
Different Developments in Supported Employment policies

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Abstract

The proposed presentation focuses on recent developments in labour market policies with a special focus on supported employment programmes. We compared supported employment policies and programmes in Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom (England) in reference to Austrian's federal state Upper Austria.

Supported Employment in our view ranges from publicly subsidised forms of employment for people with disabilities at sheltered work places to work places on the regular labour market supported by on-the-job-training and follow-up support. We considered supported employment forms which are subject to full social security. Most of those countries have been reforming their programmes to increase mainstream labour market participation of the target group and to reduce expenditure on disability benefits. In our study, we identify strengths and weaknesses of the various employment schemes and juxtaposes outcomes of recent reforms experienced in said countries.

First, in the study the social law and labour law context of Supported Employment was examined and the specific arrangements were analyzed concerning aspects like funding, payment, accessibility, support process and transition to the regular labour market. Second, interviews with academic experts and professionals revealed contradictory effects of reforms in supported employment targeting inclusive employment. Our results show that Service providers deal differently with an environment of cuts in funding by an austerity policy and a tight labour market. When sheltered work places in social enterprises were reduced, a creaming effect occurs: while the most job-ready persons within a target group are employed on the mainstream labour market, an increasing number of people with disabilities stay out of work and employment, most of them inactive at home with basic social transfers.

Keywords: Supported Employment, comparative study, reforms, active labour market policy

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