

THIRD THEMATIC SESSION: INEQUALITIES, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND RIGHTS

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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*«Le droit de choisir : défendre un droit universel et
combattre l'inégalité»*

*The right to choose: defending a universal right
and fighting inequality*

Le contexte européen et international dans lequel s'inscrit cette conférence et les grandes échéances internationales à venir nous appellent à répondre à l'exigence majeure d'aujourd'hui : les inégalités de genre qui, aux quatre coins du monde, existent partout et persistent de manière structurelle et transversale.

C'est pourquoi, partout dans le monde, et notamment dans le continent qui est le mien, l'Europe, la lutte contre les inégalités doit être une priorité. Je dirais même la priorité, car cette lutte inlassable répond à notre objectif universel d'émancipation de toutes et de tous et est le moteur du développement économique et humain.

En effet, toutes les études montrent que les sociétés les plus inégalitaires obtiennent de moins bons résultats dans toute une série d'indicateurs, qui vont de la santé et l'espérance de vie à l'incidence des grossesses chez les adolescentes ou encore la mobilité sociale.

Qui plus est, les conséquences négatives de l'inégalité ne touchent pas seulement les pauvres, mais les sociétés dans leur ensemble.

Les femmes, les jeunes, les personnes âgées, les migrants, les minorités, les personnes handicapées, tous ces groupes défavorisés, se trouvent en situation de plus grande vulnérabilité, sont discriminés et n'ont parfois qu'un accès limité aux droits et aux services.

Nous avons un besoin urgent d'investissements proactifs dans le développement social et humain qui permettent l'émancipation de tous les individus, afin que chacune et chacun soit en mesure d'exercer le droit de disposer de son corps et d'être acteur ou arbitre de sa vie et de ses choix.

Du fait des mesures qui aujourd'hui, pèsent sur les systèmes de protection sociale en Europe, seules des sociétés plus inclusives, justes et équitables permettront de faire face aux défis économiques, sociaux, environnementaux ou démographiques.

Les dirigeants seraient dans l'erreur s'ils voulaient hiérarchiser les enjeux : à trop regarder seulement les chiffres de la croissance économique et mésestimer le développement humain, nous pourrions n'avoir ni l'un ni l'autre.

C'est donc bien une approche globale dont l'Europe a besoin et dans cette perspective, l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes doit être intégrée partout, dans toutes les politiques et tous les domaines de manière transversale, et faire dans le même temps l'objet d'actions spécifiques pour rattraper le retard et permettre le plein développement de nos sociétés. Je vais illustrer, à partir de l'exemple de la France, les conditions permettant l'exercice de choix.

Pour ce qui est de la France aujourd'hui, la volonté est de véritablement transformer les politiques publiques en posant l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes comme une priorité politique.

L'importance de l'égalité des sexes est soulignée par sa prise en compte dans le programme d'action de la CIPD et dans les objectifs du millénaire pour le développement et comme une condition pour atteindre les autres objectifs.

Pourtant, les discriminations envers les filles et les femmes, la violence sexiste, les discriminations économiques, les atteintes à leur santé sexuelle et reproductive restent la plus répandue et la plus persistante des inégalités dans tous les pays.

Partant de ces constats, en France, on assiste à une nouvelle donne : le Gouvernement s'est engagé à refaire de la question des droits des femmes une politique publique à part entière et non une simple question périphérique.

Si les droits des femmes redeviennent un enjeu central et transversal, cela nécessite un changement de méthode et un changement de rythme que l'on observe dans plusieurs champs:

1. Un investissement personnel des ministres, 2. La mise en place de hauts fonctionnaires à l'égalité dans chacun des ministères, 3. La désignation de référents dans les cabinets ministériels, 4. La réunion d'un comité interministériel pour les droits des femmes qui a établi une feuille de route à suivre pour chaque ministère, 5. La mise en place de nouvelles études d'impact générées pour les textes législatifs et réglementaires.

Il s'agit là de changer le mode de fonctionnement de l'Etat, afin que chaque politique publique intègre l'exigence d'égalité de fait entre les femmes et les hommes.

Mais aussi et avant tout, l'Egalité de droits pour lutter contre la pauvreté et les violences envers les femmes puisque dorénavant, l'éducation sexuelle est enseignée à l'école, la contraception libre et gratuite est effective pour les jeunes et les femmes, et les jeunes filles peuvent décider librement d'avorter et si l'IVG pose problème pour les plus pauvres, cet avortement est remboursé à 100%. Il existe donc un environnement permettant le choix.

Ces engagements sont fondamentaux en matière de justice sociale et de respect des droits des personnes ; et pour rejoindre les débats d'hier, cela a une incidence positive sur la fécondité, puisque la France a le 3ème meilleur taux de fécondité des femmes en Europe !

De la même manière, est étudiée aujourd'hui l'extension du congé parental d'éducation aux pères, qui constitue une mesure d'incitation pour poser les choix qui leur conviennent.

Toujours dans un souci d'intégration sociale et de respect des droits humains, l'orientation sexuelle a été actée par une loi qui a autorisé le mariage et l'adoption pour les couples de même sexe.

Une nouvelle structure de gouvernance vient de voir le jour. La transversalité de la question de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes est un des ressorts majeurs de la création du Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes en France, en janvier 2013, par le Président de la République. Cette instance consultative indépendante est un outil et atout de la nouvelle donne française au regard de ses quatre missions principales :

- Animer le débat public et le faire vivre dans la société française
- Assurer la concertation avec la société civile en l'associant à nos travaux

- Evaluer les politiques publiques, aussi bien celles qui concernent 1. Spécifiquement les femmes, que de manière transversale en 2. S'intéressant à l'impact différencié sur les femmes et les hommes de l'ensemble des politiques publiques nationales

- Et 4ème mission, formuler des propositions pour le Gouvernement.

Faire vivre l'exigence d'égalité dans tous les domaines : c'est notre mission, y compris dans nos politiques d'aide au développement.

Aujourd'hui, la France a décidé d'aller plus loin en matière de relations internationales. Alors que dans les enceintes multilatérales, les engagements du Caire sont régulièrement remis en cause, la France refuse que les relativismes culturels et les intégrismes religieux puissent remettre en cause le caractère universel des droits humains que sont les droits des femmes.

En effet, comment lutter efficacement contre toutes les formes de violence si les femmes et les filles ne peuvent pas exercer librement leur droit d'accéder à des services de planification familiale ? Car il n'y a pas d'égalité de droits sans véritable autonomie des femmes dans tous les domaines et cette autonomie n'a de réalité que si elle englobe le droit à disposer de son corps et à décider librement d'un avortement.

C'est pourquoi, à l'occasion des grandes réunions du programme de développement et dès 2014, il est indispensable que les gouvernements adoptent une approche plus pragmatique et non idéologique sur la question de l'avortement et en premier lieu sa dépénalisation et sa légalisation, pour aller jusqu'au bout des engagements de la CIPD.

Partout dans le monde y compris en Europe, les besoins et les droits humains des jeunes filles et des femmes doivent être traités de tout urgence : c'est une question de cohésion et de justice sociale, c'est aussi une des conditions du développement durable.

Il n'est plus besoin, en effet, de faire la preuve qu'investir dans la santé et l'éducation, des filles et des femmes en particulier, permet de briser durablement le cercle vicieux de la pauvreté !

C'est la raison pour laquelle ces sujets doivent aujourd'hui quitter le domaine technique comme cela a déjà été affirmé hier, car ils exigent un nouveau dialogue politique sur la scène internationale.

DISCUSSANT INTERVENTIONS

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*Persistent issues and possible solutions discussed at
the thematic meeting in Belgrade
on 15–16 April 2013*

This presentation highlights some essential issues discussed during the second thematic meeting on 'Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights', which took place on 15–16 April 2013 in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia.

Topic 1: Equality, equity, social inclusion, rights and advancement of the ICPD agenda in the region

Measurement and understanding of inequality and well-being are issues that need increased attention. Indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are important markers of well-being in poorer countries, yet in middle- and higher-income countries average well-being is no longer dependent on national income and economic growth to the same extent. While differences between countries are less obvious, differences within countries are striking: nations with more in-country equality perform better on nearly every measurable health and social indicator than countries with more inequality.

Topic 2: Successes and challenges in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action as a rights-based instrument for addressing inequalities and enhancing social inclusion

When discussing the successes in the region, it has been pointed out that there has been progress in reducing maternal mortality, increasing access to modern contraceptives, increasing longevity, and advancing the access of young people to information and services. In some countries, there has also been progress in decriminalizing abortion and homosexuality. Another notable achievement is the increasingly strong and vocal role of CSOs.

Challenges include: direct discrimination against women; the persistent lack of comprehensive sexuality education in schools and a lack of or limited access to youth-friendly services; limited or no access to high-quality abortion services,

post-abortion counselling and education, and family-planning services; unacceptably high levels of violence against women; women from disadvantaged or marginalized groups still have a low level of knowledge about their rights; laws aimed at protecting rights are not always comprehensively understood or effectively executed by key actors; and national mechanisms for human rights protection are underfunded and under-supported.

The participants in the thematic meeting shared a concern that harmful attitudes and stereotypes related to gender are still prevalent in the region and continue to hinder efforts to protect the human rights of women and girls and to promote empowerment.

Topic 3: Gender equality and the empowerment of women

Family policies and gender equality: It was reiterated that in the UNECE region women still perform the majority of household care in addition to working outside the home. Reconciliation of work in the family and work for pay continues to be a central problem for families. Policy responses related to this problem are available; their advancement is recommended.

Division of household labour: The distribution of labour within families in the region has changed in some countries towards an increased involvement of men in household chores, but less so in societies with more traditional gender roles.

Re-emergence of pronatalist policies: The existing and re-emerging pronatalist policies or measures are a persistent issue in the eastern part of the region. However, policy instruments and measures are designed with individual and family choices in mind and do not lead to their restriction.

Gender-based violence: One of the most ubiquitous and entrenched indicators of gender inequality is gender-based violence, which remains widespread in the UNECE region.

Topic 4: Inequalities and vulnerable groups

Young people: Despite the diverse needs of young people, there are few opportunities for their voices to be heard. High levels of youth unemployment constitute a significant problem. Inclusion in education remains problematic, mainly for girls and

women in specific groups (mainly ethnic minorities) that pertain to traditional practices. Youth exposed to multiple vulnerabilities (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth, Roma and other ethnic minorities, young people with disabilities) require specific attention.

Older persons: Among the major trends in the region are an increase in the number of women caring for their own children and for their ageing parents (known as the ‘sandwich generation’); an increase in the number of older persons caring for their grandchildren after their children migrate to find work; and the deterioration of social support and services and infrastructure for older persons living in remote or rural areas.

Persons with disabilities: In many countries, persons with disabilities, of all ages, are not provided with adequate care or support by the State, and this is left to their families, with the greater part of the care burden being placed on women. At the other extreme, there are countries where persons with disabilities (including those with mental disabilities) are taken from their homes or families and placed in care homes, sometimes in remote locations.

Migrants: Migrants can face multiple vulnerabilities, especially when they lack legal status in a country. Often, migrants cross international borders and do not have access to health care because they lack legal status in their destination country or they simply lack information about how to access services.

Sex workers: It was discussed that decriminalizing sex work reduces gender-based violence, including state-sanctioned violence, and makes sex work safer. There are a number of policy approaches related to sex work, but the overarching approach should be to move away from criminalization and to focus on services and justice.

Orphaned children: Children who are orphaned or who are removed from their families are at multiple risks, including being less likely to complete their education and being more at risk for trafficking and sexual violence.

Ethnic minorities: Multiple discrimination was at the focus of the discussion. For instance, many Roma women face discrimination because of their gender and their ethnicity, which multiplies their vulnerability or disadvantage. Coercive sterilization is still inflicted on some ethnic minority women in a number of countries in the region.

Ms. Kate Pickett

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Reducing social inequalities: an essential step for development and well-being

Inequality is emerging as a central issue for the post-2015 development agenda and the establishment of the sustainable development goals. Inequalities in income and wealth cause economic instability and a range of health and social problems, and create a roadblock to the adoption of pro-environment strategies and behaviour. Social and economic inequalities tear the social fabric, undermine social cohesion and prevent nations, communities and individuals from flourishing.¹⁴

The impact of inequality

Social and economic inequality increases the power and importance of social hierarchy, status and class. As a result, a long list of problems more common further down the social ladder — in poorer neighbourhoods, for instance — are much more common in societies with larger income differences between rich and poor people. Although the effects of inequality tend to be largest lower down the social ladder, outcomes are worse even among the better off, because inequality damages the whole social fabric of a society — increasing social divisions, status insecurity and status competition. Indeed, it is because a large majority of the population — not just poor people — are affected by inequality that the differences in the performance of more and less equal societies are so large. The scale of the differences varies from one health or social problem to another, but they are all between twice as common and 10 times as common in more unequal societies than in more equal ones.

Although in the rich, developed countries, income inequality is related to indicators of health and social well-being, levels of average income (GDP per capita) are not. Reducing inequality is the most important step these countries can take to increase population well-being. In the developing and emerging economies, both greater equality and improvements in standards of living are needed for populations to flourish.

¹⁴ A detailed list of references can be received from the author, kate.pickett@york.ac.uk.

A large and well-established body of evidence shows that very large income differences within countries are damaging. Analyses include both cross-sectional research and studies of changes in income distribution over time. Key examples follow:

Health

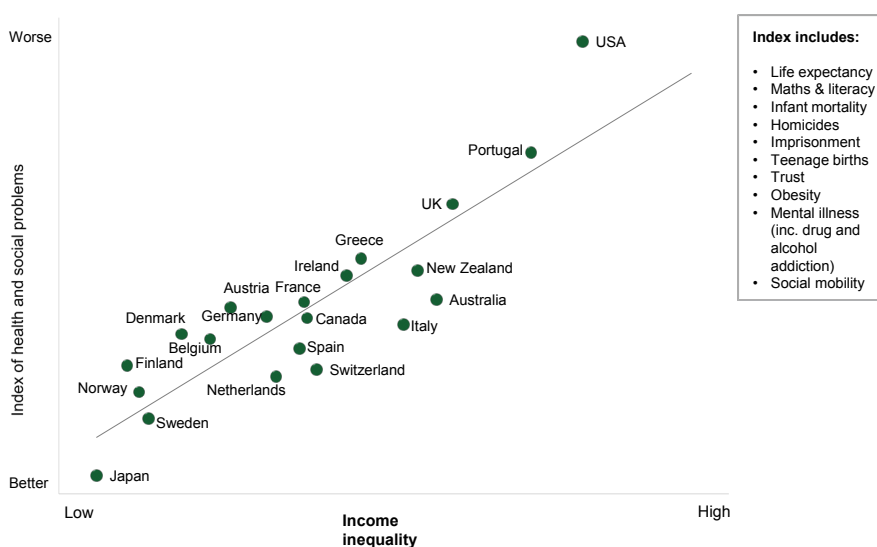
- Life expectancy is longer, and mortality lower, in more equal societies.
- Rates of infant mortality, mental illness and obesity are two to four times higher.

- In developing and developed countries, HIV infection prevalence rises with inequality.

Social relationships

- Levels of social cohesion, including trust and social capital, are higher in more equal countries.
- Indicators of women’s status and equality are generally better.
- Rates of both property crime and violence, especially homicides, increase as income differences widen.

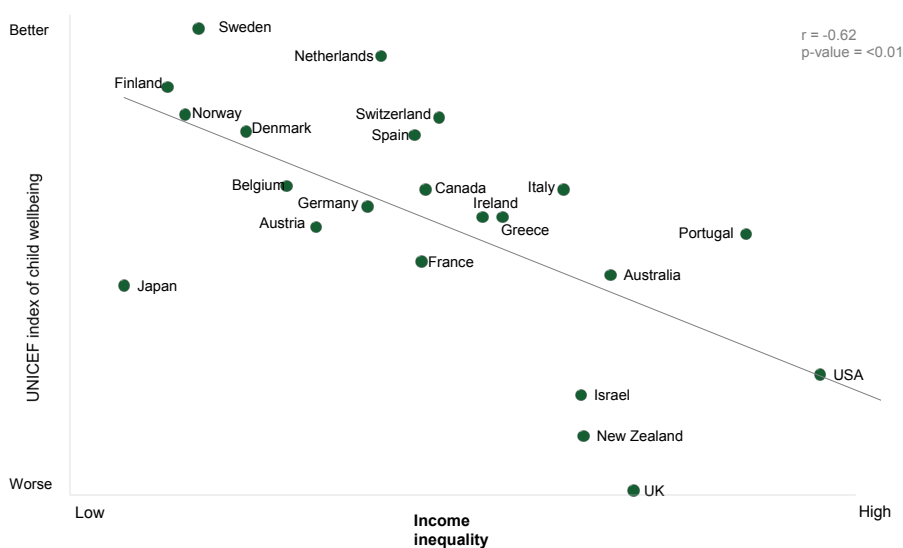
Figure 3.1: Health and social problems increase with higher income inequality



Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

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Figure 3.2: Child wellbeing decreases with higher income inequality



Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

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Human capital development

- The UNICEF Index of Child Well-being is significantly higher in more equal societies.
- Educational attainment is higher, fewer young people drop out of education, employment and training, and fewer teenage girls become mothers.
- Social mobility is restricted in very unequal societies — equality of opportunity is shaped by equality of outcomes.

Economic progress and stability

- Poverty reduction is compromised by income inequality.
- The International Monetary Fund states that reducing inequality and bolstering longer-term economic growth may be ‘two sides of the same coin’.
- In rich and poor countries, inequality is strongly correlated with shorter spells of economic expansion and less growth over time.
- Inequality is associated with more frequent and more severe boom-and-bust cycles that make economies more volatile and vulnerable to crisis.

Sustainable economies

- Inequality drives status competition, which drives personal debt and consumerism.
- More equal societies promote the common good; they recycle more, spend more on foreign aid, and score higher on the Global Peace Index.
- Business leaders in more equal countries rate international environmental agreements more highly.

Reducing inequality

Income differences can be reduced via redistribution through taxes and benefits, or by reducing differences in pre-tax incomes. The international evidence suggests that greater equality confers the same benefits on a society whether it is achieved through one of these approaches or the other.

In general, top tax rates, which in many countries — including the USA — were over 80 percent in the 1970s, have been reduced dramatically. Dealing with tax havens and other methods used by rich

individuals and large companies to avoid tax is crucial; the amount of money lost by developing countries to tax havens exceeds all international development aid. This not only increases inequality but also means that a higher proportion of public expenditure has to be funded by tax payers in lower income groups. In many countries taxation has ceased to be significantly redistributive.

Economic democracy

Forms of economic democracy, such as employee ownership, employee representation on boards, employee share ownership, mutuals and cooperatives tend to reduce the scale of income inequality. The highly successful Mondragon group of employee cooperatives in Spain, employing around 84,000 people, has maximum pay differential of 15:1. These forms of business institutions also provide a more stable basis for community life and perform well in ethical terms.

Indicators for success

A core objective of the post-2015 development framework and the sustainable development goals should be to reduce inequality within countries. The frameworks should include a top-level goal to reduce inequalities, including income inequalities in particular. This should be in addition to disaggregated indicators and targets in every other goal to ensure equitable progress across different social groups towards agreed development objectives.

An inequality target could be based on Palma’s ratio of the income share of the top 10 percent of a population to the bottom 40 percent. In more equal societies this ratio will be 1 or below, meaning that the top 10 percent does not receive a larger share of national income than the bottom 40 percent. In very unequal societies, the ratio may be as high as 7. A potential target could be to halve national Palma ratios by 2030, compared to 2010, and dramatically reduce the global Palma ratio, which is currently 32.

Prioritizing the need to tackle inequality in this way will ensure that development is truly inclusive and can drive human progress to sustainability and well-being.