EQUAL, Transnational Partnership/Endeavour, Topic to be covered by Austria (dA)

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BEST PRACTICE IN THE LABOUR MARKET

INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL POLICY (LEGAL) RAMIFICATIONS IN THE PARTNER COUNTRIES

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Objective:

- To provide an overview of the institutional, legal and social policy framework which facilitates financial and other support for the long term unemployed and other groups that are marginally attached to the labour market or are excluded from active participation in the labour market.
- To devise indicators which characterise the system of governance and safety nets; to draw up a typology of instruments and/or schemes of safety nets and re-integration measures; to clarify the internal logic of each system and to point out the advantages and disadvantages of each system in relation to the integrative capacity.
- To use the indicators and data available to EUROSTAT to determine and the demographic and socio-economic structure of labour market and the extent of social exclusion in the partnership countries in comparison to the EU average[1]. The information is the starting point for the development of additional socio-economic and labour market indicators, in particular those which capture institutional settings, which clarify the impact of institutions, legal arrangements and regulations on the structure of longterm unemployment and social exclusion[2].

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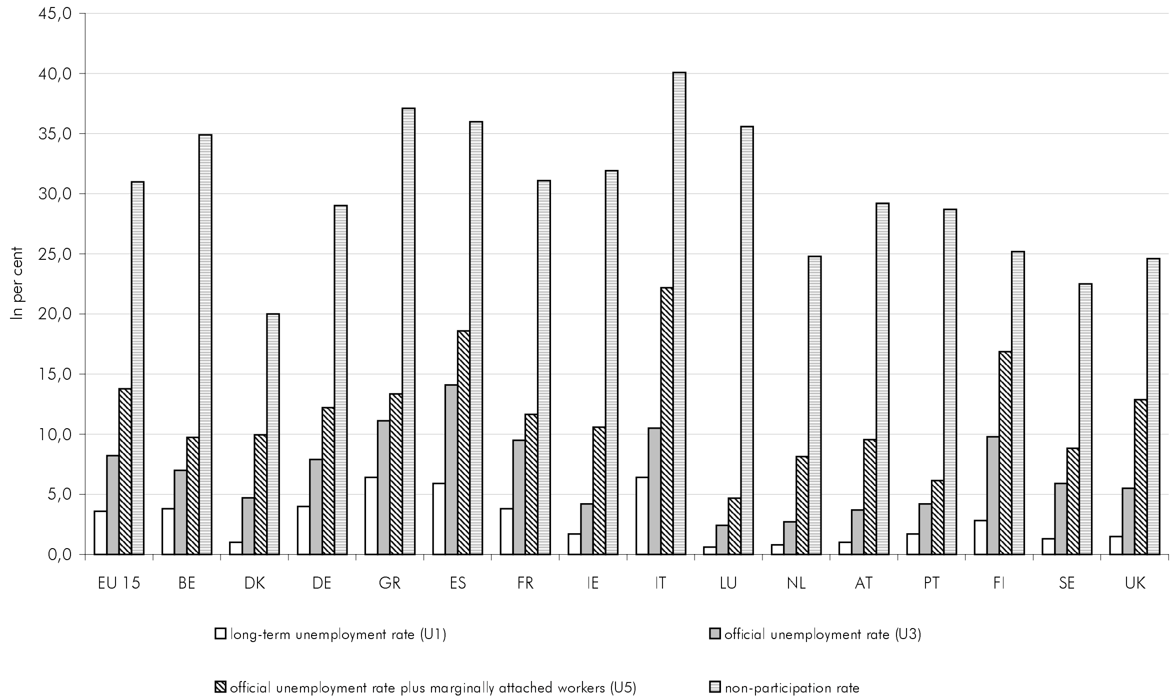
[1] It has to be borne in mind that the reforms of welfare institutions and labour market policies cannot, on their own, be expected to bring about a major reduction in the extent of unemployment and social exclusion. The main driving forces behind unemployment are socio-economic mechanisms, which include the tax system, wage policy, structural economic and social policy, monetary and fiscal policy and the like. However, the structural features of welfare recipients and socially excluded may be affected by institutional reforms and the type and extent of segmentation of the unemployed and marginally attached.

[2] For a more detailed account of the potential influence of institutional reforms on unemployment from a theoretical perspective see Biffl 1999 and 2001.

Unemployment and labour market exclusion - current state of affairs

In order to point out the need for a variety of additional indicators, beyond the ones we already have, we start with a sequence of more or less frequently used labour market indicators, to clarify the degree and type of labour market and social exclusion in the partnership countries. These indicators will serve as a starting point for further questions, questions we will pose in order to learn more about the functional mechanisms of the labour markets and the role institutions play as facilitators or impediments. The answers will help identify best practice policies and regulations in one or the other country.

Graph 1: Longterm unemployment rate (U1), Unemployment rate (U3), Unemployment rate including marginally attached persons and discouraged workers (U5), and Non-participation rate (15-64): 2000

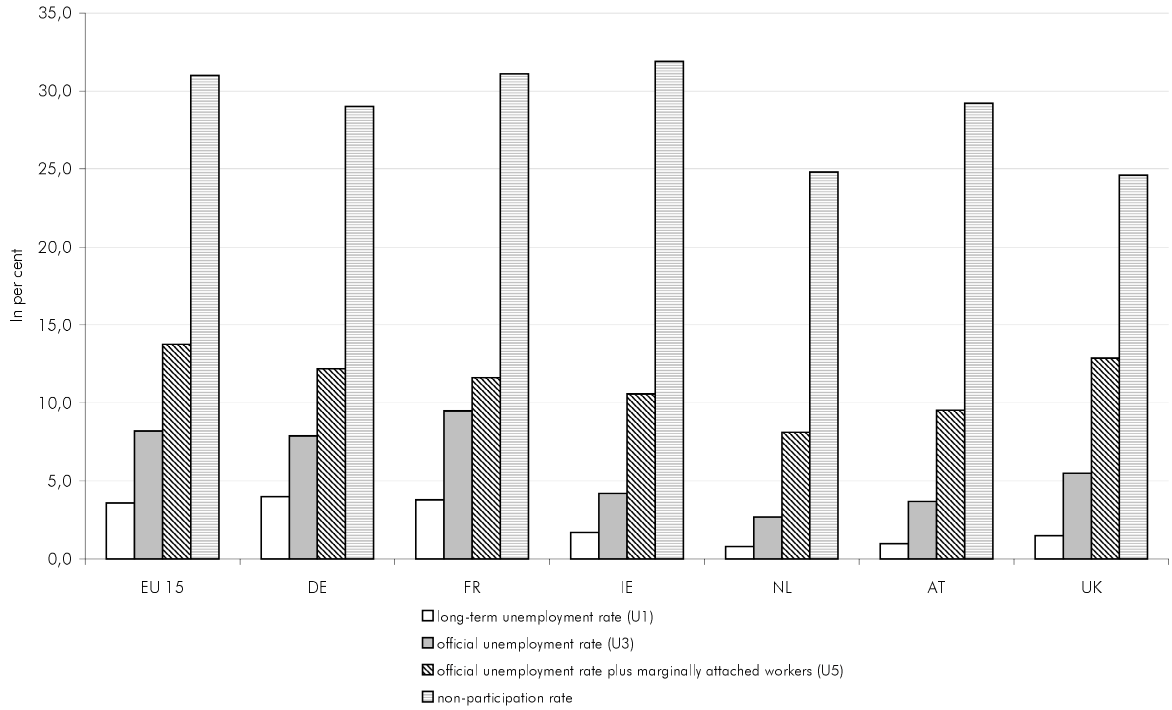


S: EUROSTAT, WIFO.

The longterm unemployment rate (U1) measures the number of workers, who have been without a job for one year or more as a proportion of the labour force (in which those working for one hour or more per week are considered to be employed); the unemployment rate traditionally used for international comparison (U3) takes the number of unemployed as a percentage of the labour force (as defined above); U5 is a less minimalist measure of unemployment; it also includes those persons in the denominator who are currently not actively searching for a job, either because they are discouraged or because they are engaging in some non-market work (e.g. care for family members); they declare in the household survey that they would like to work. The 4th indicator is the non-participation rate of the 15-64 year olds, where persons, who are not on the labour market, e.g., housewives, students, early retirees, disability pensioners and people in penetentiaries and other institutions, are taken as a proportion of the population of working age.

There is a clear positive correlation between U1 and U5 within the EU (0,73 in the year 2000). The correlation between U1 and the non-participation rate is also significant but not that high (0,46).

Graph 2: Longterm unemployment rate (U1), unemployment rate U3 and U5 and non-participation rate (15-64) for the EU ∅, Germany, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Austria and UK (2000)



S: EUROSTAT, WIFO.

Denmark and Sweden have the lowest non-participation rates in the EU (20% and 24%); Italy, Greece, Spain and Luxembourg have the highest. The latter have substantial unused labour resources compared to the two Nordic countries — between Italy and Denmark the difference is 20 percentage points. Some of our partner countries have almost as high participation rates as Denmark, e.g., the UK and Netherlands. While the non-participation rates of the UK and NL are almost the same (24,6% and 24,8%), the employment intensity of labour market participation, i.e. the proportion of the labour force with gainful employment, is substantially higher in the Netherlands.

Germany, France, Ireland and Austria belong to an intermediate group with non-participation rates averageing 30%. Also within this group the employment intensity of labour market participation differs substantially between countries.

Question: To what extent may institutional arrangements (for example, the welfare and tax system) account for the difference in non-participation rates and the employment intensity of labour market participation by age, gender, educational attainment, socio-economic handicap, ethnic-cultural background. In particular, how do the target groups of our equal project, the longterm unemployed and marginally attached workers, fare in the different countries and institutional settings. What are the institutional requirements for integration (measured by a rise in labour force participation and a decline in unemployment) to be facilitated? Is a rise in participation necessarily linked to a rise in unemployment? Should an employment tax credit scheme currently in operation in the Netherlands and one to be introduced in the UK in 2003, be a model for other European countries?

The non-participation rate is an indicator of unused labour resources. A differentiation by age and gender, provides more information about the type and the extent of unused labour. Three groups of workers show a rather high variation in labour market experience: schoolleavers, women wanting to re-enter the labour market and older workers. We deal with these in turn:

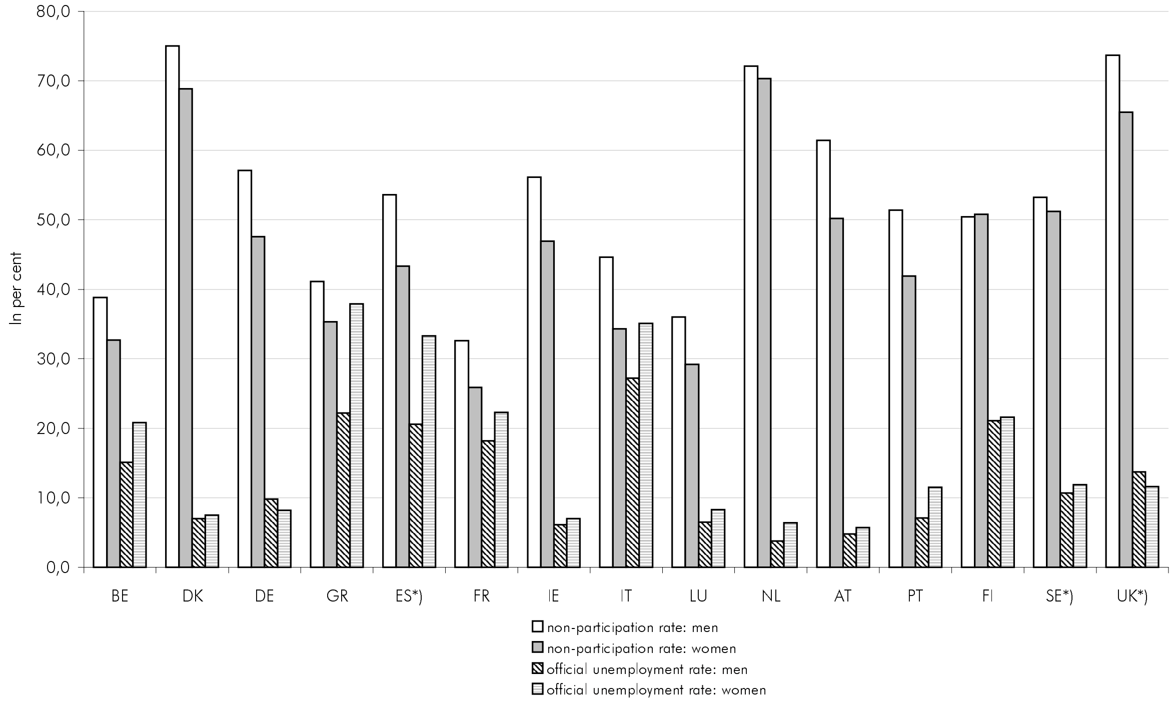
1. Differences in the activity rate of youth (15-24) are often a result of different systems of upper secondary education. Some allow schooling to be combined with part-time employment, others do not.

Thus, countries with dual education (apprenticeship training on the job complemented by theoretical schooling) and those with youth part-time labour markets, have high youth participation rates, e.g. Germany, Austria, Netherlands. Others, like France, Belgium and Italy, tend to have full-time upper secondary education which hardly allows temporary work in the labour market as well.

Segmentation of the school system by gender implies labour market segmentation by gender. This may result in different employment and earnings opportunities by gender.

Question: what institutional arrangements are associated with a high degree of integration of youth, women, ethnic-cultural minorities into the labour market? What are the patterns of education systems which ensure equal opportunities of male and female youth?

Graph 3: Non-participation rate and unemployment rate U3 of the 15-24 year olds by gender



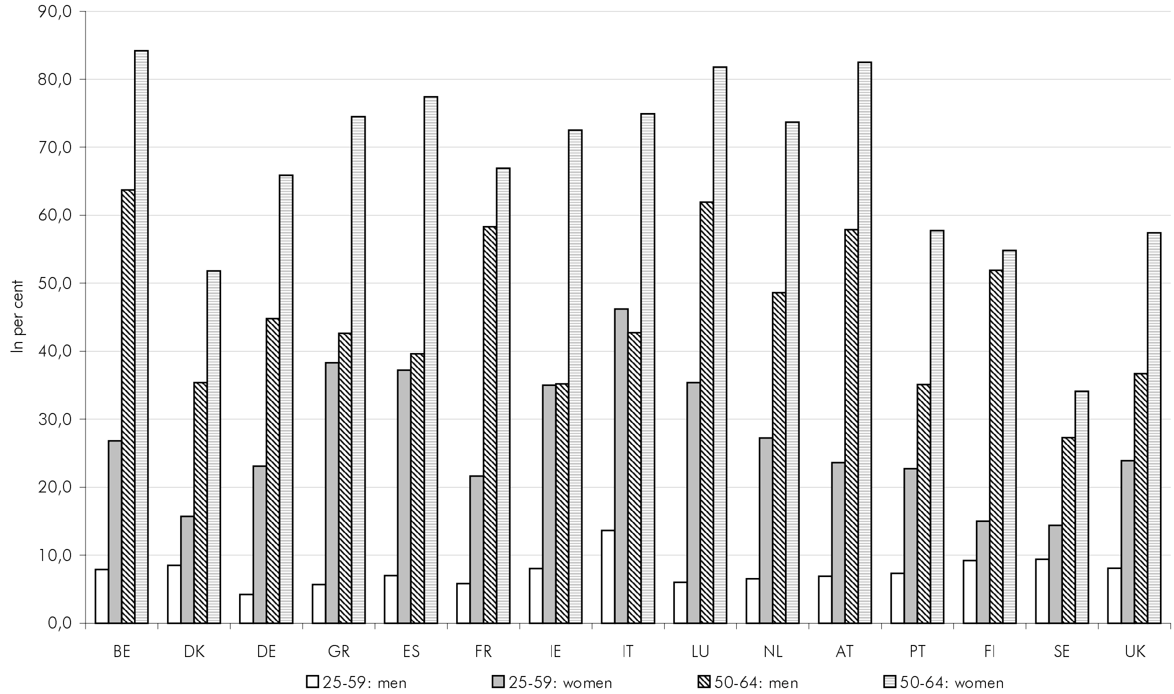
S: EUROSTAT, OECD, WIFO. - *) non-participation rate: 16-24.

2. High non-participation rates of persons older than 50 are an indicator of early retirement and payment of disability pensions as a preferred labour and social policy measure to reduce unemployment,

Belgium, Luxembourg and Austria exhibit the highest non-participation rates of the 50 – 64 year olds. Population ageing will result in labour scarcity in most EU countries within the next 8 to 10 years: prolongation of labour force participation will be one way of alleviating scarcities. Countries like Austria which have not promoted labour force participation of older workers for more than twenty years but created incentives for early retirement instead, will find it particularly hard to institutionalise a turnaround in the degree of integration of older persons into the labour force.

Question: under what conditions is a rise in the integration of older workers into the labour market linked to a rise in unemployment, particularly longterm unemployment? What are the major reasons for longterm unemployment and labour market exclusion of older workers and what can be done about it? What are best practice institutional arrangements to contain longterm unemployment of older workers?

Graph 4: Non-participation rates of middle aged and older workers by gender (2000



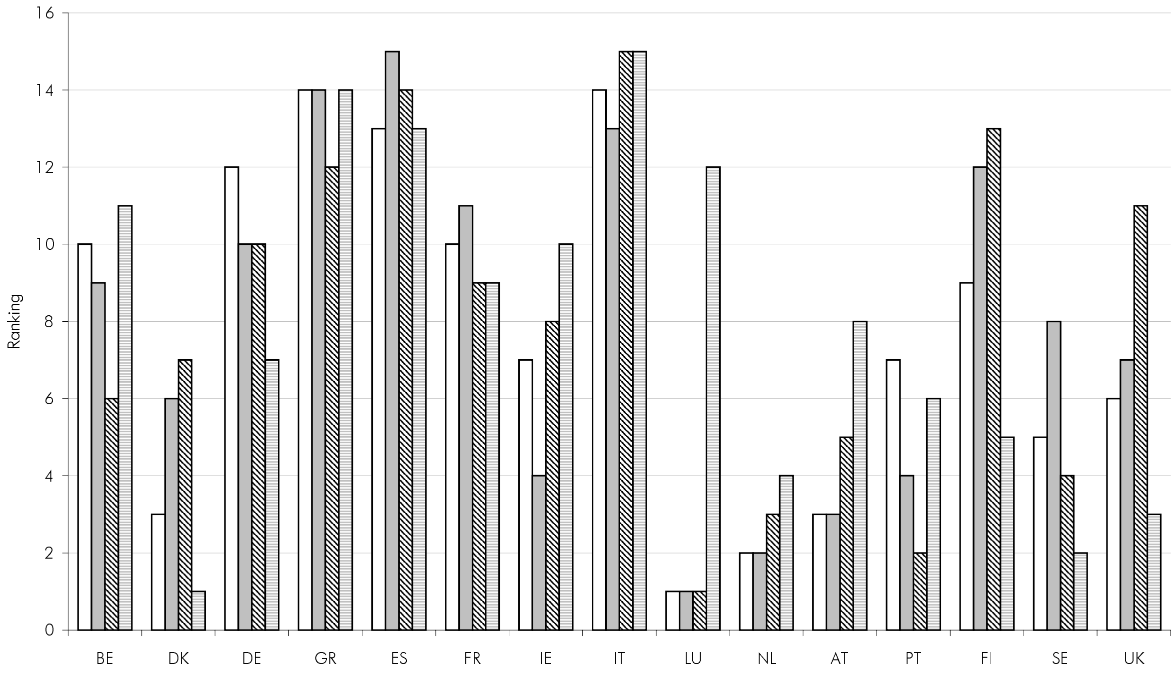
S: EUROSTAT, OECD, WIFO.

3. High non-participation rates of women of main working age (25-59) are the result of institutional settings, in particular tax and wage policies and benefit systems and socio-economic factors.

Breadwinner tax benefit systems tend to favour part-time employment of women while individual taxation systems tend to spread working hours more evenly across gender. Individual taxation fosters the transfer of household production, in particular personal services, to the labour market, thus contributing to an above average share of services in GDP. The low participation rate of women compared to men in Italy, Greece, Spain, Luxembourg and Ireland may be taken as showing that the incidence of the household as a provider of personal services (like the care for the sick, old and disabled and for children) is above the average of the EU countries. On the other hand, Nordic countries in particular, have transferred a large share of personal services to the labour market, which explains why labour force participation rates of men and women differ hardly at all.

The above overview demonstrates that unemployment, in particular longterm unemployment and social exclusion, may have a different face depending on socio-economic and educational policies and models at hand. Therefore, measures to reduce longterm unemployment will need to focus on different issues in the various countries. It is not likely that subtle changes in the regulatory mechanisms of social and labour market policy will change the fundamental labour market problems of a country. One may, however, clarify what sort of regulations are more conducive to labour market integration and what sort of regulations send out the wrong signals to labour market participants, i.e., which represent barriers to integration.

Graph 5: Country ranking by type of labour market indicator, 2000



S: EUROSTAT, WIFO.

The Amsterdam Treaty includes the objective to maximise the degree of integration of the population of working age into gainful employment, i.e. the EU wants to lower all four labour market indicators, U1, U3, U5 and non-participation. Currently the EU countries which score particularly well in all four areas are the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, followed by Austria and Portugal; Portugal has a problem of long-term unemployment (U1) while Austria has a relatively high rate of marginally attached persons (U5) – for more details on the calculation of these types of labour market indicators see Bregger & Haugen 1995, Castillo 1998, OECD 1999, Shiskin 1976, Sorrentino 1993 1995, Yamagami 2002.

A cross country comparison of the different unemployment indicators and non-participation rates in the EU suggests that in a country like Luxembourg, all those who are in the labour force tend to be employed (lowest unemployment rates (U1, U3, U5) in the EU, i.e., rank number 1). Since the proportion of the population (of working age) that is not in the labour force is comparatively large (rank number 12 in the EU), factors responsible for the sizeable extent of labour market exclusion will have to be found in the institutional setting. The socio-economic institutional system (tax system and wage policy), the education system (full-time schools with limited opportunities to work part time) as well as social and labour market policy (early retirement schemes) tend to promote late entry into the labour market and early exit. Strong familial elements in the tax system as well as other institutional factors account for a relatively large difference in labour force participation of men and women in the main working age. All these factors taken together imply a policy stance which promotes labour supply scarcities which in turn tends to keep unemployment low. Of course, the socio-economic composition of the population also plays a role.

In contrast, countries like the UK, exhibit a high degree of integration of the working age population into the labour market (one of the lowest non-participation rates in the EU with rank number 3); but a large proportion of the labour force is unemployed (U1: rank 6, U3: rank 7) or marginally attached (U5: rank 11). Institutional arrangements may also account for this type of labour market behaviour.

It will be the objective of Austria's part in the transnational partnership to devise a typology of regimes which have different capacities for integrating the population of working age into gainful employment. The transition into gainful employment, from the various activities like education and training, family and household, and from problematic personal phases in life, like illnesses, drug addiction or long-term unemployment, is organised differently in different socio-economic models. Existing safety nets may lose their comprehensive character as age-status transitions become less standardised and gender stereotypes less accepted. In the circumstances, new bridges or adaptations to old bridging institutions may have to be devised in order to decrease unemployment and exclusion.

Institutional arrangements at the dividing line between social and labour market policy

The objective of the EC social policy is to modernise and improve the European Social Model; in particular, it seeks to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Since the Lisbon summit (2000), the coordination of economic, employment and social policy has gained increasing attention. The objective of arrangements like EQUAL is to integrate into the labour market, a variety of different groups of people who are hard to place under the current regulatory system.

Different welfare systems[3]

In the wake of industrialisation and the concomitant separation of the place of work and the home, institutions and regulations were put in place to protect people from poverty and deprivation as a

[3] This passage has been taken from Biffl 1998, parts have been published in Biffl 1999B.

result of job loss. The literature tends to distinguish between three types of welfare systems[4]: the 'patriarchal' or male breadwinner (Anglosaxon) model, the family oriented continental European model, and the social democratic-egalitarian or individual rights model of Scandinavia.

In the course of the 1960s, the three models tended to converge. We now have hybrid welfare systems, in which the original logic of the systems has been retained to a certain extent. This tends to account for relatively large variations in the labour market integration of women, their occupational structure and welfare benefits.

The patriarchal and the family oriented systems share a common view about family life and the gender division of labour between the household and the market sector. A norm is defined, which provides a structure for the system of wages, taxes and transfer payments. Men are seen as the main breadwinners and women as supplementary income earners. Men are, therefore, presumed to be at the top of the job scale. Women are supposed to perform household duties, in the main care-work, and add to family income by working in the labour market in 'female' jobs - these jobs may have working hours, that are nontraditional for men, e.g. part-time, or are occupations men tend generally not to favour (consumer goods production, clerical services, sales personnel, personal services, nursing). Wages for men are significantly higher than for women; this is a remnant of the wage determination system, which was based on notions of different 'needs' by gender. Wages for men were meant to represent a family wage, while female wages constituted a supplement to family income or, for single women, to sustain an individual only[5]. Legislation on equal pay for work of equal value, given the significant gender-typing of occupations, was introduced in most industrialised countries in the course of the 1970s to counter the practice of wage discrimination by gender[6]. The introduction of individual taxation[7] together with equal pay legislation were the most powerful instruments in favour of full-time paid employment of women[8]. As a result, employment opportunities of women improved and the wage gap between men and women narrowed. However, insufficient supply of childcare facilities, another typical feature of the breadwinner model, remains the reason for continued poverty and marginalisation of single mothers in the labour market.

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[4] Esping-Anderson, 1990, proposes the distinction of three types. Sainsbury (1994), in contrast, points out that, as far as male-female employment opportunities are concerned, only a dichotomy exists. She uses the case of Netherlands (for the breadwinner model) and the case of Sweden (for the individual model) to demonstrate the wider institutional setting of the differing welfare models and the implications for the gender - division of labour.

[5] Gill (1990) points ot that 'the formulation of gender specific needs laid the foundation for the formal system of discrimination of pay on the basis of sex'.

[6] If women are doing 'men's work', they are usually granted a man's wage; in female jobs, however, the determination of the 'proper' wage remains a hot topic of debate.

[7] Individual taxation was introduced in the UK in 1989, i.e. much later than in the continental European countries. First in line were the Scandinavian countries (late 1960s), as a result of the individual rights labour model.

[8] For a detailed exposé see Siv Gustafsson, 1996.

Labour market legislation is part of a more general socio-economic and welfare system. The UK-System (Beveridge-model), which was introduced after WWII, and which is in the main administered and financed by the state out of taxes, represents a comprehensive population insurance system. Welfare payments are not dependent upon former employment but can be accessed by every member of society, on the basis of means tests. The basic model is complemented by a contribution based insurance system, which represents a means to top up the minimum state provisions through private funds (pension and health insurance). A right to childcare is not included in the legal framework, which exacerbates the social class stratification of women.

Continental Europe in contrast, chose a welfare system, which has two pillars - the social security system, which is based on paid work, and a family-oriented tax-/contribution and benefit system. The system of family and child allowances represents a major factor for the better financial situation of families in continental Europe vis-á-vis the UK (parents/family income model versus male breadwinner model). In the case of single parent families, however, marginalisation on the labour market also represents a poverty trap.

In the continental European system, the idea of a male breadwinner wage is somewhat diluted. Financing family allowances out of general taxes is, after all, in the interest of employers, since it keeps the two issues of labour separate: labour as the major factor of production and thus production cost, and workers as the major single determinant of demand for goods and services. Family allowances increase the purchasing power of families with children (in this phase of life, the propensity to consume is very high) the'family wage'being higher than the paid employment wage. France in particular, has a long tradition of employer-support for female employment, with the objective, originally, of binding whole families to the factory. As a result, France has a comprehensive full-day public childcare and school-system, which ensures that not only men but also women can pursue life-time careers. The system in German-speaking countries is not as comprehensive as the French one, the 'family wage concept' for the male breadwinner is more prominent than in France, and there is no right to child care, and schools are rarely day-schools. The latter aspect leads to a certain rigidity in working hours of women in the labour market; the opening hours of childcare services and schools acting as segmentation devices for female labour supply.

In so far care work is relegated to the household, the labour market outcome in Continental European countries is thus similar to that of the Anglosaxon model, in that social security benefits for the dependent worker are lower, resulting in lower lifetime earnings and limited occupational promotion of women. Above average unemployment rates of women, and reduced participation rates, result from the dual function of women as major provider of household work and supplementary market work.

The Scandinavian model, in contrast, is based on social rights of citizens. Sweden introduced in

1913 a basic-income system as a reaction against the German social security system.[9] The major argument was that persons should not derive social benefits and rights from work in the labour market (dependent upon the value of one's work on the labour market, i.e. labour as a commodity) or from family ties (dependent upon marriage) but rather that they should be entitled to have access to welfare on the basis of the rights of every individual as a citizen. Self-reliance and individual independence are the basic tenets of legislation. From this general social consensus flows the right of every individual to work in the labour market with full social security coverage. The linkage of individual taxation to a tax system with high marginal tax rates, provides the inducement for the maximisation of family income if every family member engages in market work. This system was introduced towards the end of the 1960s and further developed in the 1970s; it was the basis for the establishment of the most comprehensive state welfare system, in which the public sector became the main provider of social services formerly (and in other systems still) provided by households, in particular, care work. The public sector became the main source for the employment of women and allowed the rise of female labour force participation to almost male levels. A solidaristic wage policy assured that women were afforded comparable wages to those of men with similar education and training, which, in other systems, tend to carry lower wages for women.

Recently, a certain disintegration of the Swedish model has taken place. The tax reform of 1989 set the scene for a certain convergence to the EU-tax-system, which has important consequences for the Swedish welfare system. While a major shift of family-oriented public services back to the household sector does not appear to be feasible, given the pronounced individualisation of the Swedish tax system, a widening of the wage gap between men and women is in the making. This is a result of the marked gender segmentation of work, where men are predominantly working in the well paying manufacturing and services sector of private industries and women in care-oriented public services. The difference in pay arises because wages in the private sector are backed up by the functional mechanisms of the market, while public sector services are financed by tax revenues.

The interaction between social welfare and the economy is hard to capture in econometric models. The employment system and the welfare state are interconnected in more ways than one. The employability of the individual and the competitive stance of private enterprises depends upon the quality and the comprehensiveness of investment in human capital (education and training, health) and technical infrastructure. Infrastructure in the widest sense of the word is important for the sustainability of economic growth.[10] Part of social infrastructure is provided by the state, i.e. the

[9] The German (Austrian) model was developed by conservative forces (Bismarck, Taaffe) to preserve the traditional class structure of society and to withdraw popular support for social-democratic reform proposals. For a detailed exposition of this argument see Esping-Anderson (1990).

[10] In the wake of rapid institutional change during the 1980s and 1990s, an explosion of research on public infrastructure and its role in economic growth and productive performance, took place. The general conclusion is that infrastructure plays a vital role in securing the competitiveness and productivity of private sector firms (see Morrison and Schwartz, 1996).

public sector, and part by families. Employment in the public sector has to be, directly or indirectly, financed by the private sector. The higher the employment share of the private sector, the larger the tax revenues of the state and the smaller the need for transfer payments. The current changes in the nature of labour demand and supply, have no clear-cut directional effect upon the finance situation of the welfare state. While intermittent employment of male and female workers tends to put pressure on public finance in the short term (unemployment benefits) and longterm (retirement pay), increased employment of women tends to counter that development. However, the fact that the major share of female employment growth takes place in the public sector, i.e. in education, health and personal services, diminishes the positive effect on the state budget.

Last but not least, reforms to the welfare system will be necessary, as a result of the changing employment patterns of men due to increasing use of contract labour and retraining needs. Skill formation and updating is already a prerequisite for improved labour market performance and sustainable economic growth. The successful institutionalisation of life-long learning, i.e. continued learning and competence development over the working life cycle, will, however, be decisive for the preservation of the adaptive capacity of the labour market to economic and technological change in a knowledge society. The organisation of continuous learning will not only have implications for educational and labour market institutions and mechanisms per se, but also for social insurance policy. So far, women tend to be more prone to intermittent employment than men, in the main as a result of childbearing and -rearing. The different ways of organising social insurance for periods of absence from market employment, may serve as models for learning-phases, without falling into the trap of differentiating access by gender. Both, the system to finance social insurance as well as the distribution of social rights to individuals, can be expected to become more complex as a result of the flexibilisation of work and private life.

The welfare state may have to be re-constructed to reflect the new needs and rights of the society. Some form of minimum income provision, which allows the satisfaction of basic needs and protects against the vagaries of life (basic guaranteed income) may be called for. Earnings-related benefits would have to be considered in any system to preserve the existing status. Means-testing may also play a role in order to minimise costs. Funding of welfare through progressive general taxes may be necessary, complemented by negative income taxes to obtain the means for effective redistribution of income to the poor. The breadwinner/individual dichotomy of the social security model would have to be removed. The individual model reduces the focus of choice between market and household work, while the patriarchal model does not promote equal status between men and women, and thus contributes to fluctuations in income of women. The household sector, or specific duties, which are important for the continuous labour supply of an economy, e.g. child care in the early years, may be envisaged as a provider of individual social security coverage, in addition to the public sector. Another possibility could be to phase out child benefits in favour of selective social assistance and tax relief on child care costs to promote labour market activity of the carer. Further, there is a good case for a welfare system which integrates the objectives of providing support for low-income families, alleviating child poverty, and promoting employment.

The challenge lies in the details of the system design, which should ensure economic efficiency in the production of goods and services and equity between men and women. Both factors are important in their own right and are responsible for economic and social wellbeing and political stability in the long run.

Graph 6: Institutional ramifications of benefit systems for the unemployed

		Institutional Categories of Welfare Systems			
	Austria	Universal Welfare System, needs tested access, no social security concept	Unemployment Insurance as part of the social security system	Social Benefit System, lender of last resort	Bridges between the Systems, Transfer- and Taxreliefs
Regional Distribution of Rights and Duties, Type of Finance	Federal system				
	Legislative power		yes		
	Execution				
	Finance				
	General taxfund			yes	
	Employer/Employee contributions		yes		
	States (Provinces)				
	Legislative power			yes	
	Execution		yes	yes	
	Finance				
	Communities				
	Legislative power				
	Execution			yes	
	Finance				

S: WIFO.

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