

Making (it) Work: Introduction to the Special Issue on the Future of the European Employment Strategy

Ton Wilthagen, Sonja Bekker and Saskia Klosse

Abstract: This article introduces two of the core topics in the current debates concerning the European Employment Strategy (EES) that are likely to have a significant impact on the strategy's future development. The first concerns the changing view of work and security, exemplified by the growing attention for "flexicurity" and employment security. The second is the debate on the effectiveness of the EES in influencing Member State policies and performance. This article also serves as an introduction to this special issue, which approaches and discusses these two key debates in various ways.

The Implications of the Lisbon Strategy for the Future of Social Europe: 'On the Road' or 'New Age'?

Janine Goetschy

Abstract: This paper aims to capture the implications of the Lisbon Strategy (LS), and in particular the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), for the future of Social Europe (SE) at EU level in a diachronic perspective. To do so, three intellectual exercises will be carried out. In the first part I outline the contours of the LS, its aims, achievements, assessments and the reforms it has undergone. The second part presents what I consider to be the structuring meta-features and main characteristics of Social Europe at EU level over 50 years of functioning: 12 key features will be provided for a meta-level analysis. In the third part, I examine to what extent the LS in its social and employment dimensions and the various OMC processes are in line with these 12 key features: the idea is to point out which of these 'traditional' features are taken up and carried forward by the LS (a continuity scheme), and which are the features for which the LS differs from the previous approach, opening new routes for Social Europe (a discontinuity scheme).

Flexicurity – Towards a Set of Common Principles?

Per Kongshøj Madsen

Abstract: The interplay between labour markets and welfare states is at the core of debates about the new Europe, which will be shaped as the result of the Lisbon process. Recently the concept of "flexicurity" has moved to the centre of the discussion. Can interfaces between welfare states and labour markets be developed, where flexibility and security come together having "flexicurity" as the outcome? How can flexicurity develop within different national employment systems? Can the design and implementation of flexicurity arrangements be guided by a set of common principles on flexicurity?

Adapting to the European Employment Strategy? Recent Developments in Italian Employment Policy

Paolo Graziano

Abstract: The paper examines recent changes in Italian employment policy in the light of the launch and development of the European Employment Strategy. The first section emphasises some key quantitative aspects of employment and unemployment issues (§ 1), followed by an outline of the evolution of Italian labour market (§ 2), an exploration of the endogenous and exogenous pressures (and opportunities) for change and the dynamics of institutional change (§ 3), and a discussion of the possible new institutional configuration with particular reference to the most recent reform (the Biagi Law, that introduced further changes) (§ 4). Some final remarks (§ 5) on the current debate conclude the presentation of the Italian case.

The Role of Dynamic Employment Policies in the European Labour Market

Mirjana Dragičević, Alka Obadić

Abstract: In the last 15 years, impressive developments have taken place in the labour market both in the EU and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. The shrinking of the labour force and declining rates of participation are common both to the old and new EU Member States, due to the sharp decline in labour demand and to specific demographic trends. Although situations vary in each CEE transition economy, there are some common characteristics. The remarkable fall in GDP at the beginning of the transition period, caused by privatisation and restructuring, was accompanied by a sudden decline in employment. After an analysis of labour market developments and trends in the old and new EU Member States, this paper concentrates on the development of employment policies. The aim of new dynamic and innovative employment policies is rapid job-creation and solving the unemployment problem in flexible and challenging economic and labour market conditions.

As the effects of institutions and policies on labour market performance are country- and time-specific in CEE countries and Western Europe, a comparative cross-country analysis is presented. Dealing with dynamic employment policies in EU Member States, some positive examples are examined as the lessons and policy recommendations for future development in CEE countries. The conclusion of analysis is that only an integrated policy approach can solve the problem of structural unemployment caused by a mismatch between labour supply and demand.

Flexibilisation, Modernisation and the Lisbon Strategy

Rien Huiskamp and Kees J. Vos

Abstract: The ambition of the Lisbon strategy is to make Europe the most competitive region in the world by 2010. Halfway into the 10-year strategy this ambition appeared to be unlikely to be achieved. In response, the Commission relaunched the strategy in 2005. The basic idea behind the relaunch is that EU competitiveness will be boosted by focusing on two policy instruments: flexibilisation and modernisation of the social policies of Member States. This paper offers a critical review of the strategy, arguing that the results of the revised strategy may turn out to be unsatisfactory, because of potential obstacles associated with these instruments. The conclusion is

that a coherent flexicurity approach alone will not be sufficient, and that a more balanced approach to modernisation should also be developed.