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“Opportunities for Whom? - The European Social Model in a Global Perspective”

(Summary of the presentation)

The world experiences an epoch - making advancement of free market economy. Militant individualism and anti-institutionalism threaten the achievements of welfare politics. The topic of social responsibility seems to separate the free world on both sides of the Atlantic. The US is departing from their welfare traditions and is about to replace social by penal policy.

The European Social Model is a peculiar and complex phenomenon. On the one hand it seems to be of rather residual character, on the other it is used by European politicians as a kind of mantra. Nevertheless it could inspire disappointed people across the European Union and become a major means of cohesion.

Looking at the European Social Model from an outside perspective it is easy to perceive. From an inside position the picture is ambiguous. There is no compelling clarity and hence a single definition not readily recallable. We are rather facing a jungle of different concepts, terms and experiences. Only with great difficulties it is possible to cluster them to models. Which of these models should be used in order to develop a strategy of welfare revival depends on its capacity to secure the position of the citizens respectively to promote global competitiveness. The Nordic model appears to deliver most effectively along these postulates.