and all kinds of difficulties and obstacles may emerge in the way of its implementation. Also, serious consideration has been raised regarding both the par-adigm's effectiveness for the creation of public value and social capital, as well as its impact on the preservation of a balance between representative and participatory de-mocracy in the context of modern public governance systems.

However, if all that is taken into account at the design phase, through appropriate le-gal arrangements and careful planning, coproduction has the potential to become what Osborne et al. (2018, p. 18) characterize as one of the cornerstones of reform policies worldwide; a valuable tool for reforming public service delivery systems, as well as for the planning and efficient production of public services; a means of leveraging addi-tional resources in the provision public services; an answer to the question of the dem-ocratic deficit; and finally, a path leading to active citizenship and the activation of society.

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A Foucauldian discourse analysis of sexual harassment in Greek academic community

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Μια Φουκωική ανάλυση λόγου της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης στην Ελληνική ακαδημαϊκή κοινότητα

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the views and perspectives of Greek undergraduate students upon sexual harassment in academic community. The sample was 6 students and the data were analysed with the use of the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Four main themes emerged from the analysis: The "gen-der blind" vulnerability discourse, the power as a driving force, patriarchy as a developmental factor for the male perpetrator and power relations in the academic community. Patriarchy constitutes a developmental factor for the male perpetrator thus moralising practices and behaviours that develop fear and a culture of silence. Regarding the academic community, power relations are built on the concepts of prestige, profit and on the high ranking position thus interpreting power relations as gender relations.

KEY WORDS: Greek education, financial crisis, reforms, Max Weber, new governance, egucational reform, rationalisation.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η παρούσα έρευνα διερευνά τις απόψεις των Ελλήνων προπτυχιακών φοιτητών για τη σεξουαλική παρενόχληση στην ακαδημαϊκή κοινότητα. Το δείγμα ήταν 6 μαθητές και τα δεδομένα αναλύθηκαν με τη χρήση της Φουκωικής Ανάλυσης Λόγου. Τέσσερα βασικά θέματα προέκυψαν από την ανάλυ-ση: Η ευαλωτότητα των «τυφλών φύλων», η εξουσία ως κινητήριος δύναμη, η πατριαρχία ως ανα-πτυξιακός παράγοντας για τον άνδρα θύτη και οι σχέσεις εξουσίας στην ακαδημαϊκή κοινότητα. Η πατριαρχία αποτελεί αναπτυξιακό παράγοντα για τον άνδρα θύτη, ηθικοποιώντας έτσι πρακτικές και συμπεριφορές που αναπτύσσουν τον φόβο και την κουλτούρα της σιωπής. Όσον αφορά την ακαδημαϊκή κοινότητα, οι σχέσεις εξουσίας βασίζονται στις έννοιες του κύρους, του κέρδους και στην υ-ψηλή θέση, ερμηνεύοντας έτσι τις σχέσεις εξουσίας ως σχέσεις μεταξύ των φύλων.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Ελληνική εκπαίδευση, εκπαιδευτικές μεταρρυθμίσεις, χρηματο-πιστωτική κρίση, τυπική ορθολογικότητα, Μαξ Βέμπερ, απροσωποποίηση θεσμικών σχέσεων, 'απο-σύνδεση' μέσων και σκοπών.

1. Background

The depiction of women has changed over the years and especially after the influence of the femi-nist approach. Although women have found their position in the society in terms of equality and rights, the phenomenon of sexual harassment still prevails. According to Lister (2007) sexual har-assment is reflected upon the revival of "traditional" male power to the detriment of women. This phenomenon constitutes an attitude or a behaviour that operates as an indication of women being repudiated from the public sphere through undermining their dignity (Lister, 2007). The legal framework of sexual harassment seems to be diverse and varies throughout different countries. For instance, in Australia sexual harassment is classified under the civil law, although certain behaviours or acts regarded as sexual harassment are punishable under criminal law - such as stalking or persis-tent and obsessive attempts to communicate - while the court recognizes that the majority of victims are females (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008). Furthermore, research has shown that men do not consider sexual harassment as a serious problem probably because they cannot relate with the victims (Berdahl, Magley & Waldo, 1996). Garlick (1994) reports that in specific situations men perceive sexual harassment differently than women, as women consider more behaviours under the sexual harassment threshold than men.

According to Foucault, sexuality constitutes an integral part of the individual's identity (Stein & Plummer, 1994), which interacts with the concept of "power" based on a sex-pleasure relationship (Lothian, 2013). Foucault argues that if sexuality takes precedence, then it can be used as a mean of control on subordinating forces, while at the same time gender in combination with power gives in-dividuals the power to determine their own lives and the lives of others (Lothian, 2013). For exam-ple, according to the evolutionary perspective, men use their power to achieve reproduction (Browne, 1997). However, such attempts to gain sexual access result in more coercive sexual behav-iours such as rape (Ward, Hudson & Keenan, 1998). From the psychodynamic perspective Costopoulos και Junie (2018) argue that sexual harassment constitutes a consequence of the norma-tive ideology of masculinity. Men who are afraid of emotional attachment and have diminished ex-perience in sexual relationships, can be led to isolation, low self-esteem, intense stress and other fea-tures often associated to sexual harassment. On the contrary, Ridge, Plummer and Peasley (2006) point out that portrayals of masculinity and how they are defined are crucial for the way that indi-viduals will promote their social acceptance within the society. Also, Ravenhill and de Visser (2017) focus on male privileges, which include the social power as it stems from stereotypical masculinity and can be indicated by appearance and behaviours. Likewise, Hoffmann (1986) argues that sexual harassment against women from men functions as a form of social control and reflects the interac-tion between socially constructed definitions of male and female sexuality and the position socially aligned to the sexes along with the dominance of concepts of power and authority in various con-texts and institutions.

The male power is nurtured by the patriarchal family model where the man decides and the rest are obliged to obey, thus normalising practices and behaviours that nurture fear and silence among those who tolerate such behaviours (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). Indeed, as Hollway et al. (1984) point out, a socially patriarchal system promotes the image of a man who must create fear and even when he feels insecure he must project aggression so as not to lose his power. Sexual harassment moves beyond the sexual dominance while according to patriarchal capitalist theory, sexual harass-ment is a reflection of social and economic male domination that seeks to oppress women (Noah, 2008). Men seem to be so soaked in this patriarchal system that they do

not realise their actions as being harmful. It seems that based on the standard normalisation of socially expected gender behav-iours in sexual harassment cases, men consider their behaviours as being normal and justified while women are victimised (Vaux & Hobfoll, 1993). Sometimes not even the victims realise their own victimization. van Dijk's (1989) theory of power describes that someone who wishes to control an-other person must have control over his/her desires, wishes, plans, and beliefs and then perhaps the other person may accept or agree these terms. This constitutes the social power which is usually indi-rect and operates through the "minds" of people implying this kind of "mental control" which is typ-ically exercised through persuasion (van Dijk, 1989). This theory reflects Twemlow's (1999) classi-fication of abusers of sexual harassment which includes among others the abuser-helper who does favours to another person in order to receive a sexual profit and another type who uses directly his position of power to harass someone. In contrast to all the above, Pina et al. (2009) argue that sexual harassment is not a normative social phenomenon since most men do not sexually harass.

According to an earlier and traditional form of the social system, society is presented as a set of asexual objects and subjects of analysis (Lister, 2007). The term "power" refers to the negotiating perspective throughout all social relationships and functions as a vague energy on which the exist-ence of resistance depends on (Foxhall, 1994). In particular, power is involved in all social conven-tions, thus explaining the social processes, the changes, and the ways according to which human re-ality, autonomy and efficiency are experienced. According to Mcwhorter (2004), power is not ex-clusively a negative manifestation of human action, on the contrary, it shapes, creates and sets the limits of human reality. The theoretical scheme described above agrees with the organizational theo-ry, which views sexual harassment as a result of the power provided and it arises from positions of power observed at all levels of social, public, and private life (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993). The regula-tory environment that has been formed and sets the limits and rules in Western societies reflects the existence of "strong" and "weak" individuals that organizes and determines the relations between them which must be accepted by everyone (Lips, 1991). Tangri, Burt, and Johnson (1982) argue that sexual harassment is used in order to mold gender interactions according to the prevailing social norms, emanating from the demands of the biological sex, and thus maintaining the hegemonic male dominance with bullying strategies, which discourage women from professional and social evolu-tion. According to the theory of the four factors, a basic condition for sexual harassment is that the perpetrator accesses his moral inner limitations and then, within the pre-allowed place of action, he violates the victim's boundaries (O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998). According to Burr and Dick (2017), power correlations mainly refer to how a person's social status gives him more power/dominion over other people, affecting his self-image. Twigg (2004) associates the individual's identity to the way the individual perceives himself regarding his body. As Foucault indicates, the body functions as a mean of enforcing power as we cannot speak of submission of the mind and spirit without including the body (in Αλεξιάς, 2006, pp. 42-43). Stokely and Hamilton (1967) describe about institutional discrimination including all forms of inequality, such as gender inequality, economic and social ine-quality, inequalities due to power differences, etc. Discrimination is characterized by disadvantaged treatment towards individuals and groups that are considered different from those who obtain the normative and dominant position. Discrimination occurs in almost all areas of the individual's social life in a refined or less refined way and in the educational context (Πανταζής, 2015). Institutional discrimination deals with entrenched discrimination in the hegemonic dominant processes of orga-

nized structures of society. According to Allport (in Πανταζής, 2015) institutional discrimination is rooted in the causal relationship of the social representations and the processes of the institutions. In fact, Willness, Steel and Lee (2007) note that a significant factor for the perpetuation of such be-haviours, is tolerance which is projected by the framework of power. The scope of power consists moral values, rules and policies that are defined as institutional behavioural processes according to which, the organized context allows harassment behaviours to manifest. A central institutional body is, among others, the academic community.

According to all the above, this research constitutes an effort to investigate the perspectives and views of Greek undergraduate and postgraduate students regarding the phenomenon of sexual har-assment in order to understand in depth how the phenomenon is constructed and how it manifests itself within the Greek academic community.

2. Method

Data were collected by conducting six interviews. The subjects were one male and six female Greek students. Anastasis (20 years old) and Eirini (19 years old) live in Athens and they are at an under-graduate level. Maria (20 years old) is also at an undergraduate level but she lives in the countryside. Eve (25 years old) and Alice (26 years old) have finished their undergraduate studies and live in Athens whereas Ariadni (25 years old) is postgraduate student and also lives in Athens. The sample was collected via an invitation as uploaded to specific undergraduate and postgraduate students groups in social media.

The analytic approach used for the analysis was the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). FDA was initially developed by Michel Foucault who was interested in understanding how power and knowledge are shaped and used in societies (Burr, 2015). A Foucauldian scheme uses discourses as standardized systems that give meaning to historical and cultural events or contexts specifying what is considered natural and normal among societies and cultures (Hook, 2001). FDA focuses on how language is used to talk about discourses, how people have knowledge and feelings of a certain dis-course, and how people talk about or how they act according to a discourse (Willig, 2013). Discourses in turn create subject positions that allow people to behave and think in certain ways (Willig, 2013). In addition, some discourses may have more power and dominate over other discourses in order to be viewed as common-sense knowledge (Burr, 2015). In particular, when social issues such as sexual harassment arise, FDA provides the epistemological framework for understanding and perhaps resisting to hegemonic dominant discourses (Δαφέρμος, 2008).

The epistemology of FDA is social constructionism (Willing, 2013). In the light of social construc-tionism, knowledge and meanings are social constructs and reality becomes unstable depending on the historical and cultural perspective (Burr, 2003). It further assumes that through social interac-tion, language and knowledge of the world is constantly being constructed and not objective with the language being an important factor since it is used every day and within a specific culture it fa-cilitates the way a person thinks and how meanings are provided to them (Burr, 2015). In hence, constructs about the world are not discovered but created and they are based on an individual's sub-jective experience (Andrews, 2012).

For the analysis of the extracts the six steps as developed by Willing (2013) were followed and these analytic steps are: 1) discursive constructions, 2) discourses, 3) action orientation, 4) positionings, 5) practice, and 6) subjectivity.

3. Analysis

Theme 1: The "gender blind" vulnerability

This theme focuses on the vulnerability of the victims indicating that all genders may be potential victims of sexual harassment thus forming a "gender blind" vulnerability.

Extract 1: "I believe that everyone can be sexually harassed, not that I can rule out a group… neither gays nor lesbians, all sexes" (Alice, lines 117-120).

Extract 2: "I believe that we all may be sexually harassed, there is no particular individual who is more vulner-able" (Ariadne, lines 189-191).

Extract 3: "I do not rely on the gender dimension of the phenomenon just because it is not heard that a boy will be harassed BUT TODAY IT IS EQUALLY POSSIBLE" (Eve, lines 1133-134).

All subjects suggest that vulnerability is not associated to the gender dimension indicating the "gender blind" vulnerability discourse. An individual may be a victim of sexual harassment regard-less gender identity or sexual orientation. Alice's position agrees with the traditional form of the social system as interpreted in social policy according to which society is viewed as a set of asexual objects and subjects of analysis (Lister, 2007). Ariadne expresses the view that harassment is a situa-tion that can be experienced by both men and women without attributing a certain degree of vulner-ability to one of the two sexes (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008). On the other hand, Eve believes that the victimisation of men is not known because it is not frequently mentioned. Af-ter all, men do not express their feelings openly regarding annoyance and harassment due to the context of enhancing their social manhood (Twigg, 2004). Moreover, men compared to women weigh differently the cases of sexual harassment (Berdahl, Magley & Waldo, 1996) while another important factor is the fact that women receive harassment more frequently than men (Garlick, 1994). In hence, none vulnerability prediction may stand since everyone is at stake of being har-assed. According to the extracts all genders are positioned as potential victims of sexual harassment whereas power is strongly held by the perpetrators.

Theme 2: Power as a driving force

This theme indicates power as a driving force for the sexual harassment. Power is expressed through prestige or manipulation and it is marked on the victim's body thus creating the boundaries of reali-ty whereas whereas power is also genderdized as being male.

Extract 1: "Basically I can not explain it in detail. Lets' say "look at me, I have prestige, power and so I can impose myself on you and I can do whatever I want with you, I can control your body" and that's it" (Alice, 170-174).

Extract 2: "What we need to fight against is the framework of power…the framework of power is an important factor for sexual harassment" (Anastasis, lines 58-60).

Extract 3: "Something like manipulation but his main weapon was that he was a man and so he had the power" (Eirini, lines 135-139).

All three participants indicate the power discourse as a driving force for the sexual harassment. Al-ice's word reflects the Foucauldian theory which argues that sex and power combined provide the power to an individual so to determine not only his own life but also the lives of others (Lothian, 2013). The term power refers to the negotiating perspective of all social relations and functions as a vague energy on which depends the existence of resistance (Foxhall, 1994).

In hence, power shapes, crates and sets the boundaries of reality (Mcwhorter, 2004). For Alice power is expressed through prestige which socially imposes itself on the subject willing to control it. According to Burr and Dick (2017) power relations mainly refer to how an individual's social status gives him more power than other people. This disposition of power and control has no limits as Alice argues, and the initia-tion of this power relationship which is declared as vulnerability, is marked on the body. Αλεξιάς (2006) presents Foucault's position that the body operates as a mean of enforcing power since we can not speak about the submission of the mind and the spirit without including the body. So, in the case of sexual harassment the submission begins from the body and expands to the mind.

Anastasis highlights the frameworks of power and their contribution to the sexual harassment. In western societies the regulatory environment has been formed in a way that reflects the perception of the existence of "weak" and "powerful" individuals that consequently organise and determine the hierarchy which must be accepted by everyone (Lips, 1991). Willness, Steel and Lee (2007) ar-gue that tolerance constitutes a significant factor for the perpetuation of such behaviours which is projected by the framework of power and as Anastasis says, this framework should be fought.

On the other hand, Eirini not only indicates power as a driving force but also genderdizes power as being male. In this extract power and biological discourse are detected. Men are seen as biologically powerful that may use this power for conquering and possessing. Therefore, according to the evolu-tionary perspective, men use their power in order to achieve reproduction (Browne, 1997). After all, as Ridge et al. (2006) point out, men perpetuate the traditional pattern of a masculine man due to his dominance and power as attributed to him by the society. The subject positions adopted in the ex-tracts is that the perpetrator is the powerful one either because of his social status either because he adopts the role of the traditional masculine man as was given to him by the society. The power is mainly held by the perpetrator although Anastasis believes that this power should be challenged and fought.

Theme 3: Patriarchy as a developmental factor of the male perpetrator

In this theme patriarchy is indicated as a developmental factor of the male perpetrator. The patriarchal family model according to which men are raised to conquer creates a culture in which normal sexuality is defined through the superiority of men over women thus suggesting that sexual harassment is a reflection of social and economic male domination that seeks to oppress women.

Extract 1: "Men are the strong ones and they can make other genders to do what they want without their will and the others respect them because they are afraid of them….without a doubt we see that in the fam-ilies where man has the first and the last word in the family" (Eirini, lines 148-152).

Extract 2: "I generally believe that such a system has been set up, a patriarchal system that generally raises girls with worries that they should be careful…I have been taught to be directly and indirectly afraid of men and from my experiences, they are the ones responsible for such experiences without this be-ing restrictive" (Mary, lines 109-116).

The participants point out the patriarchy discourse. Eirini's perspective adopts a typical feature of the patriarchal family model where the man decides and the rest are obliged to obey, thus normalis-ing practices and behaviours that nurture fear and silence among those who tolerate such behaviours (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994).

For Maria there is a socially patriarchal system that promotes the image of a man who must create fear and even when he feels insecure he must project aggression so as not to lose his power (Holl-way, Henriques, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984). This concept of "man" is also projected in feminist theories although Pina et al. (2009) argue that sexual harassment is not a normative social phenomenon since most men do not sexually harass. However, feminist theories focus on the objectification of women and on the perception of male sexuality as insatiable, uncontrollable and over-promoted that create a culture in which normal sexuality is defined through the superiority of men over women (Hoffmann, 1986). According to patriarchal capitalist theory, sexual harassment is a reflection of social and economic male domination that seeks to oppress women (Noah, 2008). Thus, according to Hoffmann (1986), sexual harassment functions as a form of social control that reflects the interaction of socially constructed definitions of male and female sexuality along with the socially assigned position to gender and the dominance of concepts of power and authority in various contexts and institutions. In hence, patriarchal system that stills prevails in various social cultures constitutes a factor for the formation of an abusive man. From a very young age the boy internalises the values of patriarchy and he learns to dominate at the expense of the opposite sex and to impose his desires with or without the consent of others, because he has learned that it is a right granted to him by his male privilege (Ravenhill & deVisser, 2017). In this system the position of the woman is weakened and she is objectified on the altar of satisfaction of this insatiable and uncontrollable male sexual desire. The power is attributed to the patriarchal system that formulates abusive men and some men are willing to take up this role whereas women are left to adopt the position of the victim or of the submissive one. Such a deep rooted patriarchal system cannot be easily challenged since everyone is taught to behave accordingly and so it is not challenged by the subjects.

Theme 4: Power relations in the academic community.

This theme indicates the social power discourse according to which power relations between a pro-fessor and a student are unequally powerful and built on the concepts of prestige and profit whereas the high ranking position at university is strongly associated to power relations which are interpreted as gender relations.

Extract 1:"A professor exactly because he has prestige and power he believes that he can control you over anything and that he can impose himself on you" (Alice, lines 30-31)

Extract 2: "Because of the prestigious position that he holds [the professor] he believed that he would win but I also believe that the girl had thought that she may gain something from all this. So he believed that the girl would succumb because she would think "yes, I want to get a better grade in his module so I will" (Ariadni, 274-277)

Extract 3: "In most universities it is men who hold a high ranking position so I feel that it is more difficult for the victims to file a complaint against them. In hence the gender dimension is reinforced in the power relations and it is expressed mostly through bribing since he tried to bribe me in various ways and in a very natural way as if he was certain of what he was doing or as if he has done this before" (Eve, 155-159)

In the above extracts the social power discourse is detected. Alice describes how the power rela-tions between a professor and a student are unequally powerful because of the prestige that the pro-fessor holds and because of his power of imposition over students implying a universal authority and power. This universal power indicates an intentional disposition to enforce power as if this power enforcement is viewed as a normative practice of control within the academic

community. Alice's position agrees with Hoffmann (1986) who argues that sexual harassment against women from men functions as a form of social control and reflects the interaction between socially con-structed definitions of male and female sexuality and the position socially aligned to the sexes along with the dominance of concepts of power and authority in various contexts and institutions. This culture is perpetuated and reproduced through the educational system and through the operating mechanisms of the working environment.

Ariadni argues that power relations regarding the academic community are built on the concepts of prestige and profit. Twemlow (1999) argues that according to the his classification of the perpetra-tors of sexual harassment, there is one who uses directly his position of power to harass someone. These power relations are observed at all levels of social, public and private life (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993) including the academic life. The fact that a girl may succumb to her professor reflects van Dijk's (1989) theory of power according to which someone in order to control another person must have control over his/her desires, wishes, plans, and beliefs and then perhaps the the other person may accept or agree these terms. van Dijk (1989) explains that social power is usually indirect and operates through the "minds" of people implying this kind of "mental control" which is typically ex-ercised through persuasion. In Ariadni's example, the girl accepts the social power of her professor without even realising her victimisation and the mental control that the professor exercises on her through persuasion.

Eve associates the high ranking position at university thus genderdizing power and it seems that power relations depend on and are interpreted as gender relations. In other words males in high rank ing position at university are protected by their gender and by the position that they hold. Here an-other type of offender is reflected and that is the abuser-helper who does favours to another person in order to receive a sexual profit (Twemlow, 1999). Also, according to Eve's experience with her professor, it seems that based on the standard normalisation of socially expected gender behaviours in sexual harassment cases, men consider their behaviours as being normal and justified while wom-en are victimised (Vaux & Hobfoll, 1993).

Power in all extracts is strongly held by the male professors who are at the highest ranking position at university while students are positioned as helpless in front of the social power which is exercised over them. This social power may be accepted or rejected but not challenged.

4. Discussion

Sexual harassment constitutes a phenomenon that still prevails regardless the fact that women have found their position in the society in terms of equality and rights. Sexual harassment constitutes an attitude or a behaviour that operates as an indication of women being repudiated from the public sphere through undermining their dignity (Lister, 2007). This research investigated in depth the phenomenon in Greek academic community with the use of the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Three main themes emerged from the analysis. The first theme indicates the "gender blind" vulnera-bility discourse suggesting that all genders may be potential victims of sexual harassment. All sub-jects confirm that no specific gender is more at stake than other genders reflected the view that har-assment is a situation that can be experienced by both men and women without attributing a certain degree of vulnerability to one of the two sexes (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008) alt-hough it is suggested that the victimisation of men is not known because it is not frequently men-tioned. After all, men do not express their feelings openly regarding annoyance and harassment due to the context of enhancing their social manhood (Twigg, 2004).

The second theme indicates the power discourse as a driving force for the sexual harassment. Through the extracts power shapes, crates and sets the boundaries of reality (Mcwhorter, 2004) which can be expressed in many ways such as through prestige which socially imposes itself on the subject willing to control it. The disposition of power is limitless and it is marked on the body. In-deed as Αλεξιάς (2006) argues, the body operates as a mean of enforcing power since we can not speak about the submission of the mind and the spirit without including the body. So, in the case of sexual harassment the submission begins from the body and expands to the mind. In this theme power is genderdized as being male suggesting that men perpetuate the traditional pattern of a mas-culine man due to his dominance and power as attributed to him by the society (Ridge et al., 2006) whereas the society in general constitutes a regulatory environment which has been formed in a way that reflects the perception of the existence of "weak" and "powerful" individuals that consequently organise and determine the hierarchy which must be accepted by everyone (Lips, 1991).

The third theme reflects the patriarchy discourse according to which the patriarchal family model where the man decides and the rest are obliged to obey contributes to the normalisation of practices and behaviours that nurture fear and silence among those who tolerate such behaviours (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). All subjects indicate that patriarchy constitutes a shaping factor of the male per-petrator. After all, the boy from a very young age internalises the values of patriarchy and he learns to dominate at the expense of the opposite sex and to impose his desires with or without the consent of others, because he has learned that it is a right granted to him by his male privilege (Ravenhill & deVisser, 2017). In hence, sexual harassment is a reflection of social and economic male domination that seeks to oppress women (Noah, 2008).

In the last theme the social power discourse is detected. Power relations between a professor and a student are unequally powerful because of the professor's prestige thus indicating that this power operates as a normative practice of control within the academic community. Indeed, as Hoffmann (1986) argues, sexual harassment against women from men functions as a form of social control and reflects the interaction between socially constructed definitions of male and female sexuality and the position socially aligned to the sexes along with the dominance of concepts of power and au-thority in various contexts and institutions. In hence, it seems that this culture is perpetuated and reproduced through the educational system. Power relations in the academic community are also built on the profit and are associated to the the high ranking position of the professor. The fact that a girl may succumb to her professor reflects van Dijk's (1989) theory of power according to which someone in order to control another person must have control over his/her desires, wishes, plans, and beliefs and then perhaps the the other person may accept or agree these terms thus exercising a kind of "mental control" through persuasion. In addition, power relations depend on and are interpreted as gender relations since males in high ranking position at university are protected by their gender and by the position that they hold. In conclusion, based on the standard normalisation of socially expected gender behaviours in sexual harassment cases, men consider their behaviours as being normal and justified while women are victimised (Vaux & Hobfoll, 1993).

In the first three themes power is strongly held either by the perpetrators or by the patriarchal sys-tem that formulates abusive men whereas women or other genders are left to adopt the position of the victim or of the submissive ones. Such a deep rooted patriarchal system cannot be easily chal-lenged since everyone is taught to behave accordingly and for that reason it is not challenged by the subjects. In the last theme power is strongly held by the male

professors who are at the highest rank-ing position at university while students are positioned as helpless in front of the social power which is exercised over them. This social power may be accepted or rejected but not challenged.

This research constitutes an effort to investigate the perspectives and views of Greek undergraduate and postgraduate students regarding the phenomenon of sexual harassment in order to understand how the phenomenon manifests itself within the Greek academic community. For a more in depth understanding of the phenomenon further research is suggested focused on students - victims of sexual harassment by a professor or focused on the views and perspectives of the professors of Greek academic community.

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