Preventing Poverty – Creating Identity

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This paper has two aims. The first aim is to study and describe the manifest ideology of the EU's social policy. The second aim is to analyse to what extent the manifest ideology might be a part of building a common European identity - by finding common solutions to common European problems (problems, more or less constructed as common). The research is a critical ideology analysis, made up of a qualitative text analysis of EU social policy documents and National strategy reports (NSR). I ask two questions. Firstly, which are the main features in the manifest ideology of EU social policy as described in the texts? Secondly, what picture of a European identity is visible when reading the EU social policy texts and the National Strategy Reports? I have found five main features of the manifest ideology. These revolve around: how the world and change in the world are described according to the EU; the mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives and greater social cohesion; the creating of social cohesion; the importance of how policies are constructed and implemented and the EU's self-image. The texts offer either two quite different pictures with regards to the question of a European identity or ones that is partly incoherent. The analysed EU policy texts put across a picture of a uniform Europe, suggest that there is something genuinely European and a common European identity. However, the picture obtained when reading the NSRs and the collected picture of the EU policy texts and the NSRs is much less coherent. The paper argues that the manifest ideology could be a part of building a European identity, but it does not manage to prove that it actually is.

Keywords: European identity, social policy, the European social model, Finland, Ireland, Estonia, Germany.
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1 Preventing Poverty - Creating Identity

“The problem is not that we run out off money occasionally. The real problem is that we live our entire lives this way and our children grow up into this too”.

“I have no work and no housing. How can I form my life if I have no work?”

“I feel a bit like Don Quixote. I am fighting against windmills here and there and there is no real hope anymore.”

(Voices of participants in the 6th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, EAPN, 2007 p. 4-5)

Poverty is a much debated notion that has been given many different meanings and limitations throughout its history. To understand poverty, one has often focused on distributional issues, the lack of income and not having enough financial means (Barnes et al, 2002 p. 3). But the consequences of not having any income, not having a great enough income to subsist and the potential social effects of earning less than those in one’s immediate surroundings (often described as social exclusion) are also very important parts of the experience of being poor. There are still people starving in Europe today, but there are many more that are strongly limited socially because they lack financial resources.

In the EU, living in risk of poverty is defined as having 60% of the national average income or less. All together 25% of the population in the EU 25 could be considered at risk before social transfers and 15% after social transfers (Eurostat, 2006 p. 117). In numbers, that means that around 78 million Europeans are living in risk of poverty (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 3). The percentage varies substantially between different member states, however. For example 36% of the Irish population could be considered poor before social transfers and 21% after whereas the corresponding figures in Finland are 28% and 11% respectively (Eurostat, 2006 p.117). As the unit of measurement is national, in many cases the actual living standard between the countries varies even more. Furthermore, since the measurement starts from an average income, how the income is spread nationally (if there are great differences between those who earn the most and those who earn the least or if the differences are less strong) affects the result.
The EU member states both have many similarities and differences when it comes to their welfare systems. Whether there are more similarities or differences between the systems is a question which has caused – and will continue to cause – debate (more in the theory chapter, 2.2.1). On one hand, they are all democracies, market economies and have well developed social security systems (Krause et al, 2003 p. 1). However, the well known welfare regimes of, for example, Esping-Andersen have also made many readers aware of the substantial differences among the EU member states. Esping-Andersen’s typology consists of three different welfare regimes: the social-democratic, the corporatist-conservative and the liberal welfare regime. They are characterized according to how strongly the welfare state redistributes resources (a system of stratification) and how dependent a person’s well-being is on the market and his or her work (de-commodification). Different actors – the family, the state and the market also play important roles (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The typology is a simplification, but it manages to make some important differences between welfare states visible. For example, that one most probably will become dependant on different actors if one gets ill, old or pregnant. The actor it will be depends on in what regime one live in.

Some theorists take the similarities between the European member states’ welfare models as a prerequisite for a specific European Social Model (ESM). Others argue that the differences between the member states’ welfare regimes are too substantial but still believe that one could talk of an ESM as a political project. By focusing on problems (more or less constructed as common), such as an increased international competition, and offering common European solutions to these, for example a specific focus for education policy - a European identity is to be built (Jepsen, 2005 p. 238).

Social policy is still under the competence of the member states, but the EU has come to play an important role for the policies as well. With the Treaty of Amsterdam the European community was charged with the role of supporting and coordinating cooperation between the member states. Mutual exchange of information and practice is to strengthen and modernise the social protection systems and result in increased social inclusion (Sotsiaal ministeenum, 2006 p. 3). This thesis will focus on the interplay between the EU level and the member state level. It will attempt to come closer to an understanding of the EU ideology concerning social policy - with the focus on poverty and social exclusion - but also to understand the role EU’s ideology on social policy might play in constructing a uniform European identity.
1.1 State of Research

Much has been written on the existence and the creation of collective identities in general and European identity in particular.¹ To describe collective identities and their origins, theorists have often chosen one of several existing ideas on the matter. Many theorists have focused on the idea that there has to be a common basis for a collective identity. For a nation for example: a monarch, a history that shows national continuity, national heroes, language, monuments, folklore, distinctive geographical features or a specific mentality (on national identity: Thiesse, 1999, similar: Smith, 1991 p. 14, 69. On European identity: Blomsted et al, 2005 p. 32). Other factors that have also been studied for their ability to create a collective identity are among others: football, religion, political parties, education and citizenship (for example: Faltin et al, 2007; Green, 2007; Robyn, 2005, Hansen, 2000). Some have argued that this type of argument is often created to prove a point rather than to give a correct description of a real situation (in the case of European identity, for example: Karlsson, 1999 p. 63).

A “competitor” or “counterexample” can also have a unifying effect. An example of this is provided by the treatment of Muslim Turks by political and religious leaders from the 15th Century and onwards. They were seen as a threatening “other” and thus a Christian Europe was defined as a counterpoint and was said to have to unite to survive the Islamic threat (Karlsson, 2007 pp. 17-20). Similarly, today the economic system of the USA is often compared to a European economic model with the European model often perceived as being the more socially responsible. The comparison both fixes a framework for an analysis - that makes Europe seem better and more coherent - and makes it more difficult to question, for example, a European economic model or a coherent European identity (Jepsen et al, 2006 p. 2). In both the examples above, using an “other” as a reference pole makes the similarities in a collective European identity more visible and a collective identity is strengthened.

A collective identity can also be strengthened by pointing out that one group in the collective is different or even a threat. The terms “us and them” could refer to “Swedes and immigrants” for example. Although both Swedes and immigrants may be part of the same collective – the nation state Sweden –, the immigrants are seen as a threatening “other” by some (Hansen, 2000 p. 51, 56). Even if the “other” might be seen as a threat to the stability of a collective identity, it is actually often one of the most important foundations of the collective identity (Mouffé, 1994 p. 107 in Hansen, 2000 p. 56).
Some theorists have focused on other factors that could lead to a common European identity in their writings about European identity. It has for example been argued that new technology and social and economic problems will result in people bypassing the nation state for a European level (a functionalist/ supranationalist view, for example: Haas, 1958, Pentland, 1978). Others see the European integration as a more desired, deliberate process, where the states integrate in order to deal with issues which no nation state can contend with alone. The integration is limited, however, and other areas are still seen mainly as national (a pluralist view, Robyn, 2005 p. 10). How one relates to European integration affects what one will think about European identity. For example, pluralists attach more importance to national identity than the functionalists.

Some theorists see a conflict between a national and a European identity. National identities have often constituted a sort of norm for collective identities and thus when traditional factors like a common language and borders have been used to distinguish a European identity, the European identity has been considered weak (Robyn, 2005 p. 8). However, many would instead argue that national and European identities (and other collective identities) can have different forms and platforms and exist at the same time (for example: Robyn, 2005 p. 8, Diez, 2008 p. 709, Karolewski et al, 2006 p. 23).

Some theorists argue that collective identities are created (for example: Delanty et al, 2002, Hobsbawm, 1994, Anderson, 2006). In the case of a European identity, even the architect behind the EU - Jean Monnet – believed that Europe had never existed but was something that had to be created (Bjerström, 2007 p. 17). Others see a collective identity as something that can simply occur - in, for example, groups that have shared similar experiences etc. (Smith, 1991). And some take the existence of a European identity for granted and “prove it” with historical, cultural, social and political factors etc. (for example: Jansons, 1999 p. 27-29).

National identity has often been seen as a unifying factor and is there to ensure that, despite diversities, there is a basis for a collective interest (Thiesse, 1999, Delanty et al, 2002 p. 45). The same is true for a common European identity, which many see as vital if the EU is to gain legitimacy (for example: Lord, 2000, Karlsson, 1999 p. 63, similar: Karolewski et al, 2006 p. 23).

I have not found any other research, besides what I use as theory, where finding common social policy solutions to common European problems is seen as a means of creating

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1 Examples on collective identities are, among others, national and European identities.
a European identity (Jepsen et al, 2005 and Jepsen et al, 2006). However, as alluded to above, a common threat or problem - for example the Turkish threat from the 15th Century - and the need for a collective European solution to it (in the case of the last example - a European crusade) has been used as an identity creating factor already (Karlsson, 2007 pp. 17-20).

It should be self-evident that Europe and the EU are not the same entity. European identity has been a theme for discussion for much longer than the EU has even existed. However, when you read about European identity it is not always clear if the author is referring to something connected to the EU or Europe (or both). In this paper the focus on European identity is closely connected to the EU. The theory I will use focuses on a process where European identity might be created from an EU level. However, I will still employ the term “European identity” rather than “EU-identity”. I have made this choice to underline a distinction between the direct politics of the union (where identity building is a part) and the creation – the identity. The identity is something beyond the policies, the cooperation and the institutions that might have created it - possible with the power to bring legitimacy to the union.

Poverty has most often been studied as a part of development studies. When poverty and social exclusion in Europe is studied, the focus is often on Eastern Europe (for example, Dilliger, 2007) or on urban poverty (for example, Evans et al, 2005).

I hope to have made other interpretations and the stand of research on the ESM clear in the theory chapter (2.2).

1.2 Creating European identity – an EU Retrospect

In the “Declaration on the European Identity” (1973), the European Community addressed European identity in a formal statement for the first time. The member states declared that “the time ha[d] come to draw up a document on the European Identity” (Hansen, 2000 p. 53). A “diversity of cultures” was mentioned although it was to be framed “within a common European Civilization” (CEC, 1973 p. 119, 122 in Hansen, 2000 p. 54). The dynamism of a European identity were said to be a result of an “attachment to common values and principles, the increasing convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common and the determination to take part in the construction of a united Europe” (CEC, 1973 p. 119, 122 in Hansen, 2000 p. 54).

It was in the mid-1980s that the first real efforts were made to create a European identity and that a general discussion concerning a European identity gained momentum. The
European Council considered it “absolutely essential that the Community fulfil the expectations of the European people and take measures to strengthen and promote the identity and image of the community vis-à-vis its citizens and the rest of the world” (Karlsson, 1999 p. 65 & CEC, 1988 p. 6 in Hansen, 2000 p. 54). An ad hoc Committee - the Adonnino Committee - was set up to develop thoughts regarding European identity and to launch the campaign “People’s Europe” (Hansen, 2000 p 54 & Karlsson, 1999 p. 65). Behind the campaign were the ideas that the European Union could only become a reality if its people supported the idea of a Union and that the EU had to be close to its citizens (ideas derived from the Tindemans Report, 1976). A quotation from the preamble to the Rome treaty - “An ever closer union among the people of Europe” - also became an important catchphrase for the campaign (Karlsson, 1999 p. 65). The committee decided to give the European Community some of the traditional attributes of nation states, for example a flag and a hymn. Many identity creating projects have followed – the majority of which attempt to create a European identity from above (Karlsson, 1999 p. 65-66). The European Council, for example, wanted to introduce a European dimension to what was being taught in schools; a European passport and driving licence have been introduced (Karlsson, 1999 p. 65-66).

According to Hansen, the works of the Adonnino Committee ensured that the discussion about identity became an important part of the European Union discourse. And it was followed by many initiatives to foster a strong identification with the EU (Hansen, 2000 p. 54).

Research on identity formation in the EU has often focused on the member states and intergovernmental cooperation rather than on EU-institutions like the Commission and the Parliament - and their view on European identity (Hansen, 2000 pp. 54-5). In this paper the focus will be the EU and its context. A manifest ideology is derived from documents from both intergovernmental EU bodies and the Commission. The context consists of national reports from four member states. I consider there to be one manifest ideology, even if the material is from three organisations: the Council of the European Union, the European Council (where ministers from the member states represent their national governments) and the European Commission (where commissioners from the member states are bound to represent the interests of the EU). The texts I will analyse for the manifest ideology have been chosen because they treat very similar areas. The focus of the paper is not on one specific EU body. Rather, I will consider the texts as representative of attempts made by the EU - as a whole - to create a European identity. Thus, the focus will be on possible differences between the texts.
1.3 Central Problems, Aim and Questions

To create a common national or transnational identity, overriding factors like a common religion, history or values have often been used. The central idea of this thesis, however, is that a common European identity might be being built on distinct and common social policy solutions to problems that are presented as common. Other factors might also be used (see 1.1 State of Research) however; these are not researched in this paper. Social policy is still under the competence of the member states though, and the member states are quite diverse. They belong to different welfare regimes, for example, and have different resources at their disposal to carry out their policies. So what really needs to be unravelled is how diverse the situation and the ideas of problems and solutions in the various European countries can be at the same time as they are considered to share a common European identity, build on the idea of common problems and solutions to them. And if social policy is the basis for a European identity building project, how this European social policy ideology is drawn up becomes very interesting and important.

I have two - partly connected - aims. The first is to study and describe the EU ideology on social policy, with the focus on poverty and social exclusion. The second aim is to develop the study further, by analysing to what extent the manifest ideology might be a part of building a common European identity - by finding common solutions to common European problems (that are more or less constructed as common). And possibly call into question the existence of such a common identity.

The questions I will try to answer are:

Which are the main features in the manifest ideology of EU social policy as described in the texts?

What picture of a European identity is visible when reading the EU social policy texts and the National Strategy Reports?
1.4 Outline

After an introductory chapter, containing a short introduction, a presentation of central problems, aims, questions, the state of research and an outline, the theory and method chapters follows. The theory chapter focuses on social policy, Esping-Andersen welfare regimes are shortly presented, and so are definitions of poverty, social exclusion, different thoughts on the ESM and an introduction to ideology. The method chapter presents the method I will employ: ideology critique and a description of the used material and the operationalization. The analysis follows; it is divided into two chapters. The first focuses on the manifest ideology of EU’s social policy, positioning it with theories on the ESM. The second provides contexts for the manifest ideology, consisting of National strategy reports. It looks into if the EU’s manifest ideology on social policy converges with National strategy reports or not – searches for a latent ideology and questions the manifest ideology. To finish off, the results of the analyses will be presented and discussed and I will present some of my own thoughts and sources.
2 Theory

2.1 Social Policy, Welfare Regimes, Poverty and Social Exclusion

There are many definitions of social policy. Some are broad and others are more limited. The British social politician and professor in social administration, Richard M. Titmuss, tried to sum them up and found that many of the definitions contained three objectives:

First, they aim to be beneficent – policy is directed to provide welfare for citizens. Second, they include economic as well as non-economic objectives; for example minimum wages, minimum standards of income maintenance and so on. Thirdly, they involve some measure of progressive redistribution in command-over-resources from rich to poor. (Titmuss, 1974 p. 29).

How social policy is defined is an ideological question. In a residual welfare model of social policy, the state is only supposed to do what the market and the family have not managed, and “the true objective of the welfare state is to teach people how to do without it” (Titmuss, 1974 p. 31). In an institutional redistributive model of social policy, however, social welfare is instead a substantial and well integrated institution in society “providing universal services outside the market on the principle of need” (Titmuss, 1974 p. 31). Social policy was and remains primarily a national concern (more on this later). However, this essay will focus on EU social policy and the interplay between the EU level and the national level.

To help see similarities and differences between the cases I analyse in chapter 5, I thought I would present the probably most well-known typology of welfare regimes – Esping-Andersen’s, from The Three World of Welfare Capitalism (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This will be a very short and simplified presentation of the typology that is divided into three welfare regimes: the social-democratic, the corporatist-conservative and the liberal welfare regime. The social-democratic regime is characterised by universalism of social rights (Bussemaker et al, 1994 p. 12) and de-commodification (which means that people are not very dependent on the market, but can live quite well even without working) (Esping-
The state is an important actor redistributing and offering services like subsidised child care. Equality is considered important and women work to a high extent (Esping-Andersen, 1990 p. 136). In the corporatist-conservative regime, de-commodification can be a part of the social policy; however, “status-differentiating” is more characteristic and social rights are often linked to status (Bussemaker et al, 1994 p. 12). The family is a very important actor and together with charity organisations it handles much of the care work that the state takes care of in the social democratic regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990 p. 134). The measures to reduce income inequalities are quite mild (Bussemaker et al, 1994 p. 12). In liberal welfare regimes the social schemes are often modest and assistance is in most cases only there for those worst of (Esping-Andersen, 1990 p. 135). The market is a very important actor and people are quite depending on it for their social rights (Bussemaker et al, 1994 p. 12, Esping-Andersen, 1990 p. 50). Many others who have written on welfare regimes (for example: Wilensky, 1975, Leibfried, 1990) and Esping-Andersen has been criticised (for example from a feminist perspective, Sainsbury, 1994). I still believe it to be helpful though, to have a model were the main differences and similarities of the welfare regimes are presented, at the back of ones head during the analyses.

Poverty is as said a theme in the analysed texts, and here follows the definitions of most common concepts as they are considered in the analysed texts. Poverty is often divided into absolute and relative poverty. Absolute (or extreme) poverty is when people lack basic things necessary for their survival, for example, food, clean water, proper housing etc. (EAPN, 2007 p. 3). Relative poverty instead regards those whose income or way of life is much worse than the general standard of the population. Absolute poverty is obviously a more acute problem but relative poverty can still be very serious and cause much distress (EAPN, 2007 p. 3). The concepts of absolute and relative poverty have both been much criticised. A uniform definition can seldom be fair, because the actual needs are very rarely uniform. The definitions set by different transnational institutions become very important and affect many people’s lives (Barnes, 2002 p. 3). In the EU a person is considered at risk of poverty if his or her income is below 60% of the national equivalent median income (European Commission, 2006 p. 7). However, there are many other aspects of poverty. Just focusing on income is very narrow and leaves many factors out. Social exclusion, though, includes “the multiple aspects of deprivation which prevent people from participating in social life” (O’Connor, 2005 p. 359, note 3). It is a valuable complement to a narrow definition of poverty. The concept consistent poverty is also used in some of the analysed texts. Living in consistent poverty means that one
lives in risk of poverty, but also is deprived of at least one good or service, that is considered essential for a basic standard of living (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 2).

2.2 The European Social Model

Many people would agree that there is such a thing as a European Social Model (ESM). However, much uncertainty still surrounds the issue and a clear definition is lacking. When it is defined, the definitions do not always seem to correspond to one another (O’Connor, 2005 p. 346). One thought that quite often occurs in text on the ESM is that it is: “used to describe the European experience of simultaneously promoting sustainable economic growth and social cohesion” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 231). However, further interpretations seem to take separate directions.

Social policy is still mainly a national concern in the EU, and the EU member states with their various current situations, traditions and governments have different focuses for their own policies. The ESM is often considered a work in progress, and according to O’Connor it reflects “a tension between aspirations and statements of values expressed on the EU level and subsidiary” (O’Connor, 2005 p. 346). With this in mind, it is logical to question what actually is left for the EU. In this chapter I will discuss different perspectives on the ESM. The interplay between the national and the EU level as regards social policy is also a central theme for my analysis.

2.2.1 Different Perspectives on the European Social Model

In the article The European Social Model; an exercise in deconstruction, the complex concept of a European Social Model is described (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 231). The authors, Jepsen et al, list three different clusters of interpretations and contexts into which the literature on the ESM can be systematized. They then add a fourth group – related to the third cluster - which they find even more relevant (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 234). It is important to keep in mind that while the clusters are made up of texts which share similarities, they nevertheless have different authors and are not always uniform in their descriptions of a specific phenomenon.

The first cluster considers the ESM as a model that: “incorporates certain common features (institutions, values, etc.) that are inherent in the status quo of the European Union member states and are perceived as enabling a distinctive mode of regulation as well as a distinctive
competition regime” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 234) (similar thoughts in for example Vaughan-Whitehead, 2003 p. 4). The second cluster, however, sees the ESM as: “being enshrined in a variety of different national models” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 234). The different European national welfare regimes are together creating a sort of ideal model of generous welfare policies (similar thoughts in e.g. Ebbinghaus, 1999 p. 3).

The authors regard the first two clusters as one school of thought, where the ESM is seen as a model - an entity - based on the existence of common institutions and values (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 238-9). They question this approach by using Esping-Andersen’s theories regarding the diversity of welfare regimes in the EU (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 235). There are some shared values and policies e.g. a charter of Fundamental Social Rights, which all the member states have agreed upon. However, with all the different understandings of what the ESM is, the model must still be referred to with care and Jepsen et al are unsure to what extent one can talk about an ESM in this sense (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 239).

The third cluster considers the ESM as a “European project and tool for modernization/ adaptation to changing economic conditions as well as an instrument for cohesiveness” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 234). The focus is no longer on similarities between national welfare models but rather “on the development of a distinctive trans-national model” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 235).

Many of the authors and policy-makers who work with the ESM as a European project believe the “current situation to be a turning point between different models of advanced capitalism” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 236). Technological, economic and social changes are facts and a knowledge based society is the keyword (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 236). The development is believed to be connected to globalization or to be a result of it. It is seen to have caused various, but common pressures e.g. a higher global competitiveness to which actors all over the world are exposed.

European societies have to insure that the social and institutional systems change at the same pace as the rest of society (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 236). With the global pressure, national social policy systems are no longer enough and this is where the ESM takes on an extra significance. It can ensure a “certain degree of cohesion” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 236).

Jepsen et al use a fourth cluster to define the ESM - the ESM as a political project (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 238). The fourth definition regards the ESM as a concept: “via the definition of a distinct policy, a common European solution may be provided to problems that are politically constructed as common to a varying degree” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 238). With the
fourth cluster, a common policy and common problems are important factors in creating a European identity. As with the third cluster, the fourth argues that change in the European production model is a reason for having a common social dimension. The cluster focuses on a productive social policy, where social policies are used to improve the individual’s chances of survival to survive in the new economy, and not as earlier focus on correcting market forces (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 238).

Instead of building a European identity on common institutions and values (as with the first two clusters), or considering all factors exogenous (as with the third cluster), the ESM as a political project focuses on common social-policy solutions and how they are aimed at fostering a European identity (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 238).

The third and fourth clusters are considered a second school of thought, which regards the ESM as a way to deal with the changes to which Europe is exposed (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 239) - a type of cooperation.

The two schools of thought are often described as complementary – to be able to preserve the ESM (as in the first school of thought) one will have to reform it (as in the second school of thought) (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 239). However, according to Jepsen et al only the second interpretation is regarded as a rewarding one, because the member states are considered too diverse for one common model in the first sense (common institutions, values etc) (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 239).

### 2.2.2 ESM - a Way to Construct a European Identity?

The ESM as a way to construct a European identity is the real point of departure for this paper. This identity would, as mentioned, be built by finding common solutions to common European problems. However, everyone would not agree that there is a basis for such a project, because of the many differences between the member states actual situations. A similar conflict around identity building can be found in texts on the Nordic welfare state model. Many would consider a Nordic welfare state model a unitary concept that influences the way the “Norden” is conceived. However, the concept “Norden” is by others simultaneously also considered “a model with, with five exceptions” (Christiansen et al, 2001 p. 153-154). So it is not the first time the welfare state or a welfare state function has been seen as an important part of building a collective identity and at the same time being questioned for its relevance.

According to Jepsen et al, the ESM as a political project is based on a need to increase
the legitimacy of the EU (Jepsen et al 2005 p. 239). Political identity has been seen as one of three components of legitimacy in democratic societies (in this case the other components are the performance of institutions and conformity with democratic values) (Beetham, 1991, in Lord, 2000 p. 3, in Jepsen et al, p. 240) To improve the part of the legitimacy that is derived from identity formation, “the identification/attribution of key values plays an important role. We can construe the concept of ESM as a way to identify these core values through which a European identity might be constructed” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 240). When a European identity has been constructed, it is based rather on common problems and solutions to these problems than on common values (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 240).

In practice the EU is said to create a common identity trough “providing cognitive frames and conceptual paradigms” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 240). The common objectives for an Open Method of Coordination (one of the text I have analysed, further presented under material 3.1.2) is one example of how a “conceptual paradigm” is realised. The EU institutions have become important actors in determining “the direction of the debate” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 240).

Through studying the EU’s “cognitive frames and conceptual paradigms” in the form of EU social policy, I hope to understand how the identity, that one possibly is trying to create is constructed - its main features - and thus ascertain what concept or ideology of social policy that is handed down to the different member states.

2.3 Ideology

The idea or ideology of European social policy and how it is expressed is central for this essay. The term ideology comes from the Greek and means the teaching or science of ideas, but it was only in the 19th century that people started to use the term widely (Bergström et al, p. 150). Ideology is an ambiguous concept that has been and still is being used in many different ways. It is probably most often understood in a political sense, as per the definition from the Oxford English Dictionary: “A systematic scheme of ideas, usu. relating to politics or society, or to the conduct of a class or group, and regarded as justifying actions, esp. one that is held implicitly or adopted as a whole and maintained regardless of the course of events” (ideology, according to the Oxford English dictionary). A more general definition of ideology is “a set of attitudes, moral views, empirical beliefs and even rules of logical discourse and scientific testing” (Robertson, 2002 p. 232). This is something we all have although we are
not necessarily aware of it. Bergström et al make a difference between political and other ideologies. According to their definition, “political ideologies are explicit and can be studied with the help of written programs or what is said/written by representatives” [my own translation] (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 154). They give an example of a non-political ideology by discussing what the ideology of a school system could potentially be:

a certain perception that strongly influences the school system, there might be quite specific perspectives in the schools system that motivate hierarchies (headmaster – teacher – parents – students) and that there are certain perceptions that concern how one values different things in the schools, for example that it is more prestigious to be a physics teacher in a high school than home-language teacher in a compulsory school2 [My own translation] (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 154).

Because there are no written programs or representatives for the ideology of the school, it is not considered political and the question of representativity becomes quite complex (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 154).

According to Bergström et al (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 150) another dividing question with regards to ideologies is whether an ideology can be seen as neutral or not. A “neutral concept of ideology”, is when the ideology is considered to be a system of ideas. It is neutral in the sense that the definition does not have a function, built into it. The opposite would be definitions where the function of the ideology is built into the definition. In this case an ideology could e.g. have a unifying function on a society or a group (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 151). According to Marxist and Hegelian traditions, ideologies are closely related to a person’s class. One’s social position decides how one sees society and thus a factory owner and the factory worker should view the reality in different ways, if they have not been manipulated and obtained a false consciousness (Robertson, 2002 p. 233). Others have used quite different definitions. For them class is irrelevant where one’s ideology is concerned and the perception has not been valued as right or wrong (Robertson, 2002 p. 233).

The influential political scientist and newspaper chief editor, Herbert Tingsten

2 “ett visst synsätt genomsyrar skolväsendet, kanske att det finns alldeles specifika föreställningar inom skolan som motiverar hierarkier (rektor - lärare - föräldrar - elever) och att det finns vissa föreställningar som att göra med hur man värderar olika saker i skolan, som är mer prestigefyllt att vara fysiklärare på gymnasiet än att vara hemspråklärare på grundskolan.”
thought that ideologies consisted of three elements: “principle opinions and values regarding the reality, which show a certain degree of consistency and can affect the political acting” [My own translation] (Lundborg, 1991 p. 41). The central place Tingsten gave to a given ideology’s opinion about reality made it possible to test ideologies in the same way as one can test a theory (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 151-2). He disqualified ideologies that were “wrong” like Nazism, and placed substantial importance on the testing of ideologies. Critics have argued that his perspective disregards that central and substantial parts of ideologies are often normative and thus very hard to test (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 152). Tingsten’s definition gave action an important role for the ideology. Some analysts have in this sense opened their research on ideology towards acting, and study how a person or group act to understand their ideology. However, others would still demand a written or at least formulated program of ideas (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 152). I have chosen a quite general definition of ideology. So when I say that I am interested in the ideology of EU social policy, I regard ideology as a perspective which is substantially influencing the notion of social policy in the EU. As is probably clear by now, some of the theorists that have worked with ideologies would accept this definition and others would not. I think my definition has strong similarities with the example from the school system and non-political ideologies (above, Bergström et al, 2005 p. 154). However, I would argue that both their example and mine are highly political. There are many people who are affected by both the ideology of the school and the EU ideology on social policy. These ideologies might not have direct programs or representatives, but there are written texts on the subject (in my case e.g. the objectives of the OMC) and people that in some sense could be seen as representatives (e.g. Vladimír Špidla, the EU commissioner for Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities).
3 Method

3.1 Ideology Critique

The aim of the Ideology Critique is not only to present an ideology and to analyse its construction and perceptions, but also to provide a more extensive critique of a system (Bergström et al., 2005 p. 157). By comparing the manifest idea of an ideology with that of a surrounding social practice, the ideology is to be made comprehensible or even “disclosed” (Bergström et al., 2005 p. 157). Analysts using Ideology Critique have often considered ideologies as being closely connected to power. When a certain ideology’s description of a matter is assumed, people’s possibilities to take a stand in the area affected will be limited. The influence they wield over their own lives is thus reduced (Bergström et al., 2005 p. 158). This has substantial similarities to the central thought behind Carol Lee Bacchi’s What’s the problem approach, where it is said that: “how we perceive or think about something will affect what we think ought to be done about it” (Bacchi, 2001 p.1).

According to Bergström et al (2005, p. 167), an ideology critic would hold that an ideology consists of a visible and a latent part. The research can thereby be divided into two steps. First the visible part of the ideology will be presented and then the analysis will try to make the latent part visible (Bergström et al., 2005 p. 158). The main idea is that the latent part can be made visible by placing the ideology in a context. Even if the political scientist Rune Premfors did not talk of ideologies and manifest or latent parts of ideologies in his Policy analysis he underlined the important policy problem when the description of a condition and the actual condition does not coincide (Premfors, 1989 p. 51).

I do not believe that I (or anyone else) will be able to make the comprehension of the researched matter complete, if it implies showing an alternative, “truer truth”. The risk that the researcher only exchanges one ideology for another is a point where the Ideology Critique has been criticized (Bergström et al., 2005 p. 173). One does not, however, have to lay claim to an objective description of the reality. Instead the author can be open with her value conditions. I do not want to present a new, “more correct” ideology or “the solution to the prob-
lem.” I will, however, try to widen the understanding of the EU’s ideology on social policy by comparing it to a context and so provide an alternative perspective. The alternative perspective leads to the questioning of the construction of a European identity built on the cognitive frames regarding EU social policy.

3.1.1 Operationalization

In practice the analysis will consist of two steps aiming to make the hidden part of the ideology visible (Bergström et al., 2005 p. 167). The first step is that the chosen texts are read, analysed and the visible ideology is presented in the form of a list containing the manifest ideology’s main features. With the second step the comprehension of the ideology is supposed to be improved through the description of the context. I analyse National strategy reports (NSRs) to see how they relate to the main features of the manifest ideology. When the ideology is related to a context (in my case NSRs) the function of the ideology is supposed to be revealed (Bergström et al., 2005 p. 167). In my case I am not after all possible functions of the manifest ideology, but rather if the function - the latent ideology - could be a part of the creating of a European identity. Bergström et al. give examples of different techniques for textual analysis for example a valuing argumentation analysis (Bergström et al., p. 166). I have chosen first to read the texts actively, to ascertain what the main features of the texts could be. Than I have decided to use one of the analysed texts: the common objectives, as a sort of pattern (all the texts are presented under Material, 3.1.2 and the common objectives are enclosed: appendix 1). I started by collecting quotations from the EU policy texts that were recurrent and/or seemed central. To get some structure and to reduce the risk of missing a theme that could be important I chose sort the quotes after themes under the various common objectives. I found five main features of the manifest ideology, and used the different interpretations of an ESM, presented in 2.2.1 to both discuss and position the manifest ideology of the EU’s social policy. The five features of the manifest ideology became a sort of pattern for the second analysis, were I studied how four chosen NSRs related to the specific features, their similarities and differences. Choosing five main features to reflect a concept or an ideology is to some extent a simplification. However, I do find that the five features presented, mirror the texts well, both reflecting the central parts of a manifest ideology of social policy and also the content of the texts. Another author might have chosen a narrower or broader selection; however, as long as
the material would consist of EU social policy text I do believe the outcome of the analysis would have been quite similar. For the purpose of this paper, it is important to question and understand if the manifest part of the ideology is in line with the member states ideas on the same issues- or if there is a possible conflict. The questions are the main tools for the analysis and also decisive for the validity of the analysis – the validity being dependent on the questions being proper indicators for the researched issue (Esaiasson et al, 2004 p. 239).

3.1.2 Material

In 2000 the European Union, based on a consensus among member states, decided on a new strategy to modernize the EU. It was named “the Lisbon Strategy” and its goal was to make the EU the most competitive economy in the world and that the EU would reach full employment by 2010. The strategy was simplified and launched again in 2005 (Europa Glossary, search word: Lisbon Strategy). A Social agenda is closely connected to the revised Lisbon Strategy, and is supposed to secure that everybody in society becomes parts of the benefits from the EU’s growth and jobs drive (European Commission, 2005b p. 3).

For the description and analysis of the manifest part of the ideology, I read and analyzed the European Social Policy Agenda, for the period 2005-2010 (the second phase of the social agenda), the common objectives for the Open Method of Coordination (from now, the common objectives) and the Joint Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (from now, the joint report). The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is only one of several tools that are there to promote that the member states take action in relevant areas (others tools are for example: legislation, dialogue between employers and trade unions and financial support to concrete projects) (European Commission, 2005b p. 11). The common objectives, that I have chosen to analyse, are just one part of the OMC. They are guidelines agreed upon at an EU level, that the member states are supposed to implement in their national action plans (European Commission, 2005b p. 11). The Commission monitors the progress made, through reports submitted by the member states (National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, NSR) and in the joint report the implementation of the common objectives are analysed and estimated on an annual basis. The European social agenda and the common objectives are influential policy texts, and have most probably shaped the other texts on the subject. The context is represented by the EU member states’ own reports, the NSR,
where what they consider to be their principal problems; the issues they chose to focus their actions on and how they try to implement the EU policies are presented. A Social Protection Committee (SPC), consisting of high-level officials has been created to work as a link between the European commission and the member states (The Europe Commission: The Social Protection Committee). The SPC has provided guidelines concerning the structure and content of the NSRs (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 3) which makes it very clear that the chosen context is not independent from the EU and the ideology I study. I will not have the resources to compare the national reports with the policies put into practice by the member states. However, I do not believe that the member states would lie in their reports even if the selection of policies presented might be adjusted for the EU and chosen policies might be stressed and others understated. So even if the material is tendentious, it does not really matter, my interest is how the reality is described, not that it is an absolute reflection of the reality. The NSR will probably be typical texts provided by the individual member states for the EU. The study is in some ways problem-oriented but also focuses on a specific actor. The questions on which I focus dictate what material I use. However the questions of my interest are closely interlinked with the actor: the EU. When choosing the material for the analysis I have made a narrow selection. I believe, however, that the texts are quite typical and that the results would be similar had I chosen other material (Esaiasson et al, 2004 p. 244).

3.1.3 Selection of Cases for the Analysis of the National Reports

I have had to make a selection of countries - cases - for the analysis of the national reports. The countries whose national reports I have decided to read and analyse are: Finland, Germany, Ireland and Estonia. The selection has to a certain extent been influenced by Esping-Andersen’s theories on different welfare state regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990 p. 26-9). Even if there are similarities, no EU member states welfare regimes are identical, and I wanted examples of the diversity of systems in the EU for the analysis. Finland is thus chosen as an example of a social democratic welfare regime, Germany as a conservative corporatist and Ireland as an example of the liberal welfare state regime (even if there also is a strong catholic/conservative influence) (Esping-Andersen, 1990 p. 74). In their article on how different welfare states handle globalization, Jose Adelantado and Eduardo Calderon use a similar basis
for their selection – the Social Democratic, Conservative, Liberal (but also Mediterranean welfare regimes) (2006, p. 377). They show how Ireland stands out as a country with the fastest growing GDP amongst liberal regimes. Interestingly, they also highlight Ireland’s very low growth in terms of Social Protection Expenditure (Adelantado et al, 2006 p. 376), which motivated me to choose the case, even if it is located outside the Baltic Sea Region (where I to start with wanted to find my full selection). Esping-Andersen’s typology leaves out all formal socialist states (Hort 2005, p. 15), but seeing as the interest of my research is to ascertain how the member states handle the cognitive frame of EU social policy, I feel that it is most relevant to add the cases of Estonia for a broader understanding. The chosen cases became EU members at different times - Estonia in 2004, Finland in 1995, Ireland in 1973 and West Germany in 1951 (Unified Germany after 1990). The length of the membership could have an effect on how tractable the different countries are, how long they have had the possibility to influence EU social policy and perhaps to some extent how much they can affect the policies today. I do not believe that the chosen cases will be representative of all the different welfare state regimes. I will thus analyse their reports to understand each country’s individual choices and then compare the individual cases with common European policy. The possible similarities and differences among the cases will be important for the outcome of my research. I have chosen these texts because I believe I will be able to manage the material contained within them without damaging the quality of my analysis.

3.1.4 Source Critique

When choosing to perform a qualitative text analysis, it is important to bear in mind that the text is not simply “the sum of the different parts” – but rather that some parts might be more important for the understanding of the text than others (Esaiasson et al, 2004 p. 233). To avoid excluding any possible results, I have decided to leave the possible outcomes of my analysis open. This approach makes it important to fully concentrate on one’s problem formulation and means that one is more dependent on the analyzed material (Esaiasson et al, 2004 p. 241). I have tried to reduce this dependence by taking time after the analysis to consider other outcomes that also could have been possible with other material (Esaiasson et al, 2004 p. 241). With the Ideology Critique, the analysing of different types of materials e.g. texts and
other material describing a social practice, could cause problems (Bergström et al, 2005 p. 166). In my case both parts of the material are pretty similar though.

Only about three years have passed between the publication of the first and last primary sources respectively. The European social agenda was presented by the European Commission in 2005 for the period 2005-2010\(^1\). The integrated OMC was introduced in 2006 (Council of the European Union 2008, p. 3) and the objectives for the OMC were adopted by the European council in the same year\(^4\). The National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion are for the period 2006-2008. In some cases they were updated in 2007. Among my selected countries, only Finland has updated its report. I have not analysed the update, because I wanted the texts to be on the same level. The last document for my analysis is the 2008 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, which The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council and the Commission jointly adopted in 2008 (Gateway to the European Union: joint reports). I chose to analyse the most recent reports to obtain a picture of the most current developments in the ideology of the EU policy. All the sources I have analysed have been published on the internet but only on the official web portal of the European Union: europa.eu.

As the documents being used are official documents, there are not many controversial opinions and statements. Rather, these are vague texts that probably have been carefully composed to avoid creating offence. The documents are also probably the result of long negotiations. This might be a reason why they quite often seem “streamlined”. The documents are probably supposed to be fit for public consumption, even if I doubt that many EU citizens have actually found or read them. Instead the main readers are probably politicians, civil servants and groups/ individuals with a special interest in social questions (e.g. lobbying groups or individuals).

The texts are contemporary and accessible in modern Swedish and/or English and thus have not created any great problems. The vagueness of the texts and internal EU terms has been more problematic. Another risk for my research has been the possibility that I might miss a part of the possible source material, in that my “untrained eye” simply could not find it. To not compromise the reliability of my work I have tried to be thorough and asked more experienced people for help. I do believe though that the reliability of this paper is quite hard to test. Through giving an as extensive picture of the material as possible I

\(^1\) [http://www.eu-upplysningen.se/Amnesomraden/Sysselsattning-och-socialpolitik/Sociala-agendan/](http://www.eu-upplysningen.se/Amnesomraden/Sysselsattning-och-socialpolitik/Sociala-agendan/) 2008.03.21
have tried to make it clear why I have come to a certain conclusion and, at least to some ex-
tent, also make it possible for the reader to test my conclusions on their own. To increase the
reliability I will present some alternative ways to perform the research and also possible other
outcomes. When I started the analysis of the cases I had the welfare regimes in the back of my
head – they were an important part why I made the selection of the cases. I have really tried
not to make this affect the outcome of my analysis, by trying to keep an as open mind as pos-
sible, letting the content of the analysed material decide the outcome (not my prejudice) and
to consciously keep my eyes out for contradictory factors. I have tried to keep the operation-
alization as simple and clear as possible to ensure that I really ended up researching what I
said I would.

The paper’s focus on poverty and social exclusion is mainly constituted by the
selected material. When the texts handle issues directly connected to pensions and long term
care, I have not referred to them. I have also decided not to incorporate the parts of the com-
mon objectives that handle pensions and long term care in my analysis. This, although there is
a connection between health, living on a pension and poverty/social exclusion. I felt that it
was necessary to limit the scope of my study in order to make the project manageable. I also
will not go into one part of the social agenda that describes the preceding agenda, since my
focus is the most recent period and policies.
4 The Manifest Ideology of EU’s Social Policy

In this first part of the analysis, I am interested in finding the main features of the common objectives, the social agenda and the joint report to identify the components of the manifest ideology. Even if the similarities are what interest me the most, I also hope to make differences visible. There are not too many differences, however, and those that do exist are probably a result of the somewhat different character of the analysed texts: the common objectives, the social agenda and the joint report (the latter two are for example more descriptive than the common objectives). To ascertain what the main features of the texts are, I used the Common Objectives as a sort of pattern (the Common Objectives are enclosed: appendix 1). I collected quotations from the social agenda and the joint report and sorted them under the various common objectives. Roughly, I found that the Common objectives and the other analysed texts could be divided into five main themes:

1) the world and change in it according to the EU;

2) the mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives and greater social cohesion;

3) the creating of social cohesion;

4) the importance of how policies are constructed and implemented;

5) the EU’s self-image.

The first and the fifth themes represent parts of the ideology that are not actually part of the common objectives (not clearly so, anyway). However, because they are both interesting and important for the understanding of the ideology I have included them. The other three themes are the main features of the common objectives, which will be presented later with examples from the other analysed texts. The common objectives are imprecise and vague and more or less nothing is discussed in detail. This is, however, often the nature of objectives – vague
aims that make a direction visible, while remaining carefully composed so as not to offend. They are compact and the themes they take up must be considered so vital that they are chosen to be the “common European objectives” (European Commission, 2005b p. 11). Thus, they most probably mirror what the EU considers most important and what could be agreed upon, maybe a sort of ideological core. I will start by describing the main features of the text, then an analysis and a sort of summary of the main features follow. The features I will summarise will serve as the tools for the analysis of the NSR in the following chapter.

4.1 The World and Consequences of Changes in it

The Social Agenda starts of with Vladimír Špidla describing a world of international competition, technological advances and changing population patterns (European Commission, 2005b p. 3 also on p. 8). When reading, you are presented with a picture of a world that is changing fast and that these changes are occurring more and more often. The EU has to change its strategies and policies to be able to compete and handle the increasing competition (European Commission, 2005b p. 8). The main changes in the world, presented in the social agenda and the joint report are those summarize (above) by Špidla, however, sometimes they are described a bit more in detail and they are said to be both economic and social (European Commission, 2005b p. 7). The changes are neither described as all good or all bad, but as a challenge. By opening up markets, economic growth is said to follow, which could lead to raised living standards. At the same time the increased competition can oust industries and lead to higher unemployment, especially in groups which are particularly exposed for example production workers (European Commission, 2005b p. 8). The policy texts talk of the need to both find a way to use the situation, maximize the possible gain, and at the same time help those with the hardest time to adjust to the changes. An active social policy becomes vital to both take care of those who risk exclusion and make sure that they are included again. In that sense the social policy is considered a sort of competitive advantage. The need to reform and modernise, to handle change, is a recurrent theme in the social agenda and the joint report. Modernising and the improving of Europe’s model of society has for example been made the highest goal for the revamped Lisbon Strategy and the reform programme has been given top priority for the next five years (European Commission, 2005b p. 9).

In the social agenda, a need to see social policy from a global perspective is also a theme. The impact the globalisation is said to have on the “European social model” is im-
important, however, as is “Europe’s role as changes a motor for strengthening the social dimension worldwide” (European Commission, 2005b p. 16).

4.2 The Mutual Interaction between the Lisbon Objectives of Greater Economic Growth, More and Better Jobs and Greater Social Cohesion (the Common Objective b)

The joint report starts by stating that social and economic policies should be mutually supportive (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 2). This thought is recurrent and is described as one of the foundations for a European model of society (European Commission, 2005b p. 7). It is, however, the importance of mutual interaction between creating growth and jobs (the main aims for the Lisbon Strategy) and complementing this with a social dimension, (the aim of the social agenda) that mostly is stressed. The combination between the social and the economic policies are described as in a very important interdependence, where there is a need to create more growth and jobs to make it possible to deliver the desired social policy goals. And where well-designed social protection systems are considered important productive factors that are creating growth and making it possible for people to take part in the labour market (e.g. European Commission, 2005b p. 9, Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 6, 5). This idea of the mutual interdependence between social and economic policies and action is probably the one which recurs most frequently in all of the texts. Although both solidarity and growth are seen as arguments for creating social cohesion, growth often seems to be the most common argument.

The social Agenda was adopted to strengthen the social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy and is an essential part of the modernised Lisbon Strategy (European Commission, 2005b p. 9). Thus it is no coincidence if their main aims often seem closely connected. The European Employment Strategy (EES), mentioned in the social agenda, could be seen as an example of this interrelation. It is a part of the Lisbon strategy, however, also accounted for in the social agenda as an example on how to achieve social cohesion.

That creating growth and jobs is seen as vital to make it possible to deliver social policy goals is probably understandable. How social protection systems can work as productive factors, might need an explanation though. Social protection systems can, for example, provide the most vulnerable with knowledge and skills that help them both to handle possible discrimination and/or adapt to new circumstances and to reintegrate into the labour market.
Another example is how providing childcare can make it possible for people both to have children and stay working (European Commission, 2005b p. 10).

4.3 Creating Social Cohesion (The Common Objectives a, d and e)

Around 78 million Europeans (ca 16% of the EU citizens) are living in risk of poverty today. The social agenda is said to be there to make sure that the new opportunities (the result of the changes in the world, discussed in 4.1) not only reach a privileged few, but everybody in society (also the 78 million in risk of poverty) (European Commission, 2005b p. 3). This is supposed to be realized by modernising of the labour markets, by helping people to adjust to the changes and by protecting those most at risk (European Commission, 2005b p. 3).

Social cohesion is a theme in all of the texts. It is seldom addressed directly, however, appearing more commonly as a sub-objective. Social cohesion is to be promoted through, for example, social protection reforms and social inclusion policies (for example again: helping people to adjust to the mentioned changes and through protecting the absolute weakest) which more or less is the theme for all the texts (Council of the European Union 2008 p. 4). Other examples on how one wants to create social cohesion can be found in a common framework for tackling social exclusion, agreed upon by the member states. The key priorities in the framework are to: 1) increase labour market participation, 2) modernise social protection systems, 3) tackle disadvantages in education and training, 4) eliminate child poverty, 5) ensure decent accommodation, 6) improve access to quality services, 7) overcome discrimination and integrate ethnic minorities and migrants” (European Commission, 2005b p. 13). Of all the mentioned key priorities, it is only to ensure decent accommodation (5) that has not occurred in other parts of the analysed policy texts. As discussed above (4.3) much hope is invested in making more people work. Indeed this is often accorded priority status - not only because it is necessary for the national economies, but also because of the effects work is seen to have on fighting poverty and exclusion on an individual level (having a job is described as the best chance to avoid exclusion) (Council of the European Union, 2008 p.5). “Well-designed” social policies receive quite a lot of attention and are considered vital when it comes to those most at risks who need both instant help to get through their daily lives, fight discrimination and get possibilities to adapt to new circumstances to get out of exclusion (European Commission, 2005b p. 10, 12). Exactly what is meant by “well-designed” is, however, never defined. If people get help to adjust through for example social policies, it has
been shown that there will be fewer job losses should the economy slow down (European Commission, 2005b p. 12)

One is aware that different groups in society have different opportunities and this is considered a major concern. To break the glass ceiling, the importance of actively working against discrimination is stressed and a recurrent issue in the texts. Much hope is invested into education and anti-discrimination policies, which are both considered tools with the ability to break patterns of exclusion and prevent poverty from being transferred from one generation to the next (among others, Council of the European Union 2008, p. 2). Groups that are particularly exposed (for example immigrants and minorities like the Roma) are to be focused on especially, for example through targeted education programs for Roma children (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 8, example on women and children as exposed group in risk of poverty: Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 5). In 2000, legislation was adopted that gave all EU citizens the same minimum level of protection against discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity. Employment equality goes further and also prevents EU citizens from being discriminated on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (on the importance given to how the policies are designed in 4.4) (European Commission, 2005b p. 12).

Equality between men and women is also a recurrent theme in all the texts. One is aware of the gender pay gap and getting more women into the labour market is and has been an important goal for the EU. Getting more women into decision-making positions and easing the balancing act of work and family, are described as some of the important issues if progress is to be made with gender equality (European Commission, 2005b p. 15). In 2004 the first EU wide legislation prohibiting sex discrimination outside the workplace was adopted (European Commission, 2005b p. 12).

19 million of the Europeans living at risk of poverty are children. And poverty among children is a theme that receives much attention. To help children out of poverty, one has to both support their families and target the children on their own (with for example a good education - education that can compensate for socio-economic disadvantages) (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 5, 8, 9). There is a strong connection between child poverty and households where no-one works or where there is a low work-intensity (the jobs do not pay enough, 8% of the EU citizens that live in risk of poverty are employed) (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 5). To solve this, quality jobs in combination with income support and services to help families are necessary (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 3).
Other examples of how the commission tries to tackle poverty and exclusion are for example a launched communication on minimum income schemes. That the coordination process on the member states social inclusion policies are to be further developed to combat poverty. And in order to really highlight the severity of poverty and social exclusion, 2010 will be the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion” (European Commission, 2005b p. 15).

4.4 The Importance of How Policies are Constructed and Implemented (The Common Objectives c and f)

Quite a lot of the texts handle issues that are not so much about what the policies are supposed to contain, but rather about the quality, construction and issues concerning the development and implementation of the policies.

Many of the issues regarding how policies are constructed etc. often seem to be more like catchwords in the text than anything else. They are recurrent but seldom discussed in detail. It is underlined though, that well-designed policies that are carried out professionally is not only a self purpose, but that it can be essential to make it possible to include the most vulnerable in society (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 2). Neither good governance nor transparency is ever directly discussed in the texts with the exception of the common objectives. It is stressed that neither the European Commission, nor the member states will be able to handle the objectives on their own – there has to be a “partnership for change” (European Commission, 2005b p.16). For example, Vladimír Špidla argues that it is important for the social policies of the new Agenda that public authority at local, regional and national level, employer and worker representatives and NGOs all work together. This is necessary if a profit is to be made from the social policies (Vladimír Špidla, European Commission, 2005 p. 3 similar argument p. 11). There is also a need to use different policy instruments for different issues because of their various abilities. The policy instruments at hand are: legislation, which can be used to for example to set minimum standards for all EU citizens and the OMC, which helps to develop national policies through the common objectives, guidance, encouragement and learning from each other. Through the EU’s financial support, concrete projects can be backed up while discussions between employers and trade unions is considered the best way to reach a new and better balance between flexibility and security (European Commission, 2005b p. 11).
The OMC has been a way to assist the member states in designing their policies (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 4). One example is how the joint report mentions that the best performing member states use a combination of universal and targeted benefits (universal benefits create a positive environment for families and do not stigmatise groups; targeted benefits are said to be designed not to discourage from working and help those with the most substantial need). So that the other member states become ideas and maybe change to a system that works better (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 8).

In the common objectives an EU Sustainable Development Strategy is mentioned. In brief it concerns creating a development that is sustainable and does not limit future generations. For example a pension system must be constructed in a way that makes sure that future generations will also be able to retire. Tackling poverty and social exclusion, modernising social protection and combining both social and economic adequacy and sustainability with sound fiscal policies is considered vital for a sustainable EU development (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 2). The EU's Sustainable Development is mentioned briefly in the Joint Report (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 2). It is mainly present in the texts as a sub-objective.

The monitoring of policies comes up several times and just the usage of the OMC could be seen to underline the importance given to for example monitoring, it being a method where monitoring plays a very important role. It is stressed, however, that it can be quite complex, and that standard survey tools not always are enough for example when it comes to street children (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 8). Since 2007, key themes have been presented in the OMC to make the monitoring and reporting both better and easier, but also to help better mutual learning (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 4). Implementation and monitoring is a theme. For example it is suggested that national quantitative targets combined with strong political commitment can result in progress when it comes to implementation (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 8).

4.5 The EU Self-Image

When that which could be seen as an EU self-image is described, the EU is often used interchangeably with Europe. In the social Agenda and the Joint Report one easily obtains a picture of a very uniform European model of society, a European Social Model and common European experiences. In the Social Agenda the development of a European model of society
is said to make progress and is described as in many ways “unique in the world” (European Commission, 2005b p. 7). It is said to be: “based on partnership, especially between employers and trade unions” and “built on both economic growth and the creation of good jobs” (European Commission, 2005b p. 7). The growth and jobs enable good education and social protection, which also are important cornerstones of the model of society. The model of society is, however, not described in further detail.

The development the EU is undergoing is described differently in the various texts. In the Social Agenda the development is said to have been very strong although both the growth and creating of jobs is now slowing down (European Commission, 2005b p. 7). For example the working towards full employment (one of two main priorities of the social agenda) is not progressing (European Commission, 2005b p. 8). In the joint report the same positive development is described, however, without the new negative curve (Council of the European Union, 2008 p. 4). In connection to the discussions around a common development of growth and jobs in the Social Agenda, there is also talk of common European experiences:

Europeans have grown up with the benefits of this social model. But to preserve our prosperity and solidarity we need to step up our efforts to adapt to the economic and social changes which come from globalisation and the ageing of our populations.”

(European Commission, 2005b p. 7).

Neither the social model nor the fact that Europeans - not EU-citizens - have “common experiences” of its benefits is described in more detail. In the social agenda, a growing diversity caused by an ageing population and the various needs of different generations is mentioned. Immigrants are going to play a more important role in the future and that the EU will be more ethnically diverse after the last enlargements will also lead to increased diversity (European Commission, 2005b p. 8). However, the diversity among the member states is never a direct theme. In the same document as the European model of society is talked of as a quite a natural thing, it is mentioned that the European Social Fund needs to focus more on the least developed regions and that the limited movement for workers from eight of the newer member states (as a result of the accession treaty) needs to be examined (European Commission, 2005b p. 14). These are two points that shows diversities in Europe, both between geographical regions and between the rights of EU citizens in a document where a common model of
society is described – and could be seen as contradictory. The analysed texts also contain examples on measures there to further unite the EU - for example: the removing of hindrances for Europeans that want to work in other member states than their own and the creating of a European job mobility portal which would make it easier to move within the EU without losing one’s social security benefits (European Commission, 2005b p. 12).

4.6 Discussion, Manifest Ideology

In this discussion the analysed texts will be studied, using the theory where different attitudes to the ESM are described (presented in 2.2.1.). The aim of the discussion is to generally understand the texts better and specifically to show how the perspectives of the theory are present in the analysed texts. A further aim is to ascertain whether one of the perspectives lies closer to the analysed policy text’s manifest ideology. As I see it, traces of all the clusters are present, however.

The texts analysed in this chapter are full of vague terms and concepts that never get defined. Modernisation, change, development, well-designed social policy and transparency are just some examples. There are many more, however. The constant vagueness has led me to think about what the actual function of the texts is. My interpretation is that they constitute a policy statement but also leave room for national interpretations. The EU is trying to mediate a direction, but the details are still a national concern. In the case of the common objectives, the manifest function has been clear all along. They are part of the OMC and seen as the objectives that will: “help national policies progress towards common European objectives”. The joint report is part of the same OMC and thus has the same function although it is at a later phase in the process. I first thought the social agenda would be something else, a bit more “hands-on”, a document for EU-citizens, lobbying groups etc, on policy, values and practical measures. I still believe that is one of its manifest functions. However, that the OMC is supposed to “help national policies progress towards common European objectives”, made me wonder if all the policy statements might not have further functions. As I see it, the analysed texts convey a message that there is something genuinely European. A common European model of society, a common European development and need for change. At the same time, according to the analysed texts, they are also trying to make the national policies closer connected to common European policies. The question is whether the authors really think that
such a uniform EU/Europe already exists, whether one is in the process of being created or whether the aim is to present a picture showing a uniform Europe in order to create a common identity.

Instead of the EU, the analysed texts often talk of Europe and a European model of society etc. This is very interesting but also very complex. It could be a mistake. This is not very likely, however. It could show that the interest lies rather in the idea of a cultural Europe where European traditions and values are the focal point. It might also be a result of comparing Europe with another actor, for example the USA. This could make Europe feel more uniform - as an actor - and make it possible to underline a stronger social line in European policy than in the policy of the US (thoughts on identifying a European model by comparing it to the US in for example: Jepsen et al, 2006 p. 4). Because the EU is never directly compared to another actor in the analysed texts, I have not gone further with that theoretical standpoint in the analysis. However, the thought of a cultural Europe still seems probable and could be seen as connected to the theory’s first cluster, where the ESM is considered an entity based on common institutions and values. Because, when the European model of society is said to be built on both economic growth and the creation of good jobs, which ensures extensive social protection systems and education and where the partnership, between especially employers and trade unions creates an important base – this could be considered common values and possibly institutions (European Commission, 2005b p. 7). The European model of society and the EU self-image becomes hard to picture without these common institutions and values. The factors mentioned might not be unique or even very clear, but they are described in the analysed texts and together supposed to present a unique base upon which the European model is built.

The second cluster, where the ESM is considered a sort of ideal model created as a combination of the various generous national welfare regimes, is harder to confirm. The various welfare regimes are never mentioned in the analysed texts and so it would feel far-fetched to found the European model of society on them. However, with the vagueness of the Social agenda it is not impossible that the different welfare regimes - being more or less compulsory in welfare studies – might be interpreted, though only implicitly, as a common base. This interpretation would take a lot of will-power and “stretching” and is not very likely.

There are similarities between the member states, if one for example focuses on the fact that they are democracies, “socially responsible market economies” and have quite extensive social security systems (Krause, 2003 p. 1). Some of the problems and possible solutions
could probably be constructive for all the member states - focusing on the creating of growth, jobs and social cohesion would probably not be very controversial for instance. However, to be able talk of common experiences of the benefits of a European social model, or that the aim to create growth, good jobs and social protection is something unique to Europe, one again probably has to stretch and simplify the EU and the rest of the world quite a bit. Even if one only would see the creating of growth, jobs and social cohesion as the European model, people in the different member states would have various different experiences in these sectors. As I see it, the fact that the analysed texts never take up the diversity between the member states (however, for example between generations) despite the existing differences between them, shows that one is trying to create a common European identity. The diversity is not something that simply can have slipped the authors’ minds. Rather it is clear that they are trying to present an image of a uniform EU.

As is probably clear by now, I personally doubt that one can talk about real common experiences or a European model of society (similar: Jepsen et al 2005 p. 239). However, because the social model is never described in detail, it is difficult to know exactly what is meant by it.

One of the most recurrent concepts in the texts is change. It is a catchword used to describe the world that surrounds the EU, but also something that is taking place in the EU. The changes are described as possibly both good and bad. In order to benefit from the changes modernisation is needed, however. The modernisations needed are various, and differ according to issues and sectors. The overarching aim for all of them is that the EU keeps up with the changes and creates growth, more and better jobs and social cohesion. Both the social agenda and the joint report also discuss changes, problems and the modernisations needed to handle them. To some extent all the texts circles around change and modernisations. The third cluster describes the ESM as a “European tool for modernisation/adaptation to changing economic conditions” (Jepsen et al, 2005 p. 236). This is very close to the description given in the text. The OMC and the common objectives are there to show the direction and what is to be achieved by the modernisations.

One could probably argue that these changes and problems are neither unique nor common to all the member states. Even if the exact development and circumstances never occurred before there are both similarities between the cases: for example, that they all are affected by global trade cycles. And differences among the developments in the member states, for example: differences in growth, the size of the national economies - these will be fur-
ther described in the next analysis. However, in the analysed policy texts the development is described as something common to all and differences between the national developments are never directly a theme. As I see it, this attitude could make the changes, problems and possibilities seem more important and urgent. There are strong similarities in the fourth cluster, where the ESM is described as a political project and where through a policy (for example those analysed) common solution can be provided to problems “that are politically constructed to a varying degree” (Jepsen et al., 2005 p. 238). In the case of the analysed texts, the development and modernisations needed are described as something common and could be part of the political project to create a common identity.

Weighing it all together, my opinion is that there are traces of all the four clusters in the analysed texts, however, more or less likely. The different welfare regimes are, as alluded to above, never mentioned in the analysed texts. So it seems unlikely that they might form the base for the ESM in a manifest ideology (the second cluster). The ESM could be interpreted as a tool for modernisation/adaptation to the changing economic conditions (the third cluster). Modernisation and adaptation are important themes, vital to make Europe competitive. The ESM is never directly described as founded on common values and institutions (the first cluster). However, the European model of society is seen as unique and built on economic growth, the creation of good jobs that ensure social protection and education – based on partnership between employers and trade unions. These could be seen as values and institutions in a manifest ideology. That the development, problems and solutions are seen and described as common is quite clearly an argument for the fourth cluster.

Personally, I dismiss the idea of the first cluster, (the idea of common European institutions and values) because there are simply too many differences present in the EU. I suspect that the idea that there are common European institutions and values are one that has been manufacture in order to foster a common identify - the fourth cluster. However, because my aim with this discussion is to point out the manifest ideology in the analysed texts, I would have to say that the first cluster lies closest to the EU’s manifest ideology. There is a thought of something truly European in the texts, the European model of society, the common development and the need for coordinated action. These are never said to be there with the aim of bringing about a common identity. Rather they are just a description of the manifest ideology’s reality.

Still, there is much to be said for the fourth cluster such as the policy’s aim to achieve “common European objectives”. However, achieving common European objectives is more
about creating practical common factors, than the creating of a European identity. There are
signs that creating a common identity might be what is taking place here. However, to be able
to further elaborate, I need to look into the “context”. So, at this stage, the manifest ideology
is the ideology of a uniform Europe, with common values and institutions. It might have a
further purpose though – to make reality of the manifest ideology and/ or create a common
European identity.

4.6.1 The Main Features of the Manifest Ideology

1) The EU is part of a world of increasing international competition, technological advances
and changing population patterns. The development is Europe-wide and for Europe to be able
to handle these changes/challenges there is a need for modernisation. Both the labour market
and social policies have to go through modernisations and people are going to need help to
adjust to the changes. The combination of greater economic growth, more and better jobs and
greater social cohesion is set as a common goal for the modernisations.

2) The combination of greater economic growth, more and better jobs (the main aims of the
Lisbon Strategy) and greater social cohesion (the Social Agenda) is the mix that is supposed
to make Europe competitive. It is both said to be the foundation for the European model of
society and what member states modernising should have as aim. Both parts (more growth,
better jobs and social cohesion) are mutually interdependent.

3) Integrating weak groups into the labour market is seen as important because it both helps
people away from poverty and social exclusion and because of the positive effects it has on
the national and EU-wide economies. Jobs are seen as the most important factor in decreasing
poverty and creating social inclusion. However, working against discrimination, modernising
the social protection systems eliminating child poverty, education and quality services for all
are also important recurrent measures. Social Cohesion is seen as important both as a com-
petitive edge and because of solidarity.

4) How the policies are constructed and implemented is important. Well-designed policies and
carefully planned implementation are not only a self-objective but are seen as essential if the
more vulnerable in society are to be included and the policies are to become long term ones.
Much room is left for the Member states’ own interpretation of what “well-designed”, for example, is supposed to mean.

5) When it comes to the EU’s self-image, one talks of Europe rather than of the EU. The changes and developments that European society is going through (regardless if it is described as strong or slowing down) are the same across Europe. The analysed texts and thus the manifest ideology describe Europe as a uniform model of society, with common values and institutions. The European model of society is successful and unique in the world. It is said to be: “based on partnership, especially between employers and trade unions” and “built on both economic growth and the creation of good jobs” (European Commission, 2005b p. 7).
5 The Context and the Latent Ideology

This second analysis looks into the context - the NSRs - to see how the different cases relate to and have interpreted the main features of the manifest ideology. The aim is to reach an understanding of the context by studying how the chosen cases relate to the main features in the manifest ideology. It is when the visible part of the ideology is related to the context that the function of the ideology is to be revealed – the latent ideology. This study is not after all possible functions of the manifest ideology, but rather if the function – the latent ideology - could be the creating of a European identity. So, the secondary aim is to learn more about the role of the manifest ideology as regards the building of a European identity.

The analysis is structured as in the previous chapter. However, because of the similarities between the last analysis’ second and third features, I have decided to merge these two features into one: The mutual interaction between creating growth, jobs and social cohesion discussed in the NSRs – with a special focus on creating social cohesion.

The National Strategy Reports are structured quite similarly - for example using the same headings. The issues focused on and how they are discussed is sometimes quite different though. There are also formal differences among the NSRs. For example the Irish and the Estonian reports rely substantially on numbers and statistics whereas the Finnish report does not use them at all. These differences in structure will probably be visible in the following analysis. The main interest, however, is still the issues and developments described. I will give some examples, both to describe the texts and as a part of the analysis; however, there is no possibility to be exhaustive.

5.1 The World and Consequences of Changes in it

There are actually no direct descriptions of the world surrounding the EU in the NSRs. International and/or global competition are recurrent themes in all the reports except the Irish one, however. Most recurrent is the international threat in the Finnish report and to some extent
also in the German. In the Estonian report it is only mentioned indirectly (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 10). Finland also refers to inter-European competition (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006, p. 4). According to the Finnish NSR, global threats are the greatest cause of concern as regards the country’s economic development. The US economy’s deficit and the sustainability and growth of the Chinese economy are given as examples; however, national concerns are also mentioned (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 4). Technological advances and the changing population patterns will be discussed later, together with national phenomena under 5.4.

I believe that the reason the reports focus on different areas (for example: increased competition) could be that the countries in question are differently exposed. It could also be because one wants to put a certain picture across to the EU bodies and the other member states. However, the context I am interested is the one described in the NSRs, so I will not analyse this dimension further.

All the countries seem to feel a need to modernise some parts of their systems, as in the analysed EU policy texts (and the third cluster). Policy areas which are said to be in need of modernisation (in all the analysed NSRs) are among others: social policy and labour market policy. Sometimes even the population is described as in need of modernisation (through further education etc.). In the Finnish report it is explained that some important and traditional industrial sectors have had serious problems because of new competition. The changes have had serious effects on the country’s industrial structure and the importance of adapting to the ongoing changes is stressed (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 4-6). The seriousness of the situation is emphasized and described with more concern than in other NSRs. Ireland, on the other hand, does not even mention international competition. It might not be as exposed - with the positive development of the Irish economy, the low unemployment and the ability to attract manpower from other countries all factors. Most often the need for change seems to be a result of changes on a national level in the NSRs, but it is also sometimes – as in the Finnish case - a result of global phenomena. The Finnish NSR lies closest to the EU policy texts, discussing international competition and structural changes. However, in most of the NSRs the analysis of the situation seems to point out national changes rather than the manifest ideology’s focus on the international. In this case, the contexts described in the NSRs are not very coherent – the countries seem to experience different situations - and the different national situations do not seem to correspond well with the uniform
concept from the manifest ideology. The cases and the manifest ideology seem to share the idea that there is need for change. When the NSRs go into detail, though, the idea of an international threat or challenge no longer seems to be a common European concern.

5.2 The Mutual Interaction between Creating Growth, Jobs and Social Cohesion Discussed in the NSRs – With a Special Focus on Creating Social Cohesion

In all the analysed NSRs, one relates to the importance of the mutual interaction between creating growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The social protection systems are seen as productive factors, but also as dependant on the creation of economic growth and jobs. In this regard the Estonian text is exceptional - no strategy for the creation of growth is discussed or even mentioned in it.

The key priorities from the framework that the member states have agreed upon to break the patterns of poverty and social exclusion (mentioned in 4.3) are more or less central in all the analysed NSRs\(^5\). The priorities are also often quite similar. An example of common themes and priorities is how employment is described as central for achieving social cohesion (for example: Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 4; Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 16-17; Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 32, Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 12). All the NSRs underline the importance of integrating immigrants - or in the Estonian case, non-Estonians - to create social cohesion (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 14; Sotsial Ministeenum, 2006 p. 11; Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 25-26; Finland, p. 9). The ageing population is also considered a serious challenge in all the analysed NSRs - and makes the objective to create mutual interaction between creating growth, jobs and social cohesion especially important (for example in: Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 6 Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 7).

Ireland

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\(^5\) To repeat, the key priorities were: 1. increase labour market participation; 2. modernise social protection systems; 3. tackle disadvantages in education and training; 4. eliminate child poverty; 5. ensure decent accommodation; 6. improve access to quality services, 7. overcome discrimination and integrate ethnic minorities and migrants” (European Commission, 2005b p. 13).
In the Irish text, the relationship between social policy and economic prosperity is described as complementary and it needs to be “nurtured” (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 6). A correlation between social policy, growth and employment is reported. To make more people work the disincentives to employment” should be removed and necessary support in the form of financial and non-financial incentives should be provided (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p.19). By using benefits as incentives for work, the welfare schemes are to be made more employment friendly. By, for example, allowing claimants to keep receiving benefits once employed, the benefits do not become a hindrance to being reintegrated into the labour market. This would have been the case earlier, if getting a job meant that substantial benefits were removed directly (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 6-7).

The social protection system is said to be “the cornerstone of the government’s strategy for combating poverty and strengthening social cohesion. The government and its social partners are said to be committed to ensuring that the protections system “adequately supports” all people of working age, whether in gainful employment or not, and “facilitates labour market participation” (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 4). The unprecedented economic growth, together with increased spending on key services like housing, training and education is said to have resulted in a decrease in consistent poverty (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 12).

The Irish report identifies four priority policy objectives for working towards social inclusion: child poverty, access to quality work and learning opportunities (activation measures), integration of immigrants and access to quality services (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 11). Although many of the practical measures are focused on one priority area, these areas are often linked to one another. For example efforts to reduce unemployment can lead to a decrease in child poverty.

**Finland**

The Finnish NSR underlines the importance of coherence between different policies. By coordinating for example economic, employment and educational policy, one hopes to give social policy a stronger legitimacy. Examples of this from the text are that “the day-care fee policy also aims to boost employment” and that “employment and adaptation to changes in social conditions are supported with an extensive service system” (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 9-10). The Finnish policy model is said to support “balanced and expansive social reforms”. Social change is seen as something positive, and something that can be coped
with because of the system’s competitiveness, extensive education system etc. The Finnish report mentions gender equality as an “important requirement for social inclusion and economic growth” (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 4), as well as the integration of immigrants and the reduction of child poverty (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 9).

In the Finnish NSR it is stated that “good social protection is the cornerstone of society” because it is through redistribution of resources and regulations that the government can take responsibility for the well-being of all (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 14). It is underlined that measures against poverty and social exclusion “must be seen as measures complementing the social protection system that covers the entire population, not as a measure replacing it” (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 8). Social protection is said to be an important factor in making the society go through a sustainable development as it would increase social stability and make the negative effects of the changes less harmful (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 13). Services and income transfers must be available for the entire population - a universal system - and in all policies social considerations need to be made. Reforms are said to be needed; however, there is a consensus to keep what one calls the “Nordic model”, with relatively high levels of benefits, high-standard social welfare and health care systems (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 11). Special measures helping risk groups and those worst off have also been approved Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 8, 14).

Working life needs to be made more attractive by reinforcing job satisfaction. This is to be achieved by increasing equality and making it easier to combine work and family (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 27). Good working conditions are said to improve the productivity and to “contribute to the degree of employment.” Unemployment security systems are also seen as important as they support active job-seeking and labour market flexibility (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 27).

Germany

In the German report, a knowledge based society is said to be central to increase the viability of the society. Participation and social justice are two important focuses (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 7). The fact that those with the least qualifications often are those struck the hardest in a decline is said to make state solidarity – which would insure
against the risk of international competition - extra important. It becomes vital to “encourage social cohesion and equal opportunities in order to counteract exclusion tendencies” (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 8). The social protection system needs to be modernised as this would result in growth and employment. Reducing non-wage costs is considered central and the Federal government also wants to reduce social security contributions (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 8). At the same time, however, confidence in the welfare state is important to encourage an “investment and innovation friendly economic environment” (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 8).

The aim of the German Federal government’s policy is said to be to promote and strengthen “the cohesion of the generations and society as a whole” (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 6). The reason given is solidarity and that one wants to go further than just ensuring survival. Offering what is needed for participation in society etc. is also key here. In the NSR, there is talk of a “fair balance between solidarity and responsibility” and “participation and social justice”, which is supposed to be central for the overall strategy (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 6). Education and training are considered important measures - especially in a service and knowledge-based society - and they need to be expanded. The activation of the long-term unemployed, security for job seekers, social assistance and basic security benefits for the elderly and disabled are also considered important if social exclusion is to effectively combated (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 6, 10). Reducing the high unemployment considered a central policy challenge. In order to create social cohesion, eradicating discrimination and strengthening the integration of disabled are both seen as vital (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006, p 27).

**Estonia**

Under the heading “How to create mutual interaction of growth, jobs and social coherence,” the Estonian NSRs refers to another report – “The National Action Plan for Growth and Jobs for 2005-2007”. The examples given are only on how to extend the working life of the population. However, economic growth is never a theme in the NSR.

According to the report, the level of employment needs to be increased and so does the efficiency of the social protection system. This will be achieved by “applying incitements and provisions that support working” (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 8). Older workers might for example need support to be able to keep on working. Thus, the development of a
lifelong learning system becomes important; career counselling, a higher flexibility and versatility are other measures that will be carried through (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 11).

“To ensure economic and social ability” there is a need for “competitive education, decent work and good health”. The Social protection system is considered vital to help people cope “when social risks emerge” (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 8). The Estonian social protection system is said to be there to “ensure protection against traditional risks, special needs and poverty”. Those who need support because of poor health, old age, disability or lack of work are supposed to obtain the necessary help – and a decent income – from the social security system in order to prevent risk of poverty and social risk. Although it is stressed that the system can not risk to decrease prospective workers’ motivation (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 8, 12-13). Two priority areas are ensuring an adequate level of pensions and countering poverty in families with children (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 9). Certain family benefits have for example been increased and parental benefits have been established (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 9).

The Estonian report mentions several times that an increase in the efficiency of the benefit system by supplementing it with “work-incentives and labour market and welfare measures” would be desirable (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006p. 8-9, 12). Work has to secure a better quality of life economically than living on benefits (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 12). It is considered very important to integrate the long-term unemployed into the labour market. Existing labour market measures are to be improved, as are the provisions for those not working. Target groups are also to be extended (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 9). It is also considered important to “reform the regulations of the labour relations, so as to add flexibility and transparency to the performance of the labour market” – which should lead to further employment (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 10).

In the Estonian NSR, information Technology (IT) and all the positive effects of developing information and communication technologies (ICT) are given a lot of attention. IT can make society more competitive. However, the importance of preventing and narrowing a “digital divide” is highlighted and to make it possible to participate in the knowledge society, one needs access to the internet and “services using the ICT opportunities in general” (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 10). According to the report, people need to be made aware of the possibilities of an information society and provided with the skills needed to participate – both on a national and regional level (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 10).
There are, as shown, many similarities in how the NSRs relate to this second (and third) feature. One example of the similarities is how the common framework on for tackling social exclusion is visible in the NSRs (for the framework, see: 4.3). In all the NSRs, the fact that policies in one area affect other policy areas is discussed. The Finnish report, for example, explains this by providing an example of how a day-care fee policy can have effects on employment. Such a correlation can be found in all the NSRs. However, there are also important differences. One important difference regards how extensive the welfare system should be. Finland makes it clear that an extensive, general welfare system should be kept, in which measures against poverty and social exclusion is to be seen as complementing a system that covers the entire population. The German report states that the social protection system’s function is not only to ensure survival, but also participation in society. When poverty is fought, the goal is not only to eradicate financial poverty, but also to create equal chances for participation and make realisation possible. In both the Irish and the Estonian reports the social protection systems are considered productive factors and the importance to provide decent benefits for those who cannot work is underlined. However, both Ireland and Estonia have a stronger focus than Germany or Finland on how one needs to balance the benefits so that they provide people with the necessary support, without removing their incentive to work. There are differences between the Irish and the Estonian texts. The Irish believe that support should available even after a formally unemployed person has become, so that he or she is not stricken too hard at once. The Estonian report stresses that those who can not work need to get a decent income to prevent poverty and social risk. However, the system is not in place to decrease the motivation of prospective workers by offering the unemployed more money than they would earn. So, in the analysed reports, there are substantial differences as regards how one relates to these benefits. In Finland and Germany they are seen as purely positive - it is thus important that they remain extensive. In Ireland and Estonia, on the other hand, they are seen as less positive because they might discourage people from working. An important difference can also be seen in how the Irish report points out that “the social protection system is the cornerstone of the government’s strategy for combating poverty and strengthening social cohesion” (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006, p. 4) whereas the Finnish report states that “good social protection is the cornerstone of society”. While the Finns regard social protection as a cornerstone of their whole society, the Irish – despite viewing it as important - regard it merely as part of one sector of the government’s strategy.
Regardless of the reason for the differences (may they be ideological, financial or both), differences as regards how one relates to social benefits and welfare systems do exist. The national practical policies might say something else - a high level of benefits might be seen to discourage people from work also in Finland and Germany, however, this is in any case not reflected in the texts.

Another important difference between the NSRs is that the Estonian report does not underline the importance of creating growth. I believe that they either comment on this in the special report mentioned above or that current level of growth in Estonia are so exceptional that the creation of growth is a less important matter there. The Estonian special report is not part of the material, however, and so this issue will be only briefly mentioned in the analysis. The manifest ideology can be recovered in the NSRs; the similarities in this case mainly concern the themes that are discussed though. These similarities are to some extent a result of the SPC and common agreements – result of the EU’s role as a coordinator (as in the case with the framework to oppose social exclusion). However, the EU policy texts do not go into as much detail as the NSRs do and it is in these important details that some of the most significant differences can be found (e.g. attitudinal differences regarding the role of the welfare state). These differences become quite clear when one reads the NSRs and they often contradict the picture that is put across in the manifest ideology of a uniform Europe.

5.3 The Importance of How Policies are Constructed and Implemented

Statements that feel like catchwords are also quite common in the NSRs. Goals are often described in vague terms. There are, however, more practical examples given in the NSRs than in the analysed EU policy texts. Many themes recur in the NSRs – a good example being the level of involvement of different stakeholders in the development of policy. Differences in how the involvement is presented in the reports do exist but they are seldom substantial.

According to the Estonian NSR, the involvement of different stakeholders leads to higher quality decisions, as well as better implementation and monitoring of the process (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 11). An increased openness and transparency is said to follow (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 11-12). The importance of evaluation and monitoring is a theme in all the texts (for example, Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 10-11).

There are differences between what is prioritised and how the member states present themselves in their NSRs. For example, Finland distinguishes itself by stating that it is one of
the least corrupt countries in the world and that openness and transparency is the basis for the Finnish operating model (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p.10). No other countries relate their achievements in a similar way.

There are also other differences between the cases - for example, to what extent a country chooses to work with the third sector. As previously stated, they all mention broad co-operation with different stakeholders and the involvement of the third sector but the extent of this cooperation seems to differ. The German report stresses that charities and self-help initiatives are very important for the German Social Services (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006, p 28). Finland, on the other hand, talks of a further co-operation between the public and the private sector, but not in such strong terms and with less practical examples (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 29).

All the NSRs have sustainability as a central concern; with the long term financing of the public economy in mind – its sustainability. To make social protection sustainable, the Finnish report mentions three main factors. More people need to work (and work to a later age); health and capacity of the population needs to be improved (which will increase the employment and decrease the need for care of the elderly) and the productivity and effectiveness of social welfare and health services needs to be increased so that to the services become better and the work load can be reduced (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 8). Many other NSRs have a similar take on this matter.

In all the reports there are also suggestions made on how to make societal functions easier and more user-friendly. For example, to make immigration more efficient, a single access point for immigration services has been established in Ireland - The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration services (INIS). To promote social protection and inclusion it is vitally important to provide coherence between policies in different fields. Cooperation between different levels (for example local and national) and institutions is also a key issue here (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 12; similar thought also in: Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 9-10).

Again the themes in the NSRs are similar to those in the EU social policy texts. The differences occur when one investigates how the themes are to be transformed into practice. The EU policy texts do not give practical examples on how the objectives are to be transformed into national policy - another important difference between the EU policy texts and the NSRs. The ideas of the manifest ideology - the importance attached to the quality of the policies – can be
recovered in the NSRs. Once again, however, the European model of society does not seem as uniform when the context is studied.

5.4 The EU/Europe as Pictured in the NSR

There are no direct references to the EU/Europe in the NSRs, so this part of the analysis will instead consist of a comparison between the different NSRs. The thought is that the similarities and differences in the NSRs will provide a picture of a uniform or a diverse EU/Europe. I have divided the text into two parts: the first is concerned with how the cases describe their economic situation and the second with poverty and social exclusion.

With the exception of Ireland, the NSRs describe similar population developments. Most are desperately negative but Ireland has a population growth (8.1%). The population growth is a result of a high level of immigration (not a high birth rate) which is estimated to have accounted for 80% of the demographic increase. The population growth is expected to last because of the continued economic growth (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 1). All the cases - Estonia, Germany, Finland and Ireland - are concerned about their ageing populations. It is considered a central concern for the nations and is often mentioned as a top motivation for system reform. Reforms are needed to cope with the fact that less people will be able to work to support the growing number of elderly citizens (for example, Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 7). There are not enough children being born in any of the analysed countries to ensure population reproduction. In Estonia the population has also decreased as a result of migration. (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 7).

All the analysed NSR describe quite positive economic developments. However, they are not uniform and it is quite clear that it is four different national developments that are described. The Estonian report provides a picture of a “favourable” economic development and compares national statistics with an EU-average. Over the last ten years the average Estonian growth has been 6.6%. In the EU this figure stands at 2.3% (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 5). In 2000-2005, the Estonian GDP increased by an average of 8.3%; the EU average at the same time was 1.7%. The Estonian GDP per capita has increased in comparison with the EU average; however, it was still only 60.1 % of it in 2005. However, with the development then, it was predicted to be 68.3 % of the EU average in 2007 (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 5). Jobless growth was reported to have dominated in Estonia, however, since 2001 there was
a steady increase in employment and the employment rate was still a bit higher than the EU average - among 15-64 year olds it was 64.4%, 1.4% higher than the EU average. The inflation has been accelerating and was 4.1% in 2005 - the EU average was 2.2% (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 5). The unemployment has fallen substantially to an all time low in 2005, 7.9 %, the EU average at the same time was, 8.7%.

The Irish report describes a “broadly favourable” economic background. Economic growth has been positive and from 1999 to 2005 the average growth was 3.6%. This figure was expected to increase to between 4.5% and 5% in 2006. The annual growth of the Irish GDP until 2010 was projected to be between 3.5% to 4.9%. Increasing inflation is described as a concern, having increased from 2.2% in 2005 to 4.5% in 2006 (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 1). The growth in employment is likely to continue its strong positive development over the period 2006-2008. In 2006 the annual increase was 87.800 or 4.6% (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 1). The unemployment rate was 4.4% in the same year (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 1).

The Finnish economic situation has been “fairly positive” since the mid 1990s. There was a recession around the millennium but it did not last. The public economy shows a surplus and the economic development is said to be continuously positive - even if growth probably is slowing down owing to "the ageing population and a shift towards a service-oriented industrial structure” (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 4). Employment is said to have increased “steadily” and in some industries and services there has even been a labour shortage. Employment is still lower than it was before the 1990s recession (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 4). Long-term unemployment is decreasing but it remains a serious concern in some exposed groups.

Germany reports that despite the strengthening of the domestic growth forces – by using economic and financial policy measures, implementing fundamental reforms to the social protection system and stabilising non-wage costs – a lot still needs to be done (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 4). In 2006 a very slow phase seemed to have been overcome and according to the German NSR, the prospects are good. The increased foreign trade should be reflected in the domestic market and increasing investments should lead to increased private consumption (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 4). Unemployment and especially long-term unemployment are considered serious problems. It is anticipated that employment which is subject to social insurance will enjoy a
slight upturn, however. Registered unemployment is also expected to fall (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 4).

**Poverty and Social Exclusion**

The NSRs and the manifest ideology highlight many reasons for poverty and social exclusion. However, unemployment and long-term unemployment are generally seen as key factors. To create social cohesion unemployment has to decrease (examples from the NSRs: Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 3; Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 5; Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 5; Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 14). Child poverty is a central concern in all the NSRs (For example: Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 3; Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 17; Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 6; Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 14, 24).

In Finland and Estonia the relative risk of poverty has increased although in absolute terms the development seems to have been a positive one (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 5; Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 6). In Germany there has been a small increase of risk of poverty. Their report makes no mention of absolute terms, however (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 6). In the Irish NSR a very small decrease in risk of poverty is mentioned, however, in real term the standard for many seem to have improved substantially (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 3). The Irish criticize the measurement of at risk of poverty, saying it “has not proved to be a reliable indicator of the experience of poverty” (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 3). Owing to the substantial positive development “in real terms”, the Irish threshold for those living at risk of poverty has increased by 122% and – accordingly - more people are living underneath it. However, between 2003 and 2004 there was a slight decrease in the risk of poverty, from 19.7% to 19.4%. It is hoped that this is a sign that “the distorting effects of significant structural changes may well be on the ebb” (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 3). According to the Irish NSR, the increase in the risk of poverty mainly reflects a shift from one income households to two income households – the result of an important increase in female employment (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 3). The strong Irish economic development has, as mentioned above, led to reduced unemployment and improved living standards. However, a group living in “consistent poverty” remains. The NSR
reports a downward trend in consistent poverty in real terms (with some reservations for methodological questions). In 2004, however, 6.8% of Irish people still lived in consistent poverty. The risk of poverty is increasing and especially high amongst people from vulnerable groups such as: “families with children, particularly lone parents and larger families; peoples with disabilities; older persons living alone” (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 2-3). In 2002 the Irish government set a target to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or to completely eliminate it by 2007 (Office for Social Inclusion, 2006 p. 2). Child poverty is a concern and among people under 15, 9.5% experience consistent poverty (which was a reduction from 12.2% in 2003).

Finland claims to have one of the lowest levels of relative poverty in the EU. This figure is rising, however, and a deepening social division is seen as an important challenge for the Finns (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 17). There are several reasons for the increasing social division. People may be more affluent but certain groups still earn relatively little money. Unemployment remains an issue as is the relatively low level of fixed benefits and last-resort benefits (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 5). If one were to look at a fixed poverty level (how many people live below a certain income level over a period of time), one would conclude that there were fewer poor people living in Finland than previously. Such a calculation fails to take the general increase in income into account, however (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 5, 17). The real income for those on a low salary has not risen at the same pace as the general trend. Single people and especially single parents are the groups where low incomes are most common and in the last couple of years, low income levels has also increased among young families with children (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 17). Students, the unemployed and those on full state pensions are at the greatest risk of poverty. There are also substantial regional differences when it comes to available income (Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 17). Refugees are also mentioned as an exposed group that quickly needs to be placed in the labour market. The amount of people receiving assistance has fallen steadily, while socio-economic differences in life expectancy have increased (explained through different life-experiences).

As regards Germany, the risk of poverty rose from 12.1% to 13.5% between 1998 and 2003. This is seen as being linked to unemployment levels (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 5). Immigrants are at a much greater risk of poverty than others and this is rising (19.6% in 1998 to 24% in 2003) Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 15). Children are also disproportionatly affected by poverty though surprisingly the
elderly are not. However, old women and foreigners are at a greater risk of poverty than German men (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 5, 11, 14).

The positive Estonian economic development has led to a substantial – and very quick - decrease in absolute poverty in households (in 2004 the rate was 14.2%). The development has been positive among both children and adults - absolute poverty among children fell from 40.4% in 1998 to 25.3% in 2004. For adults the corresponding figures were 32.8% in 1998 and 17.0% in 2004 (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 6). The inequality of income distribution has generally remained the same for the last few years with the rich receiving six times more than the poor (the EU-average is 4.8) (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 6). In the last two years the amount of people living at risk of poverty has increased. The figure stood at around 19.3% in 2004 (the EU average at the same time was 16%) (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 6). In general poverty has decreased in the last ten years. There has been no change among the unemployed, however, with about half of those without jobs living below the relative poverty line (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 14). Even if levels of employment are growing, some groups are still very exposed. For example there seems to be a correlation between the level of education, employment and risk of poverty (for example: high level of education - high level of employment -low level of poverty) (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 16). Exposed groups are: the non-Estonian population and among middle aged, old and the young (where long-term unemployment is common) (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 14). Other groups at risk are young people who have discontinued participation in education and the disabled (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 14-15). The poverty rate among families with children is considerably higher than amongst families without children but it is falling. It remains higher amongst children than amongst other households or individuals (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 15). Poverty is more common amongst female-headed-households. The reasons suggested are that women often have lower paid jobs, are more likely to be single parents or take care of other relatives etc. (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006p. 16).

All the analysed countries are struck by the same negative population developments. The cases’ economic developments are all described in positive terms, though, and even if the NSRs provide different amounts of detail, it becomes very clear that the situations and developments are not the same. Estonia and Germany are, for example, almost opposites. The Estonian economy is small but is experiencing a fast and strong growth. The German economy, on the other hand, is enormous but is developing slowly (albeit still in a positive direction.) Even
if the Estonian GDP per capita is growing fast, it is still only around 60% of the EU average.

Again, the themes of the texts and the priorities are very similar: employment and opposing child poverty are seen as central concerns in all the NSRs. However, when it comes to how the actual situation is described, there are important differences. Absolute, extreme or consistent poverty is a theme in all the reports with the exception of the Finnish one. The Estonian and Irish reports often refer to absolute or consistent poverty and both countries seem to be working actively to eradicate this problem – their reports describe measures being taken and their development. The German report only mentions that many different stakeholders are involved in providing assistance for people in extreme poverty (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2006 p. 16) while in the Finnish report no information is given on these rougher forms of poverty at all. Instead the Finnish reports one of the lowest relative poverty rates in the EU. There is still talk of help for the homeless and those “most deprived”, but terms such as absolute, extreme or consistent poverty are never employed (for example Ministry of Social affairs and health, 2006 p. 29-30, 39).

All the cases have seen an increased relative poverty (though Ireland, is, as we have seen, something of an anomaly). Groups described as exposed are similar but not identical. The unemployed, single parents (majority being single mothers) migrants, children and those who have retired are repeatedly described as exposed.

5.5 The Manifest Ideology its Context and the Latent Ideology

In this section I discuss the similarities and differences between the manifest ideology and the context – the latent ideology. The main interest is if the manifest ideology might be a part of building a European identity.

The theory where social policy is considered a European identity creator, as with the fourth cluster (presented in 2.2.2) has strong similarities with the approach were a collective identity is created through a common threat (see: 1.1 State of Research). In the manifest ideology one does not only put across a picture of one Europe, with similar experiences, values and institutions. One also stresses that Europe seems to be exposed to the same problems and solutions, thus the member states are united in their common challenges. As I see it, the thought that Europe shares problems and the solutions could in that sense be related to building a common European identity. However, the picture of a very uniform Europe - going through the same
challenges and in need of the same solutions - that one obtains after studying the manifest ideology - changes when the NSRs are studied. The European situation does not seem as coherent any longer, to some extent it even feel wrong to talk of one European condition.

The themes the NSRs are concerned with are as said often almost identical. And at a first glance, the member states seem to go through similar developments and share many thoughts on what constitutes problems and solutions. However, at the same time, when the details are studied, there also seems to be differences in what priorities one has; how exposed one is and also signs suggesting that the cases partly have different ideals regarding welfare regimes. All the cases mention a need to modernise, to handle their current situation and the modernisations regard similar areas (for example: social policy and labour market policy). The problems leading to the need for modernisation differs though, all of the cases mention national developments – for example an ageing population – but some also add the global/ international development. How urgent the modernisations are also tend to differ; with Finland most concerned with the structural changes. All the cases underline the importance of mutual interaction between creating growth, more and better jobs and social cohesion. All agree that social protection can be considered a productive factor, however, its role in society, either as “a cornerstone of society” (Finland) or “a cornerstone of the strategy to combat poverty” (Ireland) differ. The cases have some different opinions regarding benefits. All the cases see the importance that benefits secure a good life quality, however, when Finland and Germany seem to consider benefits as purely positive, the Irish and the Estonian report that benefits can remove the incentive to work if they are too high.

The most substantial differences between the NSRs become visible when their economic situations and developments are compared. Poverty and social exclusion seems to be quite differently urgent problems as well, with Finland having one of the lowest levels of relative poverty in the EU (not even mentioning extreme or absolute poverty) and, for example, Estonia fighting quite high levels of both relative and absolute poverty. The most important difference between the manifest ideology and the context seems to regard Europe as a coherent unity. The differences between the national situations are, as said, quite extensive. However, regarding the ideas of problems and solutions there are both similarities and differences. On a broad level regarding objectives the cases and the manifest ideology seem to have quite similar opinions. The manifest ideology seldom goes into detail and when the NSRs discuss detail the countries often take quite separate directions. It is in this gap, between the reality described in the manifest ideology and the picture derived from the context that the latent
ideology should be made visible. When the cognitive frames of the manifest ideology provide a picture of a coherent Europe, the context shows that it is a too simplified picture. As I see it, the gap underlines that the manifest ideology could have a function and it is a possible argument for that one wants to put across a picture of a more uniform Europe possibly to create a European identity. It could be an error, the results of ignorant policy writers or simply a nice text without any further functions. However, I find it unlikely, the policy texts seem too important just to be made up to look nice and they really have affected the NSRs at least to some extent. The simplified picture could also be a result of trying to mediate a unified picture of Europe to the non-European world. However the analysed documents are mainly for EU-intern application, which makes that conclusion quite unlikely.

I believe it is not especially controversial to suggest that most of the similarities between the different NSRs are results of coordination from an EU level. Examples on these results of the coordination are the common themes in the NSRs and to some extent common perspectives, for instance how social protection and quality policy is considered productive factors in all the NSRs. The link between the commission and the member states - as regards social policy issues – the Social Protection Committee (SPC), has provided guidelines concerning the structure and content of the NSRs (Sotsiaal Ministeenum, 2006 p. 3). Besides the similarities resulted of the SPC, other similarities have come out of direct agreements between the member states, for example the framework to tackle social exclusion (mentioned in 4.3 and 5.2). I can not fully know what similarities in the NSRs that are the result of EU influences. However, I do know that the themes in the NSRs and to some extent perspectives and priorities are coordinated and the result of the cooperation mentioned above.

That the problems and solutions described in the manifest ideology and in the NSRs are so similar could be a result of the identity creating process or simply that the member states already had quite similar outlooks. That the EU is affecting some parts of the NSRs can be seen as an argument that one is trying to mediate a picture of a uniform Europe and thus build a European identity. However, it does not have to be the case it could also only be the EU trying to coordinate policy to create better social policy in Europe. As I see it, the studied cases do to a high extent have different history, welfare ideals, current economic situations, but their ideas of problems and solutions are still quite uniform (even if there are some important differences). I believe the reason for this could be that the images of problems and solutions seldom go into detail which leaves room for national differences even if the main objectives are shared. Identity creating according to the fourth cluster could thereby be possi-
ble despite the differences between the cases. Still, I believe it is impossible to say for sure if there is an ongoing identity building process regarding social policy in the EU today and if there is one to what extent. I would probably have had to make study over time to be able to make such a statement. The manifest ideology could be part of building a European identity. The uniform picture it provides of Europe as exposed to the same problems (with common solutions) fits the pattern of the fourth cluster. And I am partly surprised of both the very uniform picture of Europe in the manifest ideology and that the cases seem to have so many similar views regarding broad objectives despite their often quite different situations and traditions.

The NSRs are most probably a lot more similar to each other and the manifest ideology than if the EU would not have been part of the process. And one can not disregard the fact that there is a coordination process in action regarding social policy. Together with the manifest ideology’s picture of a uniform Europe and the cases quite similar ideas on what constitutes problems and solutions to them (despite there quite different situations) one could argue that an identity building process is in the making. On the other hand, the coordination does not have to have identity creating as its aim and the similarities between the NSRs could have other causes. If one does not agree with the identity creating process, the manifest ideology becomes quite hard to explain. The social policy it is derived from could be the result of ignorant policy writers, or simply an act with out no further aim than to present a nice picture of Europe. However, I personally do not find those explanations credible.
6 Conclusions, End Discussion and My Own Thoughts

The first question I wanted to answer with this thesis was: *what are the main features in the manifest ideology of EU social policy as described in the texts?*

As shown, I have found five features of the manifest ideology that I consider central:

1) the world and changes in it according to the EU;

2) the mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives and greater social cohesion;

3) the creating of social cohesion;

4) the importance of how policies are constructed and implemented;

5) the EU’s self-image.

*The world and changes in it according to the EU:* The world around Europe offers an increasing competition and together with fast technological advances and changing population patterns they pose an important challenge for Europe. The development and the changes are European and they make the need for reforms and modernisations important to handle the changes and to gain as much as the possible of the situation. The challenges are European and so is the need for reforms and the chances to make a gain.

*The mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives and greater social cohesion:* The labour markets, social policy systems and even the population need to be modernised. Central is the mutual interdependence between social and economic policies, or more precisely, the creating of growth, more and better jobs and social cohesion. These both constitute the aim for the modernisations of the social policies and the foundation for the European model of society.

*The creating of social cohesion:* Social policy is regarded a productive factor and the key priorities are to increase the labour market participation and, as said, to modernise the social protection systems. Disadvantages are to be tackled with education and training which also are to
help overcome discrimination and making the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities more efficient. Child poverty is to be eliminated and decent accommodation is to be ensured (5.3, or European Commission, 2005b p. 13).

The importance of how policies are constructed and implemented: Policies are to be well-designed, carefully implemented and monitored. The high qualities of the policies are not a self-purpose but considered essential to help the most vulnerable and make policy sustainable

The EU’s self image: When reading and analysing the EU social policy texts one of the most striking factors is how uniform the EU or, rather Europe is described. The manifest ideology describes Europe as one; no differences are made between the member states. The European model of society is said to be “based on partnership, especially between employers and trade unions”, “built on both economic growth and the creation of good jobs” (European Commission, 2005b p. 7). The European model of society is described as unique in the world, uniform and making progress - there is an image of something genuinely European.

(The manifest ideology is discussed more closely under 4.6 and also summed up in 4.6.1).

The second question I wanted to answer was: What picture of a European identity is visible when reading the EU social policy texts and the National Strategy Reports?

The picture of a European identity that is visible when reading the EU policy texts and the NSRs are either two quite different ones or one that is partly incoherent. The analysed EU policy texts put the picture across of a uniform Europe and that there is something that is genuinely European. There are common European values, institutions and experiences and one both has the same problems and is in need of the same solutions to these. A European identity does not seem to be in the making, but rather existing right now.

It is not as easy to make a statement on a European identity according to the NSRs, probably because they are four different texts from four different actors and that Europe as a concept never is discussed, but rather national politics. However, according to these texts, it is hard to talk of something that is genuinely European, or one coherent European identity. On one hand, there are similarities between the NSRs. For example, many of the thoughts from the third cluster (the importance of change and adaptation) can be found in all the NSRs. There seems to be common values and institutions among the cases and quite similar ideas of what constitutes problems and solutions. The similarities can also be found in the choice of themes; many are similar or even identical. However, on the other hand, when one looks into detail how an objective is to be reached or how urgent different matters (for example the
problems) are considered, there are often important differences. The most substantial differences regard the cases current situations, for example: when most of the cases seem much challenged by the demographic development, Ireland seems calmer because of their considerable immigration. Finland does seem much more threatened by international competition than the other cases and the German economy is developing positive; however quite slowly in comparison to both the Irish and the Estonian etc. There are clear traces of different welfare regimes in the NSRs, the differences can for example be seen in how one discusses benefits and what role social protection is to play in society. When the Irish and Estonian texts focus on how to balance benefit levels so they provide support without removing the incentive for work (a possible sign of a residual welfare model), the Finnish and German NSRs rather seem to focus on what one needs to achieve a good quality of life. And when Ireland see social protection as important to fight poverty and social exclusion, Finland instead regards it as an important part of their society (possibly a sign of an institutional redistributive model).

The factors that are supposed to build a common European identity according to the theory on the ESM’s forth cluster - shared problems and common solutions to these - are partly there in the NSRs. However, some of the issues that are considered essential in the manifest ideology are not mentioned in all the NSRs (for example international competition in the Irish report and strategies for growth in the Estonian report). The issues that are mentioned are also given different priority and perceived in different ways. As I see it, if one only studies the texts ideas on problems and solutions as broad objectives there are differences between the texts, but enough similarities to give a quite uniform picture of Europe. It is also these areas - the broad objectives - were the EU seems to have focused its effort to coordinate. But as fast as detail - especially regarding the national situations - are added to the picture it becomes clear that if a European identity exists it would have to be a quite diverse one.

I am not able to answer if the manifest ideology is part of building a European identity; or to what extent it could be. To do that the research would have had to be structured in another way. However, the manifest ideology’s picture of a uniform Europe sharing problem and their solutions makes it possible that the manifest ideology is part of such a process – with the ideas of the fourth cluster in mind. The gap that appears when the manifest ideology and the context are compared contrasts the picture of a uniform Europe as with the manifest ideology. The gap could be a mistake - the result of ignorant policy writers - but it could also be seen as an argument for that the manifest ideology has a function. That one wants to put across the
picture of a uniform Europe, possibly with the aim to build a European identity. The situations in the member states are quite diverse; however, the ideas of what constitute problems and solutions in the NSRs, the themes discussed and some perspectives are quite similar. The similarities in the texts, despite the different situations could be regarded as another argument for that the EU has affected the member states with the aim to create a common European identity. It is clear that the EU coordination of social policy has affected the NSRs and made the different reports more alike. This could also be seen as an argument for that the EU is coordinating social policy to put across a coherent picture of Europe and thus build a European identity. But it could just as well be the EU coordination policy, without any further aims.

Personally, after spending all the time I have with the EU policy texts and the NSRs I believe that there is an identity building project in action and that the manifest ideology is a part of it. It is especially the manifest ideology’s picture of a uniform Europe that I find very hard to dismiss. However, as said, I do not think I have managed to produce enough strong arguments to really be able to argue that this identity building really is taking place. I also do not believe it is a coincidence that the main parts of the coordination regard broad objectives. But rather that it is an area where the EU can put across a picture of common problems and solutions that the member states could agree on without directly interfering with areas that is not within ones competence. Building a European identity on similarities regarding broad objective would also make it possible to provide a picture of a uniform Europe despite all the member states actual differences. Regarding many of the details though, the national realities are too different for closer coordinating and the member states will want to keep their mandate over social policy and also their national characteristics. One example on this can be found in the Finnish NSR were one states a need for reform and modernisations - as in the manifest ideology - but one also underlines that one will keep an extensive “Nordic” system.

The identity building process I have studied would be a building project from above. As I see it, to really create a strong European identity – more similar to the national identities in Europe today – with a process similar to the one I have studied, a regional threat that felt genuine and to which all the member states were exposed would have to arise. The problems (and solutions) in the manifest ideology today, are more genuine for some of the member states. I personally doubt that such a feeling of belonging together could be created by an EU institution, but on the other hand, national identities do not always have very long histories.
The building of a European identity is - as probably clear by now - not only a possible subject for social policy, but also carried through more traditionally, for example, by appointing a European cultural heritage, a European hymn and flag. Altogether, there are several factors that makes a European identity seem quite convincing, even if one focuses on factor that earlier would have been reserved for nations, like the currency. However, the national diversity is extensive and a possible European identity is still very different from national identities. As I hope to have made clear after State of Research (1.1), those who have written on the subject - European identity - have often different opinions around if there is one or not. And the result probably depends on what factors one looks into. As I see it, if the manifest ideology would be a part of building a European identity, the focus would be on broad objectives - not interfering with national characteristics. Thus as I interpret it, the aim would not be to compete with national identities, but rather to increase the legitimacy of the European project by creating a European identity that could exist next to a national identity.

So what new thoughts and results does this paper has to offer? The fact that the EU is trying to create a European identity to give the project legitimacy is neither new, nor unknown. That the studied cases have different economic situations, different poverty rates and prioritise differently regarding social policy is also nothing new, but rather expected after all the research on welfare models etc. Instead, what really is new is the attempt to provide a description of a manifest EU ideology of social policy, where for example an EU self-image is presented. The contrast between the manifest ideology’s description of the reality and the description attained by analysing a context has probably also not been made as visible before. I have as said not found any other studies, besides what I use as theory, were finding social policy solutions to common European problems is considered a way to create a European identity. So to consider and study social policy with a focus on poverty and social exclusion as an arena for European identity building is new, social policy being an area that since long has been considered almost strictly a national concern. Even if the member states’ policies distinctive characters most probably will be preserved, the areas one focuses on, the used language (used terms etc) will most probably start resembling each other as a result of the coordination from the EU level. And how this development will proceed is very interesting.

I would find it very appealing to over time study how the language in the NSRs develops. In first place to see if the language in the reports actually are affected by the EU guidelines and coordination, or if it stays with the formulation of themes for the NSRs. If one could see a changed language use in the reports, it would be tempting to study to what extent
and to compare the development in the EU context with national policy texts to see if and how national policies might be affected. As well as a study of used terms and concepts I would also like to see if the problems and solutions presented from an EU level become more established on the national levels or if adjustments only affect documents produced for the EU. It would also be interesting to see if there is a perception of a specific European social policy model today among European citizens, national politicians and civil servant. And than to study if/how the development evolves over time. The usage of formulating common problems and solutions to them as a way to create identity interest me and I would like to see more research in other sectors, looking for the same identity creating processes.

I do believe that the outcome of the research could have been quite different if it would have been planed differently. For example, by trying to identify a European identity by comparing the EU to another actor, like ASEAN, the outcome could have been quite different. The chance that the EU would have seemed more coherent is probable, because a comparison has a tendency to fix a framework for an analysis which can make questioning difficult (see example in: 1.1 State of Research). If I instead would have looked into another level of politics, for example by comparing how the member states act, not only policy reports, the chances that the EU would have seemed even more diverse is probable. However, as long as one studies EU social policy texts, I believe it would have been hard to come to a conclusion very different from the one I have reached concerning the manifest ideology. When I chose the cases that have constituted the context in this paper I wanted them to be as diverse as possible. However, I do not believe that another selection of EU member states would have resulted in very different results. Other selections might have brought an a bit more coherent picture of Europe, but I am convinced that all the member states still are so diverse that the results would have been very similar.

If the life of those experiencing poverty and/ or social exclusion will be affected by the EU’s project to coordinate European social policy is hard to say. The efficiency of the OMC in reaching its suggested objectives has been criticised (for example Eckardt, 2005 analysing the efficiency of the OMC on pensions) but it still might provide additional perspectives in the national debates, which has to be a possible good.
Appendix 1

The overarching objectives of the OMC for social protection and social inclusion are to promote:

(a) social cohesion, equality between men and women and equal opportunities for all through adequate, accessible, financially sustainable, adaptable and efficient social protection systems and social inclusion policies;

(b) effective and mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives of greater economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and with the EU’s Sustainable Development Strategy;

(c) good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy.

The following objectives apply to different strands of work:

A decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by ensuring:

(d) access for all to the resources, rights and services needed for participation in society, preventing and addressing exclusion, and fighting all forms of discrimination leading to exclusion;

(e) the active social inclusion of all, both by promoting participation in the labour market and by fighting poverty and exclusion;

(f) that social inclusion policies are well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people experiencing
poverty, that they are efficient and effective and mainstreamed into all relevant public policies, including economic, budgetary, education and training policies and structural fund (notably ESF) programmes.

(The common objectives for the Open Method of Coordination, 2006 p. 1)
Published Sources


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Literature


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