

WT22 – The wealth and poverty: the search for a social model

Session 1

The Chinese vision

- very rapid economic growth has reduced absolute poverty dramatically
- as a result of economic success disparity between rich and poor is now quite high and gets wider
- there is an imbalance between city and rural areas between developed and underdeveloped regions and east and west
- disparities affect the goal of building a “Harmonious Society”
- strong cultural belief in solidarity and care for others provide an important base for development of Harmonious Society
- environmental deterioration aggravates poverty
- there are already important political initiatives taking place to reduce disparities, these include developing social protection system and cooperative medicare systems, improving education and reducing illiteracy, abolition of agricultural tax
- to build a Harmonious Society through better sharing the wealth generated by economic growth
- to improve redistribution systems between rich and poor people
- to increase income from labour so as to reduce poverty
- to promote economic development of poor regions and the countryside and achieve sustainable agricultural reform
- to deal with rapid urbanisation and problems faced by migrant workers
- to build stronger social security system including a health care system
- to maintain progress on improving educational opportunities

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The European vision

- Poverty in the EU is about more than absolute poverty. It is also about people's standard of living relative to the rest of society and involves non material factors like access to housing, health, social, cultural and recreational services
- Poverty is linked to social exclusion and to limited opportunities to participate in society and there are still wide inequalities (both income and access to services) in some countries and between some regions
- The social policies in the European Union is underdeveloped compared economic/employment policies
- in some countries minimum income systems do not exist or are inadequate (the right to adequate minimum income not fully implemented)
- services of general interest and social utilities are put at risk by being opened up to free market
- increased economic competition and liberalisation has created new insecurities and new challenges to social protection systems to support both flexibility and security (flexicurity)
- economic and employment growth, while very important, has not ended poverty and social exclusion
- increased migration and diversity is creating new risks of social exclusion and discrimination
- achieving real gender equality remains to be achieved and the lack of it leads to a higher risk of poverty for many women
- there is a growing concern of impact of environmental problems on poverty
- the ageing of European populations puts new pressures on social security systems and development of elderly care
- changes in family structures (increase in number of lone parent families) and decline in extended family structures creates new social care challenges
- children in the EU are at greater risk of poverty than adults and there is a need to break intergenerational inheritance of poverty in order both to ensure the rights of children and future sustainability of society
- there is a risk of a growing technological and IT gap leading to new social exclusion and poverty

- Key challenge : to balance materialistic and social values
- Key challenge : to ensure that economic and employment, social and environmental policies are mutually reinforcing (make Lisbon work)
- Key challenge : to develop integrated and multi-dimensional approaches to tackling poverty that cut across and integrate all policy areas
- Key challenge : to ensure minimum social standards for all
- Key challenge : to reduce inflow into poverty and increase outflow
- Key challenge : to maintain high quality public services in a more marketised environment
- Key challenge : to increase access of people in poverty to decent jobs
- Key challenge : to increase the participation of people experiencing poverty in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies
- Key challenge : to reduce geographical and administrative inequalities across Europe

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Session 3

Similarities

- here is a shared need to develop models of economic development which will promote a Harmonious and cohesive society
- “The Europe of today is maybe the China of tomorrow”
- wide disparities in income and opportunities are an obstacle to a Harmonious Society and to a cohesive society
- strong political leadership is essential for effective anti-poverty policies
- A society’s cultural values and moral standards - a belief in the importance of social cohesion and Harmonious Society – are key factors in developing inclusive policies
- Sustainable economic growth is essential but not sufficient to combat poverty
- it is essential to adopt a balanced approach to economic, social and environmental goals
- employment policies must promote good working conditions and adequate wage levels
- there is a need to involve all levels of government (national, regional and local) to work together to combat poverty
- all different parts of society (governments, employers, workers, farmers, NGOs, academics, people experiencing poverty) should work together in partnership to combat poverty
- local family and community networks can play an important part in promoting solidarity
- Social Security Systems play a key role in preventing poverty and ensure a sharing of risks between all citizens
- It is important to develop a systematic approach to policy development with proper enforcement and implementation and monitoring
- Access to affordable child care is an essential element in anti-poverty and equality strategies
- It is important to address serious regional differences and inequalities

- A holistic approach (i.e. addressing employment, income, health, education, culture, environment in a coordinated way) is very important for tackling poverty

Differences

- There are significant differences in wealth and poverty within as well as between China and Europe
- The scale of the poverty problem and its characteristics are very different and this reflects different stages of development (There are also many similarities)



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How to enhance the dialogue between China and Europe ?