

"Aktivering", "flexicurity", the surface Europeanization of employment? [

Ediciones Complutense, 2015-10-23

info:eu-repo/semantics/article info:eu-repo/semantics/publishedVersion

Analítica

In the domain of social protection and social policy, a conventional way of trying to document "Europeanization" has always been to track European English policy discourses at the EU level and in the nations of Europe. Notions that crystallize the normative orientations promoted in the forums of political communication and in the policy communities are numerous. All of them are crafted in English and travel across national forums of political communication and national scientific forums. The present paper selects two such notions, i.e. "activation" and "flexicurity" and carefully studies the locus of their inventions and the travels across many countries and many forums - national and transnational. The precise documentation is based on participation in numerous forums, field studies in Denmark, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy over a long period (1997-2008). The findings are all relevant for this period, i. e. prior to the upheaval of social policies at the EU level and in the member states provoked by the financial and economic crisis. They have in common to identify the dissemination of a standard discourse and the resilience of national substantive choices and roles of actors of social protection and labour market policies. Because the paper is written with hindsight, taking stock of the late 1990s and early 2000s, a de facto comparison unexpectedly becomes feasible with the crisis period (2008-2014). The counterfactual is easy to design: a powerful Europeanization of systems of social protection and labour markets has happened in this second period, via the highly constrained implementation of structural reform and budget cuts programmes deemed to satisfy macroeconomic and macrofiscal orientations decided at the EU level, especially within the Eurozone, and especially in the Southern member states. Whereas the Europeanization of discourse and social policy concepts remained superficial in 1997-2008, actual and hard Europeanization really bit deeply

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Editorial: Ediciones Complutense 2015-10-23

Tipo Audiovisual: social europe; europeanization; european social policy; flexicurity; activation of social protection Europa social; europeización; política social europea; flexiguridad; activación de la protección social

Variantes del título: "Activación y flexiguridad". La europeización superficial del empleo?

Documento fuente: Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales; Vol 33 No 2 (2015): Monográfico: Las pensiones de jubilación: una perspectiva alternativa; 357-395

Nota general: application/pdf

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Lengua: Spanish

Enlace a fuente de información: Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales; Vol 33 No 2 (2015): Monográfico: Las pensiones de jubilación: una perspectiva alternativa; 357-395 Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales; Vol. 33 Núm. 2 (2015): Monográfico: Las pensiones de jubilación: una perspectiva alternativa; 357-395 1988-2572 1131-8635

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