

***Opening up Canadian Federalism the European Way***  
**Coordination of Social Policy and the 'Market' for Coordination**  
**May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Toronto, Ontario**

**Workshop Report by Isaac Alexander Gray, Carleton University Student Rapporteur**

This workshop engaged Canadian and European Union (EU) policy experts in order to create an opportunity for interactive learning and comparative analysis related to intergovernmental relations, policy learning, and social policy coordination in the EU and in Canada. In the opening address, Professor Amy Verdun from the University of Victoria drew attention to the comparison of the quasi-federal EU structure to the federal structure of Canada, pointing out that the two regions are logical comparators. She argued that the Canadian provinces tend to rely on path dependent solutions to guide policy making, and that there is potential for the provinces to learn from the information sharing practices of the Member States and specifically their Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The OMC provides an opportunity for intergovernmental cooperation in EU, something that is noticeably underdeveloped in the Canadian context.

Bart Vanhercke, Director of the European Social Observatory, spoke about the OMC and its potential applicability for Canada. He pointed out that the OMC is a malleable process that can be shaped to meet the needs of a policy area. As such, there is no concrete definitio

policy, which should facilitate policy learning between the member states and therefore improve Member States, EU institutions and civil society, but notably the European Parliament plays a marginal role. Today there are some 12 fully

tools (indicators, targets, peer review etc.). OMCs are created as they are needed and are given different powers according to the needs associated with the relevant policy area. OMC instruments range from the ability to establish indicators, to stronger powers such as the authority to monitor the progress of the Member States and to institutionalize coordination processes. The European Commission plays an important role in the OMC, which is to summarize the progress/regress of the Member States in relation to policy objectives, to point out country-specific problems, and to make policy recommendations accordingly. The OMCs have influenced the character of domestic and European policy making by a) establishing a space for civil society to influence public policy b) increasing the statistical capacity, and c) allowing new policy issues to be put onto the policy agenda. It is also noteworthy that OMC tools have been replicated at the subnational-level across the EU (e.g. regional peer reviews).

University of Toronto PhD Candidate, Carey Doberstein presented a comparative study of and the OMC. Through the HPS, the federal government has attempted to partner with municipal governments, giving them the power to , with Ottawa providing 50 percent of the total costs. These plans had to include significant input from , which were required to include civil society representatives. Similar to the OMC, participation in the HPS is voluntary and both also emphasize local/national control and civil society involvement. However unlike the OMC the HPS does not establish any mandatory indicators/targets. It also does not engage the provinces or facilitate national-level conversations, focusing only at the local-level. In

