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# Comparative Report on the Impact of an Integrated Approach to Social Cohesion

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Coordinating Organisation: CARL VON OSSIETZKY UNIVERSITAET OLDENBURG (CETRO)

**Authors:**

**Karolina Sztandar-Sztanderska**

**in cooperation with Sławomir Mandes,**

Institute of Sociology,

University of Warsaw

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The general aim of Work Package 7 (thereafter: WP7) was to analyse the impact of an integrated social and employment policy on the social inclusion and well-being of the most vulnerable groups in society. The complexity of the subject and limited resources for empirical investigation in this last part of Localise research has led us to focus the analysis on frontline workers-clients relationships, in particular on the organisation of their encounters in terms of communication process. This aspect has a crucial significance for outcomes of policies targeting vulnerable groups, yet it is not an exclusive factor for understanding whether or not they improve their well-being and work prospects and how.

In line with classical authors using the term “street-level bureaucracy” – among whom the most prominent is Michael Lipsky (1980) – and authors representing studies of human services organisations (for an extensive overview, see Hasenfeld, 2009; Hasenfeld, 2010), we analyse policies in practice at the street-level. We propose to analyse the relation between the workers in employment and welfare organisations and individuals applying for these services as “people processing” (Prottas, 1979), which means that street-level bureaucrats translate differentiated life-situations into organisational categories. This perspective enables us to analyse abstract policies in a concrete manner: as sequences of ordinary actions that take place in a specific setting. We also analyse people-processing from the perspective of vulnerable individuals. How do people deal with the situation that they become the object of categorisation, intervention and control? How they assess the role of policies from the point of view of their needs and expectations?

This explorative study fills a gap in research on implementation of activation observed in Europe (see, for instance, Borghi and van Berkel, 2008: 331-332; Barbier and Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2004). As Jean-Claude Barbier and Ludwig-Mayerhofer put it: “we are still very far from being able to assess the actual working of (different kinds of) activation at street-level. More research is needed in future, not least field research moving beyond usual assessment of policies from official reports and statistics” (Barbier and Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2004: 430). The added value of qualitative analysis is that it sheds light on discrepancies between policies’ planning and policy in practice. Moreover, it gives more critical insight into what is considered to be policies integration and activation of individuals.

The structure of the report is as follows. First of all, we will provide theoretical entry points to the analysis of policy in practice. Second of all, we will describe methodological approach adopted for the purpose of WP7 research. In a third and forth part, we will summarise case studies’ results on people-processing from the point of view of street-level bureaucrats and vulnerable individuals in reference to exhaustive national reports<sup>1</sup>. It will be followed by general conclusions. In the annex, we have also included basic statistical data on poverty and unemployment in the six countries under study<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This report is based on the following reports, prepared by research teams involved in Localise project: Rice, Siebolds (2014); Bourgeois, Tourné Languin, Berthet (2014); Fuertes, McQuaid (2014); Hollertz, Garsten, Jacobsson (2014); Monticelli, Catalano (2014); Sztandar-Sztanderska (2014). We would like to thank all team members for their excellent work and valuable comments.

<sup>2</sup> It was difficult to use this quantitative data as background information in the report for two reasons. First of all, the latest comparative statistics from EU-SILC refer to 2011, which means that compared to qualitative evidence, they are relatively outdated. Second of all, some cases for confidentiality reasons were anonymised and we were not able to link them with quantitative evidence at all.

## 2. THEORETICAL ENTRY POINTS

We will focus on three features of the policy in practice, in particular: 1) the relative autonomy of the street-level bureaucrats implementing the employment and social policy, 2) people processing in the employment and welfare organisations seen from the point of view of street-level bureaucrats, and 3) from the point of view of vulnerable individuals using their services. Concerning the first point, we propose to shift perspective and treat implementation problems as phenomena typical for the relation of organisation to the environment (Luhmann, 1990; Andersen and Sand, 2012) instead of considering them as dysfunctions or obstacles that might be simply overcome by increasing resources or tightening control upon street-level bureaucrats. The policy in practice at street-level is relatively independent from the policy planning. Translation of the social and employment policy goals into outcomes is not straightforward and the inside life of organisation should be taken into account in order to understand this process. Second of all, we propose to analyse the relation between the workers of employment and welfare organisations and individuals applying for these services as “people processing” (Protas, 1979). This expression draws attention to the fact that what street-level bureaucrats do, is not simply identifying problems of the individuals and satisfying their needs. Analysing their everyday actions enables us to see that the individual is subjected to the operation of the organisation. It means that his or her complex situation is simplified (some aspects of his or her biography are treated as relevant, others are ignored), categorised (e.g. “employable”, “with deficit of skills”, “unmotivated”, etc.), standardised and acted upon. In other words, s/he is being processed and transformed into “client” or “beneficiary”. The fact that this social construction had taken place is often forgotten and organisational categories are taken for reality during latter interactions. Third of all, we want to analyze this process of translation of differentiated life-situations into organisational categories from the perspective of vulnerable individuals. How people deal with the situation that they become the object of assessment, intervention and control? What kind of strategies do they develop? How they assess the role of policies from the point of view of their needs and expectations?

Now, we will describe these three aspects in greater detail to define research questions.

### **The relative autonomy of the street-level bureaucracy**

There are several characteristics of street-level bureaucracy that makes impossible mechanical “implementation” of formal rules and official strategies. First of all, since the services that street-level bureaucrats deliver are usually “free of charge” for their clients, resources tend to be always inadequate to tasks workers are asked to perform. Broadening the offer of public services or improving their quality leads to an increase of demand for them, which means that there is no objective point at which needs are satisfied (Lipsky, 1980). Apart from a limited number of service options (e.g. training, subsidised employment, job offers, etc.) – what counts for workers of welfare and employment agencies is time that they have at their disposal compared to their caseload and other tasks they have to perform (including paperwork). In response to these work conditions, they develop various strategies to deal with time pressure and a high number of clients, such as mass processing, controlling information flow, creaming or imposing additional costs on clients (e.g. waiting time, psychological costs, etc.).

Second of all, social and employment policy is described in formal documents – such as laws, regulations, strategies or local programs, quantitative targets – that have to be translated into actions. The works of Lipsky (2010), Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) or Prottas (1979) as well as later studies on human services organisations show that street-level bureaucrats – showing discretion in their relation with clients and translating their complex situation into organisation procedures – are policy makers on their own, who substantially influence the outcome of public policy. At the street level all these formal documents have to be interpreted. Neither the best law or strategy, nor the activation programme can provide a strict description of every element of the street-level bureaucrats' work. Interpretation of formal documents is necessary, because life is always far more complex: problems of clients and interactions with them cannot be predicted and easily managed. Instead of mechanically implementing directives from formal documents, street-level bureaucrats translate heterogeneous situations of individuals into organisational categories and match them up to existing documents and indicators.

Moreover, the environment in which street-level bureaucrats work has significantly changed (e.g. Hasenfeld, 2010; Dubois, 2010; Siblot, 2006; Hasenfeld, 2009; Weishaupt, 2010) and is differentiated locally (e.g. Künzel, 2012; Weishaupt, 2010). Instead of focusing mainly on compliance to formal regulations, frontline staff carry out projects, have to fulfil the expectations for accountability or participation and are subjected to evaluation and benchmarking. Despite these changes in role expectations and ways of controlling street-level bureaucrats' work, they still preserve their relative autonomy when dealing with the complexity of individuals and unpredictability of the course of interaction (Evans, 2010).

### **People-processing seen from the point of view of street-level bureaucrats**

The way individuals are processed depends on the way the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats is shaped and constrained by different systems of control. For example, a minimum level of resources (e.g. a number of case managers, service options) is necessary in order to “individualise” treatment, but resources are not the only important factor that defines constraints street-level bureaucrats face and their margin for manoeuvre. Their practices are different in a highly bureaucratized environment (this kind of context is called, for instance, “eligibility compliance culture” by Kane and Bane (1994); or “management-by-regulation” by Weishaupt (2010)) than in an environment where other techniques of control of street-level bureaucrats are applied. In the first one, control concerns mainly the question of eligibility and is performed through verification of documents. In this context, types of services, entitlement criteria and categorisations of clients are usually legally defined. The changes of governance of welfare made widespread other techniques of control: such as a system of targets and indicators through which actions of street-level bureaucrats are made “accountable”, performance-based payments, programme evaluations, customer satisfaction surveys and targets, etc. This topic – raised already by WP2, WP4, WP6 research – is further investigated in WP7 as important for policy outcomes.

The scarcity of resources combined with the complexity of the street-level bureaucrats' environment force them to reduce complexity by changing or ignoring some regulations, modifying goals, processing people faster, and simplifying their problems. This has enormous influence on the final outcome, especially on the relation with individuals. The overworked street-level bureaucrats have to improvise and develop routines to deal quickly and easily with the complex problems that individuals might have: some problems are omitted; others are reduced to basics. Most important problems might be separated into particular categories. Selected problems are granted a definite scope of time.

These are only examples of strategies that can be used in processing people. In general, the complexity of the problems which bring people to the welfare and employment organisations is reduced, modified, and translated into appropriate classifications, and the individual becomes a “legible” client with a well-defined, easy-to-target identity (Wedel *et al.*, 2005; Rosenthal and Peccei, 2006). Many categorisations are inscribed in work tools – such as administrative forms, interview guidelines, psychological tests, etc. Street-level bureaucrats use these ready-made identities to deal with differentiated life-situations of individuals and to justify access to services. Some of them are rather straightforward (e.g. gender, age), while others are negotiable (e.g. “motivated”, “with skill deficits”, “disabled”, “in risk of social exclusion”). Street-level bureaucrats might favour representatives of specific groups (e.g. young or long-term unemployed, single mothers) because at that moment financial resources are available for them or because placement of these groups is additionally rewarded.

Moreover, the client’s performance is measured. Nowadays measurement is crucial for the functioning of many organisations. During the last 20 years we observed the “explosion of audit culture” (Power 1999). The welfare state has been transformed by this process – the work and outcome of the street-level bureaucrats is the object of evaluations (Travers, 2007). The career of street-level workers, the financial resources and prestige of the organisation depend on the effects of these scrutinizing procedures. Evaluations might be seen as instruments enabling the organisation to learn and adjust to the needs of the environment, but they are first and foremost instruments of control (Strathern, 2000).

### **People-processing seen from the point of vulnerable individuals**

The relation between the street-level bureaucrats and an individual is usually asymmetric. Most people accessing the employment and welfare organisations do it under a certain level of compulsion. Generally speaking, the more vulnerable the person the more dependent he or she is on a street-level bureaucrat, because a street-level bureaucrat has control over resources s/he cannot do without. The asymmetric relation defines the balance of power between the two parties. As Lipsky wrote in 80s: “If street-level bureaucracies have non-voluntary clients then they cannot be disciplined by those clients. Street-level bureaucracies usually have nothing to lose by failing to satisfy clients. They will try to manage a large volume of complaints and undoubtedly seek to minimize the extent to which they are perceived as difficult to deal with or unresponsive. But managing complaints successfully is a far cry from changing policy in response to consumer dissatisfaction” (1980: 55).

Even in these circumstances an individual is not powerless and is able to affect the street-level bureaucrats (Trethewey 1997). Using the Bardach phrase, we can describe the relation between the street-level bureaucrats and the individual as “the implementation game” (1977). The former have the superior power because they are the source of information, know the procedures and hidden opportunities and can make a process easier or more difficult. However, street-level workers also depend on their clients: in order to process cases smoothly, they want to socialize the individual according to the norms and goals of welfare or employment organisation. The individual can take advantage of this, if he or she also has precise expectations, some specific skills and resources (Siblot, 2006) and enough perseverance to fulfil it. People can develop different individual or collective strategies: they can either show compliance or hinder the process, increase difficulties, complain, submit a multitude of applications or even organise themselves collectively. The street-level bureaucrats can punish individuals in many ways – such as depriving them of full information, making the process more difficult, being impolite, etc. – but he or she cannot simply ignore their formal requests without justification.



It is a game in which the stakes are, on the one hand, the well-being of the individual, and on the other the control of the street-level bureaucrats over their work process.

The empirical analysis of this “implementation game” should also take into account changes of practices between the two parties resulting from the redefinition of their relationship, namely various institutional and organisational arrangements aiming at clients’ greater individual responsibility, contractualisation of social rights or clients’ participation in the policy-making and services delivery (Serrano Pascual and Magnusson, 2007; Borghi and Van Berkel, 2007). The empirical question is how these arrangements shape constraints for both street-level bureaucrats and individuals.

Another aspect worth studying is the way clients experience and deal with the people-processing. This is rarely a smooth process, it rather resembles a clash of cultures with a clear power asymmetry. The individual entering welfare and employment organisation has to answer a lot of questions that might seem irrelevant, and to fill in many papers. He or she can attempt to influence this process. Nevertheless the individual usually has to reformulate, mostly narrow down, his or her problems to fit in.

The questions are the following: What is the margin for manoeuvre of vulnerable clients in this process? What is their scope of voice? To what extent do they influence the way their situation is defined in the welfare and employment organisations and the types of services they are being assigned? How do they assess the policies from the point of view of their needs and well-being?

### 3. EMPIRICAL DATA AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The report is based on six case studies. Each one was conducted in a local entity situated in one of the six countries included in the project: Germany, France, UK, Sweden, Italy and Poland. We have selected one case per country from eighteen localities which were previously studied in the frame of other work packages. The selection was performed according to the criterion of the most visible collaborative attempts between organisations. This way, even in countries where it is difficult to observe an actual integration of social and employment policies (e.g. Poland and Italy), we have tried to choose relatively more “innovative” cases. Basic information on case selection is presented below.

Each case study comprises of, in minimum, fifteen in-depth interviews<sup>3</sup>: seven with vulnerable individuals and eight with street-level bureaucrats involved in daily interaction with clients. We interviewed frontline staff who have authority to exert power over individuals and who are responsible for allocation of resources. As vulnerable individuals, we interviewed long-term unemployed according to the national administrative criteria<sup>4</sup>. However in some cases, for reason of accessibility or complex governance structure, there were additional criteria used for selection of interviewees (for details, see the following section).

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<sup>3</sup> Originally, one focus group interview per case study was planned in the frame of WP7. However, in order to obtain more comprehensive empirical evidence, we have decided to combine research on WP6 and WP7 and conduct fifteen in-depth interviews per each case study instead.

<sup>4</sup> Originally, it was planned to include three vulnerable groups in each locality in order to analyse whether integrated employment and social policies are successful in reducing multiple risks of social exclusion. However, the number of interviews with clients (7 interviews) was insufficient for this purpose. Instead we have decided to focus on one group, which is heterogeneous and whose representatives deal with multiple life difficulties, including various barriers to labour market participation. For detailed account of life problems of interviewees, see national reports.

In order to secure data of good quality, the task leaders of WPs 6 and 7 prepared together a common interview guide and coordinated a methodological workshop. All interviews were transcribed and analysed. They have been stored electronically in the aim of pursuing analysis of this rich empirical evidence for further publications. All teams also performed secondary data analysis of documents and interviews collected previously for the purpose of WP4. Finally, the task leader reanalysed available quantitative data, which will serve as general background information.

One stipulation has to be made. The qualitative analysis of people-processing is of an explorative nature. It provides neither a comparison of local nor national entities, but a comparative investigation of practices that take place in organisations providing services for long-term unemployed. The comparative insight thus involves the identification of micro-elements of this process, which are considered beneficial (or disadvantageous) for improvement of well being and work prospects of vulnerable individuals, rather than general conclusions which institutional and organisational arrangements are better for these purposes.

## **BASIC INFORMATION ON CASE STUDIES**

### **Case study in Germany<sup>5</sup>**

German case study was conducted in the municipality that is situated in the German province of Saxony-Anhalt. It has suffered greatly from de-industrialisation since the collapse of the German Democratic Republic and now concentrates on the development of its service sector (e.g. call centres). In response to the relatively unfavourable labour market, local Jobcenter has developed innovative strategies and partnerships for reintegrating the long-term unemployed population into the labour market.

In total, 15 interviews were conducted. Concerning the client interviewees, German team had requested that all interviewed caseworker recruit one long-term unemployed client. In the end, only four client interviews could be realised this way. For this reason and because it was not possible to recruit unemployed respondents *via* different channels, an additional four clients were interviewed in the Northern German municipality.

### **Case study in France<sup>6</sup>**

The French case study concerned Minimum Income Scheme recipients (thereafter RSA) in Bordeaux. Policies targeting RSA recipients were planned to integrate employment and social services and they involve various organisations, including non-governmental organisations. Moreover, the follow-up provided for RSA recipients was supposed to set up a “single referee” system. It means that each person should be assigned one caseworker responsible for coordination of his/her activation. The “single referee” system is considered an attempt to make the cooperation of several stakeholders clearer for the beneficiary’s sake. Therefore, it was treated as example of “innovative” approach, worth closer look.

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<sup>5</sup> This part is based on Rice, Siebolds (2014).

<sup>6</sup> This part is based on Bourgeois, Tourné Languin, Berthet (2014).



Interviews were conducted with eight street-level bureaucrats from various organisations involved in policies delivery and seven interviews with RSA recipients, who shared certain characteristics. One additional interview with a head of local employment agency was conducted. All interviewed RSA recipients were long-term unemployed, no longer entitled to the unemployed insurance. They were also supported by a service provider other than the national employment agency. They were all considered as “close to employment”, but all of them have some difficulties, not directly related to labour market (e.g. childcare, health, mobility, housing).

### **Case study in UK<sup>7</sup>**

Due to confidentiality reasons, the organisation, locality and region was anonymised. Anything that could identify the organisation has been deleted or changed substantially. Interviews with front-line workers and service users took place in one organisation providing labour market interventions to long-term unemployed individuals. The organisation operates in an urban locality in the UK. Eight advisors and nine clients were interviewed.

### **Case study in Sweden<sup>8</sup>**

Örebro municipality was selected as the most innovative entity of the three Swedish case studies. Innovativeness here refers to well-established collaborative structures. Meetings between local PES office and municipality staff at management level, intermediate level and frontline staff level are arranged regularly. In addition to this, the municipality has developed methods to improve the chances for long-term unemployed to enter the labour market; one example of this are the social aspects included in procurement procedures. Also the municipality has shown commitment to involving third sector actors and private sector actors in the efforts to improve transition from unemployment to employment.

In total, twelve interviews with street level bureaucrats and eight interviews with clients were carried out. The sample does not necessarily give a representative picture of the work performed by caseworkers in general in each organisation, but rather gives a picture of work performed by experienced caseworkers. Two programmes for long-term unemployed were selected, one focusing on job coaching and cv-writing and one focused on work rehabilitation. Both projects were funded jointly by PES and municipality, and are examples of coordinated structures at local level. In addition, documents used by caseworkers in their daily work, for instance guidelines used in investigations, templates in documentation systems and so on, were collected.

### **Case study selection in Italy<sup>9</sup>**

Italian case study was conducted in Milan-city Agenzia per la Formazione, Orientamento e Lavoro (thereafter: MCA), which is a public institution devoted to service delivery with respect to employment, training and career guidance at the provincial level. MCA was selected because it represents an example of local organization devoted to employment issues that started to implement several projects focused on activation policies. Moreover, MCA is a very well structured organization providing different services according to the targets (young people, disabled, unemployed people over 40 years old in need of further training). For all these reasons MCA represented a very interesting and unique case of study.

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<sup>7</sup> This part is based on Fuertes, McQuaid (2014).

<sup>8</sup> This part is based on Hollertz, Garsten, Jacobsson (2014).

<sup>9</sup> This part is based on Monticelli, Catalano (2014).

In total there were 15 interviews conducted: 8 with experienced caseworkers and 7 with long-term unemployed. Due to a difficulty to contact long-term unemployed, researchers decided to approach participants of one active policies training programme addressed at people with common professional background (mechanical design and drawing). It might constitute a selection bias.

### **Case study in Poland<sup>10</sup>**

The case study was conducted in a sub-region with a relatively good economic situation, compared to average economic unemployment rates in Poland and regional GDP figures, yet lately deteriorating during economic crisis. The municipality under study has a specific administrative status<sup>11</sup>, which makes inter-sectoral cooperation easier. Contrary to most territorial units in Poland, it fulfils simultaneously functions in the respect of both labour market policy and social assistance.

The case study was based on two types of methods: 1) in-depth interviews (IDIs) with long-term unemployed (11 IDIs), street-level bureaucrats working with this target group in public employment service, social assistance and non-governmental organisation (9 IDIs); 2) documentary analysis. Additionally, we analysed tools used during processing of unemployed by frontline staff (e.g. individual action plan, electronic records, etc.).

## **4. PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS**

### **GERMANY: ONE-STOP-SHOP<sup>12</sup>**

One of main characteristic of German system is an integration of unemployment support and social assistance in one-stop-shop model. From the perspective of individual the system seems very simple: there is one place to go to and one caseworker to communicate with. However, this apparent simplicity hides a complex organisational structure design for processing people.

The diagnosis of the life situation of a long-term unemployed person is standardised. All Jobcenters use the Federal Employment Agency's (thereafter: FEA) IT system "VerBIS" as a tool for collecting information about clients and structuring interventions. Whenever a client first applies for benefits or returns to the Jobcenter after more than six months, a new profile must be created. Following the IT interface on the computer screen, the caseworker begins by analysing the client's so-called "strengths" and what is euphemistically called "potentials", which means that any existing obstacles to work or activation are to be identified and stored in the form of "action requirements". Depending on the type of profile, the caseworker then selects a feasible goal for activation or job-search in the second phase of the FEA's client-processing cycle. If a regular job is chosen as the goal for activation and if the immediate labour market integration is possible, the caseworker can use the computerised client profile to immediately run a nation-wide search for job openings in the FEA's job database. Otherwise, the third phase of the FEA's client-processing cycle consists in selecting one or more strategies for bridging the gap between the client's status quo and the identified goal of activation.

<sup>10</sup> This part is based on Sztandar-Sztanderska (2014).

<sup>11</sup> X is a city with powiat rights' (pl. *miasto na prawach powiatu*). Similar to other 64 cities in Poland, it combines these two local territorial levels (*powiat* and *gmina*) in one. It means that both PES and social assistance are part of the same municipal administration, which is a factor facilitating cooperation.

<sup>12</sup> This part is based on Rice, Siebolds (2014).

Very important elements of diagnosis of LTU are psychological tests that are routinely used before a long-term or expensive activation measure (e.g. re-training) is granted. The tests are conducted in groups but their forms are customised to each client, depending on the skills that would be required for a particular training course, education, or job (such as commercial skills, technical skills, or artisan skills). Most questions have to be answered on a computer screen, but some questions are also distributed on paper. After the test has been completed, a psychologist discusses the test results individually with each client. The test results are also forwarded to the responsible caseworker, who then can base his or her activation decisions on them.

The profile of client created by the IT system and psychological tests direct the perception of client's problems by caseworker, which revolves around the client's "Strengths" and "Potentials" operationalised in the form of "Qualifications", "Capacities", "Motivation" and "Circumstances". But these official categories are not without limits and are difficult in application especially in case of "untypical" clients.

For example, the "Qualifications" category is often used to unearth more generally what a client "wants" in life, because only if such a vision exists are retraining measures and other educational instruments deemed feasible. Also the "Motivation" category seems to be interpreted in a slightly more comprehensive fashion than foreseen in VerBIS, namely in terms of a personality trait rather than as pertaining more narrowly to the motivation to work.

The two remaining profiling categories discussed above – "Circumstances" and "Capacities" are even more problematic because its empirical application often brings to the surface insurmountable obstacles to work that cannot be "cured" by Jobcenters in the current competitive labour-market environment. They differ from the categories "Qualifications" and "Motivation" in so far as they sometimes make visible the practical impossibilities of realising labour-market integration in spite of an official policy discourse mandating caseworkers to look "primarily ... at strengths, not at weaknesses" (A2, 73).

The main types of circumstances identified by German caseworkers as hindering labour-market reintegration are family circumstances, addiction, debts, and limited mobility. But the interviews with SLB show, that not all circumstances are seen as equally surmountable in individual cases because of the impossibility of reintegrating certain clients into the labour market is not foreseen in the official action guidelines.

Hence, in contrast to the formal policy discourse that "individualises" the problem of unemployment, caseworkers recognise the existence of structural factors that hinder employment besides individual ones, leading to an at least partial re-appropriation of the "Circumstances" and "Capacities" profiling categories in daily application. The research show, that German Jobcenter caseworkers speak of "incurable" individual-level or structural factors that lie outside of the activating logic of the German UB II (unemployment benefit II) system.

Overall assessment of the activation system for long-term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats is mixed. They have many different instruments at their disposal. Besides regular job counselling, at least sixteen types of instruments were mentioned. Caseworkers had a positive view of their high level of discretion, which allows them to tailor activation measures individually to each client's needs. The procedural target group approach used by virtually all German Jobcenters can be helpful for developing specialised expertise and tailor-made counselling approaches for the client groups in question. However, the target group approach also has a negative flipside, namely that clients categorised as "normal" receive only standardised and workfarist job-search assistance although they, too, might be in need of more specific advice.

Intensive counselling trajectories in which the caseworker receives regular feedback from clients have the potential to trigger learning processes not only among the clients but also among caseworkers – leading to a better understanding of, as well as a more holistic perspective on, activation.

But street-level bureaucrats also pointed to many problems of the activation system for long-term unemployed. They complain of high caseloads and lack of time. Their judgement of clients seem to differ structurally between regular caseworkers and case managers. The caseload of case managers normally seems to be around 70-80 persons whereas regular caseworkers have up to 450 clients in the analysed Jobcenter. For this reason it is nearly impossible for the latter to counsel clients intensively. The other important obstacle to the idea of one stop-shop model are frequent caseworker changes, which hinder the relation with clients. Street-level bureaucrats also mentioned more general problems. At the policy level they indicated at deliberate low-wage policy, lacking childcare facilities, incoherence between benefit systems as well as legacies of a past “dependency culture”. They also mentioned difficulties at the systemic level: disappearance of low-skilled jobs, low wage-level, high job demands in terms of flexibility and physical fitness, formal qualifications count more than real skills (especially after the German reunification), structural discrimination of lone parents and UB II recipients by employers.

Concluding, high caseloads (within the regular counselling system) contribute to standardisation, whereas differentiated counselling approaches (caseworkers/case managers), special target groups, legal caseworker discretion, and a broad range of activation instruments contribute to more individualised interventions. Hence, overall conclusion from German case is that the one-stop-shop “Jobcenter” agencies are organisationally well-equipped for providing tailor-made services; however, in practice, scarce staff resources (to be funded by the municipalities and the FEA) may counteract the smart organisational Jobcenter design.

### **FRANCE: COMPLEX INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE WITH MULTIPLE SERVICE PROVIDERS<sup>13</sup>**

The system of support of RSA recipients involves multiple actors. However, each unemployed should have one caseworker (called “single referee”) who coordinates activation process that might go beyond one office.

At the beginning a person is profiled in one category: social- or labour market integration orientation. This profiling is realised by a platform made of several actors working in different organisations belonging to PES. Once the RSA recipient has been put into one of these categories, s/he is orientated towards one “single referee” that works in one of the following organisations: national employment agency, social organisations, NGOs, etc. This single referee is supposed to develop an integration path with the unemployed that might rely on outsourcing in order to address specific issues. In principle, the outsourcing is used when the issue to tackle (e.g. childcare) is out of the intervention perimeter of the particular caseworker or the particular organisation.

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<sup>13</sup> This part is based on Bourgeois, Tourné Languin, Berthet (2014)

Street-level bureaucrats complain about the increasing formalisation of contacts between organisations involved in the policy delivery. It has made exchange of information on clients more difficult. Another difficulty is that, either in theory all recipients should have a “single referee”, in practice some of them are being followed by many caseworkers due to, for instance, staff turnover or are even processed by several organisations at the same time without their staff knowing it.

People-processing starts with identification of possible hinders and follows up with a preparation of the professional project and contractualisation. Criteria used to conduct this diagnosis are relatively similar between different actors and refer to both personal and professional factors. They include, among others, social skills, personal and familial environment, language skills, education and professional career. Another category are so-called “peripheral hinders”, which include problems concerning childcare, housing, health, and mobility.

However, the conditions under which service providers and the national employment agency identify those barriers differ. At the national employment agency, where a person has to be registered and later profiled, a street-level bureaucrat conducts a rather standardised interview and s/he is obliged to respect strict time limits. Whereas street level bureaucrats working in non-profit and private organisations other than the national employment agencies, who work with already formally profiled RSA recipients, follow a less rigid framework when it comes to the content of counselling. Diagnosis conducted at services providers or partners is rather an on-going and flexible process, while at the same time frequency of meetings and general objectives are imposed. Street-level bureaucrats emphasise that this room for manoeuvre is crucial in order to develop of a good relationship with the beneficiary, which enables identification of “real hinders” and makes possible successful intervention. Diagnosis should take into account not only factual data, but also a person’s expectations and a way of thinking, which might be itself an obstacle for entering labour market. Another important factor is whether a spatial organisation of the office, where encounters take place, secures privacy. Lack of possibility to meet alone in is considered one of the factors of non-take up of social rights.

Street-level bureaucrats working with RSA recipients have a smaller caseload and a wider range of services than those working on the universal support provided by the national employment agency. However, with current resources and frontline staff professional skills, they are not able to deal with some of their clients’ problems (e.g. lack of basic language skills or substance abuse problems). They often have to leave the unemployed aside without concrete solutions. Even though the names of the actions change, the content remains more or less the same. Also some of the services are restricted to specific categories. Caseworkers try to make their beneficiaries “fit” into one category in order to access a service. However, it is not always possible. The usage of sanctions has not really been effectively implemented within service providers (only the national employment agency has timidly implemented them). In general, frontline staff consider that their main aim is to “get long-term unemployed people into motion” or “keep them active”. However it hardly ever leads to employment.

## UK: “BLACK BOX” POLICY<sup>14</sup>

In UK, mainly private firms<sup>15</sup> are service providers for the long-term unemployed. There are eighteen areas for the Work Programme, 40 contracts and eighteen companies have been contracted by the government to deliver the programme. The Work Programme replaces a number of previous programmes. The introduction of the Work Programme has affected JCP service provision, which was said to be now focused on the short-term unemployed. Reading the following analysis it is important to remember, that service providers are free in organisation of people-processing, which means, that presented organizational solution cannot be generalised.

All individuals claiming out-of-work income benefits and defined as long-term unemployed as well as a few other groups<sup>16</sup> have to take part in the Work Programme. Other benefit recipients can be voluntarily referred, but once in the programme, participation becomes obligatory. During the first meeting the client meets the advisor from Work Programme, who is not the client's caseworker yet; a caseworker (also called advisor) will be assigned to each client after the first few meetings and once the client's next stage of support has been decided. The advisor's judgement and client's opinion determine client's next stage/type of support. During the first meetings the client's current personal and household situation, employment goals, and barriers to employment are explored through a standardised questionnaire. However, caseworkers stressed that it is a subjective tool, which allows them to use their experience in order to categorise clients according to their position with regards to labour market participation.

Advisors are usually assigned to the same client for a period of several months. According to advisors their role is to support and help people through different means to move closer to getting a job and ultimately move into sustainable employment. Advisor's responsibilities differed slightly depending on their specific position within the organisation.

During the diagnosis, four areas are taken into consideration. First, the client's personal circumstances. Every aspect of a client's situations that could be a barrier to work is considered when planning and/or providing support to individuals: including their health, housing needs, finances, childcare, also clients "personality and likeability" or in other words their communication skills and presentation. Second, clients' expectations, third clients' goals and preferred jobs and fourth, clients' employability and job-search methods. Advisors "screen" and categorise clients, but there seems to be scope for subjectivity and participants' input.

All advisors interviewed stressed that they have a high level of flexibility in adapting the support provided to clients' needs and wishes. Most advisors said that targets do not hinder their job, and that the way to achieve targets is to do the job properly: i.e. sustainability is achieved by finding the right job for the client.

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<sup>14</sup> This part is based on Fuentes, McQuaid (2014).

<sup>15</sup> Of the 18 organisation contracted out to provide the Work Programme (employment services for the long-term unemployed) 15 are private organisations (Damm, C. (2012)

<sup>16</sup> For details, see Fuentes, McQuaid (2014: 6).



The support offered and the pace of the support depends on the individual circumstances and needs, such as: personal health (e.g. physical or mental illnesses or substance misused), household situation (e.g. having children in care, partnership/marriage breakup, etc.), housing issues (e.g. homelessness), and other issues such as criminal records. It also depends on unexpected individual circumstances or other factors, such as family bereavements, health issues, etc. These factors will determine clients' needs and assistance at different times. According to advisors, their experience and their judgement are fundamental in deciding client's next stages, pace and type of support.

Overall assessment of the activation system for long-term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats is positive. In term of the adequacy of the Work Programme, advisors stressed that the support available is very good, however a number of potential improvements were mentioned: increasing the availability of local service provision that Work Programme prime providers can access; the administration of sanctioning by Job Centre Plus (thereafter: JCP) could be made clearer to clients, as at present was said to be confusing and as a results tends to diminish clients' trust in the Work Programme organisation; increasing resources into the Work Programme by DWP (the Department for Work and Pensions) as this will increase the number of staff and the available support; increasing the profile of the Work Programme amongst employers could be beneficial. Advisors also stressed that the timing of support could be improved. For example unemployed individuals would benefit if they were referred to the Work Programme earlier on.

The design of the Work Programme aims at dealing with some of the shortcoming of previous policies. The "black-box" approach could foster personalisation of services, while the sustained and differential payments could aimed at discouraging "revolving doors" and "creaming & parking" of those unemployed. The Work Programme funding period (up to seven years) could be seen as an attempt to tackle short-termism in funding. However, there are a number of objective factors perceived during the study, which could hinder personalisation and tailor-made services. Although Work Programme prime contractors have freedom to devise service provision and the government expects contractors to put in place the necessary services in order to move people into the labour market, Work Programme providers are constrained by formal policy goals and more importantly available finances (i.e. total payment expected for services and expected return). The available resources are influenced by the financial and contractual model of the Work Programme, with some interviewees arguing that it appears that Work Programme providers' use of subcontractors is low and there is a lack of specialist provision as a result. This would seem to be confirmed by national Work Programme statistics that show expected outcomes for individuals with more complex and multiple problems (i.e. those previously in receipt of health or income support benefits) are not being reached. The high caseloads of advisors, which seem to be necessary also as a result of the Work Programme financial model, could restrict the amount of support provided to clients. Advisors' necessity of meeting targets, as the Work Programme is based on payment by result, could result in creaming (prioritise assistance for those closer to the labour market) and parking (less services and support for those further to the labour market). The lack of personalisation as a result of these factors could affect more those service users with multiple and complex needs.

It could be argued that the model of payment to WP contractors, based on sustained and differential payments, signals a departure (started to an extent with previous programmes) from work-first approaches, towards an "employment-first" approach. In an employment-first model sustainable employment, with long-term career progression or maintenance, would be the aim, which for some service users would require dealing with barriers to maintaining and progressing in employment.

## **SWEDEN: PEOPLE-PROCESSING IN A COORDINATED SYSTEM<sup>17</sup>**

The activation process in Örebro includes well established and coordinated structures and actors from various sectors (employment, social assistance, prison services, health policy), multi-level (municipal and national) collaboration, also representing several stakeholders (public, private and third sector). Other actors also play significant roles in increasing chances for labour market participation, despite the fact they do not offer activation as such. They do so by providing important additional services, such as day care, debt counselling, social care, and other social services. However, it should be noted that such an integrated system might have excluding effects on people who do not register as unemployed; those, who are not categorised as belonging to the official target group or those who fall out of the system due to sanctions resulting from non-compliance.

The Public Employment Service (thereafter: PES) is the main organisation performing activation for unemployed. The general view transmitted by the caseworkers was that PES as an organisation has limited resources to work with the "regular" unemployed. However, if the unemployed were detected and categorised as a person in need of work rehabilitation (or having a reduced work capacity) an extensive set of tools to for activation was made available. Many of these targeted programmes were described as having a real potential in offering highly individualised services. However, street-level bureaucrats have access to different sets of tools according to what target group they work with. Duration of unemployment, work capacity and age are the most important distinctions. This internal specialisation of staff reduces their scope of manoeuvre and the possibilities to tailor make services. Despite the fact that PES is an organisation with a strong top-down structure, there is, in fact, some leeway and discretion for the caseworkers. However, the extent to which this is used is closely related to their knowledge and experience.

When registering as unemployed, the face-to-face meeting between caseworkers and unemployed follows the structure determined by the online, computerised registration,. In this meeting, an assessment tool is used to detect those who run a greater risk of becoming long-term unemployed. The unemployed are divided into categories according to a statistical analysis that includes variables such as work experience, education, preferences, mobility, unemployment duration and previous unemployment as well as environmental factors and country of birth. For those who are categorised as having a reduced risk for long-term unemployed, programs can be offered at an early stage of the unemployment period. However, for those who are categorised as regular job seekers, the activation process is divided into three stages.

In the initial phase, a personal caseworker in PES is assigned and an action plan is initiated. According to this, the person should independently search for job for three months if s/he is below 25 years old, or for approximately 14 months<sup>18</sup> if s/he is between 25 and 64 years old. There are no programmes available for these job seekers, but there are open services they can take advantage of, such as for instance job fairs and PES job search engine. Caseworkers, who work with unemployed in this initial phase, find themselves in a constant time constraint. High administrative demands and case load restrict their chances to have more of an in-depth contact with the unemployed. Meetings are held short, and are framed according to the templates of the internal documentation system. At this stage the unemployed are not necessarily inclined to express special needs. Rather, they have an interest in presenting themselves as employable, motivated and active job searchers – in line with the demands and expectations from PES.

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<sup>17</sup> This part is based on Hollertz, Garsten, Jacobsson (2014)

<sup>18</sup> Or when the unemployment insurance is about to be exhausted.

When the unemployed is categorised as long-term unemployed, the second stage of unemployment starts. Within the programs “*Youth and job guarantee*” or “*Job and development guarantee*” intensified job search activities, investigations, labour market trainings, coaching and work placements can be offered. Unemployed people at this stage depend on PES caseworkers for a decision on which programme they will participate in, but then they interact mostly with project staff (and not their caseworkers). Their contacts with PES remain rather impersonal and staff at PES encourage the unemployed to meet with any caseworker, not necessarily the one assigned. Most of the programmes offered are described as being standardised and many times quite similar to each other. The relations between caseworkers and clients are not considered to be a central aspect. Who delivers the meal is made secondary and the content of guarantees are standardised. Taken together, the situation do in some ways resemble a “MacDonaldisation” in the provision of labour market policies; where standardised meals are handed out by exchangeable caseworkers.

PES caseworkers also observe that relatively few unemployed can be offered the preferred programmes. The selection procedures are closely linked to individual capacities of the unemployed. For instance, the unemployed with stronger resources and ability will have more chances receiving work placement that tends to lead to employment, while others will be rather provided job coaching. As for training, availability as well as limited duration of the second phase of activation are considered obstacles for referring job seekers. Generally speaking, activation programmes offered by complementing actors, which most long-term unemployed are activated by, are described as fairly similar in content. The value of repeatedly sending unemployed into similar activation programs is put into question. After 450 days in the guarantee, the third stage of the unemployment starts. For those who enter this stage, occupation is the only alternative available. The occupation takes place in work places, but should not compete with the regular tasks carried out in the work place. A regular job seeker cannot be offered other instruments at this third phase, which is considered a significant obstacle.

If a person, when registering as unemployed (or in any other stage of unemployment) is detected as potentially having a reduced work capacity due to functional impairments<sup>19</sup>, further investigations can be carried out by professionals in a rehabilitation team. This categorisation opens up for an early intervention and other organisational resources such as subsidised employment<sup>20</sup>, work rehabilitation, personal assistance on the work place, tools to facilitate for the individual in the work and so on. Also job seekers who are referred to PES by the Prison and probation service or by Swedish social and insurance agency (SSIA), as part of the rehabilitation chain, have access to these interventions. The caseworkers, who work with the unemployed with a reduced work capacity, describe their day to day work as highly individualised, with a focus on social relations with an unemployed and also carried out in exhaustive cooperation with actors outside PES, such as for instance health care, SSIA, municipality, civil society.

The second significant actor in the field of activation is the municipality, which is responsible for complementary activation of the unemployed registered at PES, who apply for social assistance. The categorisation process, similarly to the one carried out in PES, is based on closeness to the labour market. Those that are considered to be “job-ready” receive support in a job search programme, where counselling and guidance is offered. They can also participate in fairs to which employers are invited. Those unemployed who, according to the

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<sup>19</sup> Caseworkers can refer job seekers to investigate whether they have reduced work capacity any time during unemployment.

<sup>20</sup> Subsidised employment, however, can also be granted long-term unemployment if the unemployment exceeds 12 months or shorter if the person is below 25 years of age.

caseworkers, have barriers for entering the labour market are offered activation with a rehabilitation focus (e.g. work assessment, work training that includes tasks such as craftwork, kitchen work, gardening, snow removal). In general, the unemployed are not employed in the established sense of the term, but receive benefits as activation support or social assistance during the work assessments and work trainings with exception of selected groups who can be employed within municipal organisation (e.g. the unemployed parents).

The activation programmes offered by PES are preferred over local activation. The success of municipal organisations can be described as working towards making clients “fit” enough to be able to get access to the services delivered by PES by enhancing employability. Financial compensation for the unemployed is an important factor for preferring activation by PES rather than municipal programmes. Only those unemployed who take part in activation offered by PES, have the right to receive activation support, while participation in a municipal programme gives only the right to social assistance. When a person receives the state funded compensation (activation support) the demand for social assistance is reduced.

### **ITALY: INSTITUTIONAL FRAGMENTATION AND ACTIVATION THROUGH PROJECTS<sup>21</sup>**

In order to enrol in unemployment lists job seekers register in a division of MCA called *Centro per l'impiego* (thereafter: CPI) and declare their immediate job availability. Those who fulfil formal criteria will receive monetary benefits and might participate in employment services. Activation takes place in the context of single projects, which are planned and financed by region and province and implemented by the other unit of MCA called *Politiche Attive per il Lavoro* (thereafter: PAL). Target groups, instruments as well as, for instance, standardised reporting forms are imposed, which sometimes provokes difficulties during implementation. Caseworkers don't have a large room of manoeuvre in adapting these services to individual needs.

Only few of activation projects entail class activities and specific technical training. The majority comprehend psychological, behavioural consulting, competencies screening and CV updating. One of these projects called *Dote Lavoro* introduced a quasi-market system of service providers. Interviewees indicated that users lack information and skills that enable them to make an informed choice. Moreover, this system has also led to a “race to the bottom” in services' quality<sup>22</sup>. In Milan, there are also other municipal and non-profit organisations providing employment and social services, but they are not integrated with MCA. Even people, who are known to have social difficulties, are not directed to them.

The approach toward job seekers differs a lot depending on the unit of MCA. The first phase of people-processing takes place in CPI. It is highly standardised and massive approach due to the enormous workload. The job seeker has to fill in an online form, containing information on professional and educational career, IT skills, foreign languages. Then his/her benefit entitlement is verified. Data is stored in online base, which is standardised in Lombardy. Staff still waits for a construction of national database in order to have a unique system for the matching of job supply and demand for the whole country.

<sup>21</sup> This part is based on Monticelli, Catalano (2014)

<sup>22</sup> This effect is due to the problem of reaching the ‘critical mass’ of people, who decide to spend her/his voucher in one organisation. Only then service providers would have economic incentive to improve the quality of the delivered services, being them training, placement or job search. In order for this ‘critical mass’ to be attained, service providers often offer the services that are more apt to attract as many workers as possible (and which usually are very basic) and that not necessarily respond to people's needs.

When it comes to active services or ongoing projects, job seekers can either apply for participation themselves or wait for being summoned to PAL. The problem is that they might be unaware of existing opportunities, since there is no systematic link between registration, unemployment benefit and activation<sup>23</sup>. CPI caseworkers have a high level of discretion in provision of information. For instance, people classified as “vulnerable” might be addressed to an open space, where they can access Internet and receive help in writing a CV in Italian. Similarly, if a person is seen to hold some expertise and skills, s/he can be addressed to PAL office in order to screen ongoing activation projects and eventually apply for them. It might lead to creaming and parking and, therefore, marginalisation of some segments of the unemployed people. Street-level bureaucrats also reported that people are generally discouraged, they don’t apply on their own, neither do they answer to caseworkers convocations. The reasons are not only a lack of information, but also problems with understanding it and a general disbelief in programmes usefulness.

When a user applies for a slot in an activation programme or his/her profile is selected from database, s/he is convoked for a first screening interview in PAL. These interviews are fixed by appointment and take place in offices ensuring privacy as opposite to CPI front-office. The guiding criteria of the pre-screening process in PAL are strictly bounded by projects’ frameworks. Each project usually aims at targeting some specific segments of the population (e.g. youngsters, people over 50, women). In this sense, a first categorization is undergone by PAL caseworkers who screen the database in order to match the given criteria. Those who are selected sign an individualised plan. Conditionality system is almost inexistent, users are obliged to attend classes, but there is not a real “stick-carrot” system. Once a project comes to its end, there are not follow-up or monitoring activities.

### **POLAND: LIMITED RESOURCES, LACK OF LONG-TERM MEASURES AND NO LINK BETWEEN DIAGNOSIS AND INTERVENTION<sup>24</sup>**

People-processing of unemployed (including the long-term unemployed) is divided between two public organisations:

- PUP (i.e. Public Employment Services in Poland), when it comes to passive (PLMPs) and active labour market policies (ALMPs).
- MOPR (i.e. social assistance organisation) as regards the problem of poverty and other social problems.

Since there are no permanent collaborative structures between two offices at the street-level, it is a citizen’s responsibility to find his/her way through them.

In case of MOPR, there is one social worker assigned to each family, however his/her role is focused on evaluation of entitlements to social assistance (e.g. means-tested last resort benefits), while time and resources for social work and activation are scarce. Social workers have a repetitive contact with families in their environment over a longer period of time. There are no standards of how to work with (long-term) unemployed as regards type of instruments, order of actions and time frame. Moreover, instead of preventive measures, interventions seem to be implemented when problems have already accumulated. Also certain municipal social services, such as childcare (up to 6 years old), are highly insufficient.

In PUP after registration and verification of rights to unemployment benefit (long-term unemployed don’t meet these criteria), a person is directed to Occupational Activation Centre.

<sup>23</sup> This link will be created in 2015.

<sup>24</sup> This part is based on Sztandar-Sztanderska (2014).



It regroups all frontline staff responsible for activation: job placement, vocational counselling, job search and vocational training. They carry out their specific tasks separately with coordination limited to the use of common IT containing information on clients' professional and educational career and a history of contacts with PUP staff.

An unemployed person is not assigned one case-manager, but come to an open space area for an obligatory meeting with job placement agents. Contact with job placement agents is rare (once per 3 or 4 months), quick (a few minutes), impersonal and focused on verifying if there are suitable job offers and – if additional criteria are met – apprenticeships. Agents have a high caseload and there are no conditions securing privacy, which makes it difficult to play a diagnostic role. Job placement agents decide, for instance, to appoint an obligatory meeting with a job counsellor if a person lacks motivation, work experience, qualifications or there are other difficulties that demand a closer look. Unemployed might also see those other workers on their own, but not all of them are aware of it and some learn about it several months after registration. Vocational counsellors have more comfortable working conditions, both in terms of time and spatial organisation. Also job club leaders work more closely with a small number of the vulnerable unemployed, mainly in the frame of 3 weeks' job search training.

Street-level bureaucrats in PUP identified several problems that negatively impact chances of improvement of work prospects and well being of vulnerable unemployed. First of all, even if anybody from staff is able to diagnose individual problems, this knowledge does not translate into intervention. The reason for this is the uncertainty of resources for ALMP and defragmented organisational structure. Job offers and selected ALMPs are distributed either on a first come, first served basis or are distributed in a competition between the unemployed, rather than being linked to what was seen as a response to identified barriers. This organisation often leads to creaming and parking. People, who are "*still so distant from labour market*", yet motivated by vocational counsellors or job club leaders, have smaller chances to get access to the most popular instruments. This trend is reinforced by increasing importance of performance indicators, that measure moving quickly to job without taking into account neither precarious life circumstances, nor the actual job sustainability.

Also it is an individual who must fit in the current PUP offer rather than this offer is prepared to fit concrete people. Legal regulations define available instruments. It means that nobody in PUP has decision-making power to use other measures, even though they might be crucial for finding or keeping employment. There is no cooperation in this respect with social assistance, which theoretically might use special allowances for additional purposes. Street-level bureaucrats having more personal contact with the vulnerable unemployed complain about a lack of "*intermediary instruments*", making possible a "*rehabilitation*". By which they refer to tools that will enable to continue activation process in a longer perspective for those, who have to change a lot in their life before entering labour market. Three weeks of job club training or monthly sessions with a counsellor are not enough for them to make them ready for contact with employer. Without continuation of support, the effect might be contrary to intentions. The same problem concerns activation programmes carried out by MOPR.



## 5. PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

### GERMANY: PROCESSING OF INDIVIDUAL THROUGH THE SYSTEM<sup>25</sup>

The German case is an example a well-organized and clear processing of individual through the system. The period of intervention starts with the client's first contact with the Jobcenter at the express counter. There, clients are assigned a number and when they are called up, they can voice their concerns at this counter. In most cases, clients have two concerns in this situation: On the one hand, they must fill in an application for unemployment benefits; and on the other hand, benefits are conditional on making an appointment with a caseworker geared towards reducing benefit dependency and finding a job as quickly as possible. In most Jobcenters, caseworkers are responsible for either benefit administration or job-search assistance and counselling – not both of them combined.

During the first consultation the caseworker checks the main facts about the client's situation and the personal situation of the client is discussed as well as the client's vita and the last job he or she had. The caseworker analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the client and enters the relevant information in an IT platform. On the basis of this so-called client profile, additional activation measures may then be discussed. If it turns out during the activation process that clients have multiple problems and therefore require intensive counselling, they can be referred to a so-called case manager (*Fallmanager*) whose caseload is much lower than that of regular caseworkers (*Integrationsfachkräfte*).

The client profile created during the first session is very important for the consecutive activation steps as well as for a client's future within the Jobcenter organisation, because when caseworkers change, other caseworkers will build up on the already existing profile. Once a complete client profile has been established, caseworker and client are meant to sign a so-called individual "integration agreement". This integration agreement is one of the important instruments in the work of caseworkers, because creating it gives structure and direction to the interaction with the client. The caseworkers typically create the integration agreement together with the client. The client has the opportunity to gauge what may be possible to accomplish until the next meeting. Only if a client refuses to be activated, caseworkers turn to the legal possibility to make certain requirements mandatory by way of an administrative act.

The assessment of everyday policy practices in terms of their impact on well-being, work prospects, and participation in society of LTU shows mixed results. Several clients (and also caseworkers) mention that formal profiling procedures depends crucially on the personality of the caseworker. Sometime individual complain, that it is very difficult to switch to a different caseworker if the "chemistry" is not right and no productive working relationship ensues. In order to be transferred to a different caseworker, one would have to go through the Customer Response Management department and file an official complaint.

One of the most interesting findings from German case is that from the perspective of individual the profiling process is a kind of negotiation: it depends on caseworker personality and attitude and individual cleverness. In contrast to caseworkers who often complain about the lacking motivation of long-term unemployed clients, the clients describe themselves as doing their utmost best to find work. They try to convince caseworkers of one's "worthiness". Most of the characteristics that clients ascribed to themselves correspond with the formal

<sup>25</sup> This part is based on Rice, Siebolds (2014).

profiling characteristics discussed in chapter II, which proves either the strong structuring power of the VerBIS profiling system or the “true-to-life” character of VerBIS, or both. For instance, several clients talk about their qualifications or rather, their lack. But there is one exception. In contrast to the profiling categories “Qualifications”, “Motivation” and “Circumstances” that clients use habitually to refer to themselves in interviews, the profiling category “Capacities” does not appear at all when clients talk about themselves. It seems, that clients experience the former three categories as relevant in their own job-search efforts and personal interaction with employers, whereas the latter category is not perceived as directly work-related by the long-term unemployed themselves.

Individual complained at arbitrariness of procedural regulations. For example formal/informal age categories create artificial boundaries for activation measures. Other example of reigning of procedural regulation is the fact, that only formal qualifications count on the job-market and practical work-experience is not taken into account.

In general, the clients seemed satisfied with the counselling they received. But not all client experiences were positive. The encounters with caseworkers were shorter, rather superficial. The meeting with casemanagers were evaluated as much more satisfactory. This supports our overall impression that tailor-made counselling/activation is only the rule in the case management part of the German system, with the activation approaches of regular caseworkers being much more standardised and workfarist.

When it comes to activation measures that take place outside of the Jobcenter such as training courses, sheltered work, work trials etc., we saw in our interviews that clients’ satisfaction with activation measures again varies considerably. Firstly, several clients talk of “useless” bulk measures such as application trainings that are often perceived as degrading rather than helpful or motivating (due to their partial low quality and also due to repetition). Secondly, two clients reported that they had to “fight” in order to convince caseworkers of their motivatedness and “worthiness” of extended support, which may indicate that caseworkers sometimes depart from the baseline-expectation that a client is not motivated. Several clients refer to “useless” application trainings – apparently the emblem of bulk measures that many clients perceive as low-quality. But there were also stories of life-changing experiences triggered by activation trajectories. For example, one of client told enthusiastically about the personality development she underwent at a sheltered workplace. In spite of such activation successes, several clients underline that successful activation does not automatically entail successful reintegration into the labour market.

Concluding, the effects of policies on the well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals the quality of job-counselling varies considerably depending on four individual factors and one systemic factor. The respective individual factors appearing in our interviews are: the personality and labour-market expertise of the caseworker, the organisational position of the caseworker (in terms of target groups and/or the casework/case management division), the personality, socialisation, motivation to work, and skill-set of the client, the “chemistry” between individual caseworkers and clients. However, especially if clients are transferred to the case management system where more intensive counselling can be provided, clients often seem very satisfied with the results.

## **FRANCE: INFORMATION ASYMETRY, BUT GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS<sup>26</sup>**

All interviewed RSA recipients have a long history of contacts with PES, but a blurred knowledge of the whole system, also when it comes to such basic things as the identification of their “single referee”. It shows that the development of a single referee system that occurred over the past years has not been properly implemented. RSA recipients have often been followed by different organisations and through different policies schemes, but they had impression of “things repeating themselves” and “going round and round in circles”. They would prefer to be provided information about all services and training available at the beginning of the support, since it would enable them to become more active in their labour market integration path. Contacts with many workers at different organisations also means that they have to repeatedly explain their life stories, which might be considered a psychological burden.

Generally speaking, RSA recipients emphasized the high quality of service of private and non-profit service providers compared to the main operator: national employment agencies. What they assessed positively in case of private and non-profit service providers were: the frequency of appointments, the availability of the caseworker, the way they are listened to, the way their obstacles are taken in account. The support they received helped them to remain or become active in their search. It appears as a strong re-rallying element. However, some of their problems remained unsolved (e.g. lack of childcare arrangement in case of jobs with early or late working hours).

Also despite their motivation and involvement in various programmes, many of them remained sceptical when it comes to developing an interesting professional path. They opted for a financial approach, meaning that their objective (at least their short time objective) is to find a job as quickly as possible that will initiate a new dynamic.

## **UK: FROM PUBLIC JOB CENTRE PLUS TO PRIVATE WORK PROGRAMME<sup>27</sup>**

Individuals, who were referred to the Work Programme, were given no information. Most clients assumed that it would be a similar service to the one offered by Job Centre Plus. In the first instance they met with someone in the organisation who asked them questions and explained the various stages of support within the organisation.

The majority of participants meet their advisor every week and one meets monthly with the advisor (it would seem that this is the participant that is furthest away from the labour market compared to other participants). However, advisors said that most clients have meetings every two weeks, although sometimes keeping this regularity proves difficult due to caseloads. All participants seemed happy with the regularity of meetings, which for most had changed over time. It would appear that clients who are “more job-ready” tend to be seen more regularly, which appears to be corroborated by our sample. According to few advisors, more regularity for those that are closer to the labour market is a “necessity” as those clients need to keep activity and motivation up. Usually, clients are seen by their advisor and only met other advisors in exceptional circumstances. Having the same advisor seemed important to build trust and a personal relationship.

According to participants, most meetings consist on: doing or revising CV; searching for jobs; looking at new vacancies; considering different jobs; filling applications; talking about

<sup>26</sup> This part is based on Bourgeois, Tourné Languin, Berthet (2014).

<sup>27</sup> This part is based on Fuertes, McQuaid (2014).

interviews and exploring new avenues to search for jobs. Meetings can consist on clients spending the whole time with their advisor, or spending some time together and then they will do job-search by themselves (e.g. using the computers, telephones, etc.). The majority of participants had attended at least one course and said that they were useful and convenient.

It was mentioned that advisors also push the boundaries of comfort zones in a “coaxing” way more than through pressure. None of the participants mentioned being pressured by advisors, although participants said that there is an expectation that they will meet a certain level of activity regarding job-search. Participants stressed that advisors respect their choices in terms of desired hours of work or preferred sector, but that they are encouraged to explore and then, if suitable, consider other sectors and jobs.

Assessment of everyday policy practices in terms of their impact on well-being, work prospects, and participation in society is positive. Most individuals stated being pleasantly surprised when they found out about the type and content of support offered by the Work Programme organisation. All clients interviewed stressed that they really appreciated the support from the organisation, and said that they were very happy with it. In general they mentioned that the help received is very good and useful, relevant to their needs and circumstances, and met their expectations. The job offers given to them by advisor met their goals and desires. The most useful support mentioned was the advice by advisors, the workshops available, the support with computers, the use of facilities, the knowledge of advisors regarding hidden jobs and job searching, and the moral support and encouragement. In terms of job opportunities, participants mentioned the fact that advisors know about new vacancies or “hidden vacancies”, places were to search, etc. as very valuable: “[my advisors] is always kind of networking for me, sometimes on my behalf I think that might be a good way to put it”.

All individuals said that advisors have a very good, positive, friendly, approachable and open attitude, which makes them feel welcome either during and outside pre-arranged meetings, and which they find helpful. While, in contrast, relationships with advisors from JCP or other employment agencies were said to be rather distant and include more pressure. The common complaint with external agencies was the lack of professionalism of advisors and of the service in general, and the support being rated as not very useful. There were a number of complaints regarding the lack of support offered by JCP, such as lack of assistance with CVs, courses available, in-work support, etc. some of which was said to be influenced by the short-nature of the meetings. Individuals also mentioned that the advisors tend to vary, and that they are not as approachable and knowledgeable of their circumstances.

The effects of policies on the well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals is generally positive. Most individual mentioned that their live has improved to some extent since being referred to the organisation. They mentioned that a number of issues had improved: their confidence due to the support, encouragement and overpraising from advisors, and also due to them being more proactive; their optimism, because of the advisors support and help, due to taking part in a work trial which shows “that I can do the job”, as a result of having goals, and again being more proactive in general. Two participants said that their life has improved in a general way, as they have someone to speak with, something to do during the day, a routine to keep, and a goal to look forward to. One participant mentioned that even though workshops are sometimes targeted to wellbeing, the organisation does not focus on health.

Concluding, in the organisation studied there seems to be limited standardisation in type of support provided. The relation between advisors and clients appear to have a high degree of flexibility, even though there are some standardised patterns in their work and the nature of support is limited and not that flexible. This allows for individualisation within a pre-given framework created by formal policy, organisational context, and available resources. Individuals interviewed stressed that the support received was relevant to their needs and of quality. The available resources greatly influence the individualisation of services: i.e. the smaller the range of support, the greater the standardisation of services (less individualisation and choice). With the very limited picture that this study allows, a tentative analysis is that the support and assistance provided to those with health issues or multiple barriers is narrow. It could be inferred by the information gathered that the positive effect, stressed by participants, of the WP in their well-being, is more a result of the process of support than of the substance of support.

### **ITALY: LOW EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS UNTIL MEETING WITH ACTIVATION CASEMANAGER<sup>28</sup>**

Despite long registration period, job-seekers are not aware of the range of services provided by MCA and, most of times, they consider it a mere formality in order to receive benefits. Being a public office, MCA is not considered a place in which activation, career guidance and training are provided. This impression results from their experience: after registration they were told to look for a job on their own and then waited, even years, for any contact from the office. Therefore before they have been invited to PAL, their expectations about services, financial support and treatment are very low or inexistent.

The interviews confirmed that there is a high level of fragmentation between the first formal-bureaucratic step in CPI, usually recalled in a negative way as fast, superficial and almost useless and the second optional one in the unit devoted to activation programmes (PAL). After registration they were neither aware what was written in their professional profile, nor provided any useful information. Generally, they felt lost and abandoned.

In contrast to CPI, tutors which are individually assigned at PAL are recalled as professional, trusted and reliable. Users are asked to take some psychological tests and they have to fill in many forms and documents. The objective of this preliminary phase is, for the caseworkers, to understand their needs and competencies in order to provide the most targeted services as possible. The outcome of these meetings is usually a targeted plan of career guidance and training. However, job-seekers don't have a large room for manoeuvre in determining the characteristics of the activation route: the range of services provided is limited and job-seekers have only the possibility to express some expectations about the outcome, but not any indication about the real content and modality of activation process. Most of them want to be urgently given a job, no matter which kind of.

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<sup>28</sup> This part is based on Monticelli, Catalano (2014)



## **POLAND: PREDOMINANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS<sup>29</sup>**

Interviewed long-term unemployed criticise policies as having little impact on improvement of their well-being and work prospect. Some of them are even reluctant to call them “*support*” and rather describe them as last-resort “*charity*”, helping them to get along in difficult situation. Due to a low level of income support, long-term unemployed run the risk of poverty and are financially dependent from their families. Their situation varied significantly depending on income of other family members and number of children to maintain.

Generally speaking, they don’t believe in finding a job through intermediary of PUP. Meetings are too rare, which made them feel abandoned and when they finally occur are reduced to a mere formality, because there are no job offers. Work organisation is focused on a control of their presence in the office rather than on assisting them in job search. Moreover, some unemployed observed that in an era of Internet, a system of control which demands confirmation of job search activity in a form of document with employers’ stamps and signatures is obsolete and implies unnecessary costs for them in terms of time and paying public transport. Those, who during this or previous registration finished participation in vocational training, don’t find them so useful from the point of view of improvement of work prospects. Their critical remarks concerned, among others, a lack of opportunity to get work experience linked to a subject of training or too general content of training. Whereas apprenticeship and subsidised employment are considered – with a few exceptions – as a substitute of regular employment, a way of getting money, but not improving their chance to get employed without subsidies. The most enthusiastic in their assessment were women who have been taking care of children and household for a longer period. They valued the opportunity to earn money, but also felt empowered. Some of them spoke about activation as stimulus for self-change and improvement of more general well-being.

Based on their experiences, the interviewed unemployed suggested several improvements concerning benefits, services and people-processing:

1. A current level of financial support is far from the one effectively preventing poverty.
2. A person and her/his family should not be deprived from a free access to health care in consequence of sanctions.
3. A focus of workers should be in providing support to job seekers and not on verifying formal requirements.
4. It will be desirable to finance public transport for the unemployed or at least refund tickets for dates of obligatory visits in PUP and referrals to employers.
5. The access to staff providing advice (such as job counsellor) and participation in activation programmes should happen faster after registration in PUP to prevent a person from making mistakes in contact with employers and to counteract the negative effects of unemployment before a person becomes a long-term unemployed.
6. The contact with vocational counsellor should be closer and – if a client – sees such a need should not terminate after a small number of sessions. Otherwise, a vocational counsellor will not support psychologically a person during stressful period of job search.

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<sup>29</sup> This part is based on Sztandar-Sztanderska (2014).



7. Communication between staff and the unemployed in between rare meetings should be two way. It means that if interesting job or activation offers appear a case manager will contact an unemployed and not – as it is today – that it is exclusive responsibility of the unemployed to check offers regularly in order not to miss an opportunity.
8. If needed activation process should last longer than from a few weeks to a few months. It should consist of several measures in order to make chances for employment bigger. For instance, a short training without practical experience does not count from the point of view of employers. It also means that the access to apprenticeships should be also possible for people usually not selected by employers: people aged more than 40 years old, with low or outdated qualifications, with longer breaks in their professional career and mothers.
9. PUP should keep in touch with employers regularly in order to avoid situation of presenting the unemployed with an offer which is no longer vacant.
10. Staff should take responsibility for providing unemployed with information concerning the PUP s/he is looking for and support her in this search if it concerns external institutions.

### **SWEDEN: NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF PES AS OPPOSED TO SERVICE PROVIDERS<sup>30</sup>**

All of the informants were in contact with and registered as unemployed as the local PES. In order to be eligible for financial compensation, unemployment insurance as well as activation support, a registration at the local PES office and compliance with suggestions made by PES caseworkers is required. The informants were very well aware of the imminent threat of losing the financial compensation

In general, the level of knowledge about the system of support offered by PES was low among the informants. Some of them expressed a great deal of frustration in relation to decisions made by caseworkers, where the rationale behind the decisions had not been sufficiently explained. In PES, the heavy workload and the high administrative demands on the caseworkers reduced the possibilities to develop a relation that went beyond a bureaucratic dimension. The face-to-face meetings with caseworkers at PES were described as short, and rare. Meetings are usually organised by the caseworker, who writes a letter to the person, with an invitation for a meeting. The meetings are described as highly focused on job search, on updating of action plans. Issues related to more private matters are generally not discussed. Therefore, most of the long-term unemployed did not see the caseworker at PES as an important channel of support, and they did not think their caseworker had much knowledge about their specific situation or specific needs. The caseworkers are, with some exceptions, described as friendly and professional; and as persons doing what they can under their working conditions. They are all very well aware of the high workload carried out by the caseworkers, and whereas some use this as an explanation as to why caseworkers are not as accessible as they wish, others are frustrated. Generally speaking, caseworkers were important to the long-term unemployed through the referrals to activation programs (standardised procedures), and as monitors of the financial support received by the unemployed (unemployment insurance and activation support). The interviewees neither express any expectations of an improved or intensified contact with their caseworkers at PES, nor do they believe in finding employment thanks to support of PES caseworkers.

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<sup>30</sup> This part is based on Hollertz, Garsten, Jacobsson (2014)

In contrast to their relation to PES, the long-term unemployed described their relations to project staff in the activation projects as more intense and more valuable. The staff was perceived as committed, friendly and with a strong focus on the general well-being of the individual participants. The daily face-to-face meetings and the low staff – long-term unemployed ratio made it possible to get to know each other. There was a broad understanding as to what issues were relevant to discuss: family situation, health related issues, gambling problems etc. where all considered relevant and important aspects of the day-to-day interaction between staff and long-term unemployed. Many of the long-term unemployed had high expectations on the project staff and a strong belief in their ability to support them and also to have a successful transition to the labour market. The content of the project highlighted the responsibility of the unemployed to find an employment. Increased job search intensity improved ability to construct oneself as employable, behaving and dressing appropriately was, in the activation projects, highlighted as important keys for finding employment.

Most long-term unemployed had participated in various projects with similar in content and structure. The long-term unemployed interviewed saw structural barriers (changed demand for labour) and personal life circumstances (e.g. low level of education, migration, psycho-social problems) as the main reasons for their failures to enter the labour market. This raises important questions in relation to personal experiences of “failures” when no jobs are found in spite of multiple and ongoing participation in (different) activation programs. How many times can a person be motivated and; there is an ethical dilemma in terms of a continuous responsabilisation of individuals through the activation programmes. The responsabilisation discourse has to be considered in terms the possible risks of *reducing* the general well being of long-term unemployed by increasing stigma and feelings of social exclusion when failure is followed by failure.

However, participation in the activation programmes was by the majority of informants described as an improvement in relation to personal well being. Receiving support from the project staff, interacting with other long-term unemployed and “getting out of the house” was important and valuable for them. Others described how the activation was a successful way to get out of social isolation and at times, a difficult situation at home. However, there were also critical voices. The strict time frames and the bureaucratic procedures in which referrals to activation programmes were made, reduced the scope for choice and voice for the long-term unemployed.

Only three of the informants mentioned contacts with the municipal social services, and had been taking part in municipal activation programmes as well labour market programmes offered by PES. Some of the informants did not see the social services as a viable option, due to the stigma associated with means tested social services. The encounters with the caseworkers within the municipality were generally described in a more positive way than the encounters with caseworkers within PES. First of all, the caseworkers were perceived to have more knowledge about the entire life situation of the individual, than the caseworkers at PES. Finally, caseworkers within social services in Örebro keep the same clients throughout the entire process, whereas the PES caseworker is replaced depending on participation in labour market programs.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Case studies reveal aspects crucial for the way frontline staff perform people-processing at street-level and for the way long-term unemployed experience this process. We will particularly emphasise the results that give insight into discrepancies between policies' planning and policy in practice and stress more critical results concerning what is actually done in the name of policies integration and activation of individuals.

### **PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS**

First of all, the way individuals are processed depends to an important extent on the significance of procedures in a particular system. Main public actors dealing with long-term unemployed, such as a Jobcentre analysed in Germany and a Public Employment Service in Sweden, represent highly bureaucratized environment in which case managers are not only obliged to follow detailed regulations, but also their work is constantly evaluated through a system of indicators. Some of these elements are also found in case studies, which were carried out in Poland, Italy and France. However, due to a less sophisticated system of surveillance and control, they seem less constraining for the frontline staff. This kind of administrative environment limits space for an actual case management, since a lot of effort is put into proving compliance to rules. Both street-level bureaucrats and service users criticise it for making difficult the development of personalised relation between them.

As observed by Prottas, the margin of manoeuvre of street-level bureaucrats in this kind of environment lies, among others, in the process of control and manipulation of information coming from service users (1979). In order to perform their tasks, frontline staff have to make effort to "fit" individuals into pre-existent administrative categories in order to legitimise access to special resources or programmes, reserved in some of these countries for legally defined vulnerable groups (e.g. Germany, France, UK, Sweden, Poland). Only when a person meets formal criteria of vulnerability (e.g. "functionally impaired" in Sweden, long-term unemployed in UK), more individualised interventions become possible. For a client it might involve a long waiting time, if an official definition of target group includes a long duration of unemployment (e.g. Germany, UK, "regular" job seekers in Sweden). This waiting time is experienced differently, when a personal situation is precarious and a job seeker feels a need for immediate solutions.

With the multiplication of administrative distinctions between service users, introduction of computer-based assessment tools and psychological testing used for the purpose of profiling, mainly well trained and more experienced workers are able to manoeuvre in a complex system. This knowledge and know-how are particularly important in order to deal with difficult life circumstances that were not anticipated by the standardised system.

The people-processing is there in a first step, focused on a legitimisation of use of resources by a formalised categorisation. Even though a process of verification of service entitlements is no longer based on documents (but rather more sophisticated methods are used), this administrative environment retains main characteristics described, among others, as "eligibility-compliance culture" and "management by regulation" (Weishaupt, 2010) as opposed to "self-dependency culture" (Kane and Bane, 1994) and "management by objectives" (Weishaupt, 2010). The latter ones are represented by the UK "black-box" policy.

The Work Programme – targeted at long-term unemployed – is outsourced and public administration is no longer in charge of this group<sup>31</sup>. Indicators play a crucial role there also sometimes followed by a system of performance-based payments. However, there are no detailed procedures to be followed. Therefore, categorisation of clients in this type of environment is performed rather for intervention and payment purposes and not external legitimisation of activities. In these cases, identification of life- and work-related problems tend to be ongoing process with a more active role of a service user himself/herself, which is positively evaluated by both frontline staff and long-term unemployed.

Second of all, frontline staff's autonomy in relation to clients is constraint by levels and types of resources. By “resources” we mean, not only what they use in their work with clients (number and types of benefits and services), but also personal resources: for instance, how much time they have for each task they carry out. Regarding this first point, we found out that in many organisations under study, street-level bureaucrats, especially those working in bureaucratic environments, complain about not only insufficient number of instruments, but also their inadequacy to work with vulnerable individuals. By vulnerable individuals they do not necessarily mean, the clients which are defined as such by top-down criteria. The problems arise when target groups as well as types of instruments are top-down defined. People, whose problems, are not taken into account at all or not taken into account at this particular stage of activation, are marginalised by the system.

What seems to be common for frontline staff in various institutional and organisational contexts, is the experience of the tensions triggered by the fact that the target population has become more heterogeneous. All people, also those “distant from labour market”, are supposed to be activated according to new objectives, no matter if their work prospects might be actually improved. Frontline staff also criticised the predominance of cheaper job search activities, single programmes that have no continuation and which are all similar in content over a more comprehensive and long-term approach (see, case studies in Poland, France and in Sweden in regards of “regular” job seekers).

However, one should remember about the differences in this respect between various case studies, various organisations in each case or even various types of caseworkers. Hence, instead of universal service provision, we observe deepening differentiation of working conditions in organisations responsible for service implementation. Various street-level bureaucrats have unequal access to instruments. It depends on where they work and with what target group. Therefore, in our relatively small sample, we found street-level bureaucrats who were rather satisfied with what they can offer to individuals with multiple-problems (e.g. case managers in Germany and UK, caseworkers in rehabilitation team in Sweden) as well as frontline staff, whose predominant experience was “having their hands tied” so to speak. To sum up, due to this increasing differentiation of working conditions, it is rather difficult to formulate specific recommendations instead of general ones. For this reason, we highly recommend reading of the national reports.

As regards to the question of street-level bureaucrats' time resources, despite significant differences, we can observe similar time allotment strategies such as, massive processing, discouraging people from using services and creaming. What differs is the scope of responsibilities of staff. It depends on, first of all, organisation they work in and, second, their professional role in it (regular *versus* specialised staff). For instance, there are huge inter- and intra-organisational differences when it comes to clients-street-level bureaucrat ratio.

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<sup>31</sup> Also some publicly financed services delivered by private actors and non-governmental organisations might be qualified as such, but not in all cases.

For this reason, in some organisations or in case of selected types of frontline workers, it is hardly possible to perform any case management at all. The most extreme examples would probably be job placement agents from PUP in Poland and from CPI in Italy, whose role is in effect mainly bureaucratic one. Moreover, this ratio gives only limited insight into daily working conditions, because responsibilities vary significantly. They might be top-down defined or might be defined partially or not at all. Its definition might include several aspects: the administrative responsibilities as well as the content of work with clients (what is discussed, for how long), form of contact (e.g. email, telephone, face-to-face contact) and level of its standardisation and frequency. To give some examples: while there are no regulations in UK defining when the first and latter contacts after entering Work Programme take place, Swedish PES staff at the first stage of activation is obliged to control “regular” job seekers minimum once a month and verify a person’s job search activities according to his/her action plan. In order to deal with these imposed responsibilities, Swedish PES caseworkers – similarly to other interviewees whose tasks are top-down defined – develop various strategies to limit time devoted to people they meet with and manage all the paperwork. These working conditions, which were planned as a way of controlling policy delivery, translate into depersonalisation of relations with most of the clients, since – at least some of these contacts – are experienced as useless from the point of view of job search and mere formality. On the other hand, no regulations concerning the frequency of meetings – as it is a case in UK – might lead to selection of most promising cases and leaving behind people, who portends badly for the future (creaming and parking).

## **PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED**

In the case of long-term unemployed interviewees, one of the first observations made of the reconstruction of their encounters with welfare and employment agencies is escalating compulsion. Qualitative evidence confirms that in all cases under study (with exception of Italy, but it will change soon, since reforms have started already), we observe an increasing conditionality of social rights. Coordination of services is not only serving empowerment, but also, or even primordially, serving social control. The institutionalisation of links between organisations or institutional mergers create “chains of conditionality”. Hence, coordination of employment and social policies means that even if a person decides to contact a public institution, because of one specific problem, not only this specific issue is investigated and dealt with. In order to have access to, for instance, social assistance (e.g. Germany, France, Sweden, Poland) or health care (e.g. Poland), a person himself/herself is obliged to become an object of assessment that includes other life spheres and her/his behaviour. Moreover, being excluded by a system where services are coordinated is not equivalent to being excluded by a single public organisation. The power asymmetry between citizens and street-level bureaucrats increases. Instead of losing one service a person risks losing many of them. Therefore, in such coordinated systems both sanctions and non-take up might have more severe social consequences.



Second of all, we analysed how people, who apply for these services, manage to get information that is necessary in order to find one's way through the system and to make informed choices. The general problem is that service users often lack this kind of information and they are dependent in this respect on street-level bureaucrats, for whom it is advantageous to retain control of the process. Moreover, many of our interviewees also lack skills needed for understanding the rationale of the system. Almost everywhere, long-term unemployed interviewees experienced insecurity and frustration resulting from the lack of knowledge and difficulties to understand options they actually have, which limits possibilities to play an active role in activation process and decrease their chances for improvement of well-being and work prospects. This power asymmetry is partially compensated for, if both the activation process and institutional path are relatively standardised. However, if this is not the case, people with less skills risk to be lost and "parked" for a while, whereas those better equipped are able to get through. This might be particularly the case in the UK "black-box" policy.

Reforms aiming at the coordination of services only sometimes and under specific conditions create a system which is more transparent for its users. For instance, a creation of German Jobcentre as one-stop-shop was from this point of view relatively successful, whereas the introduction of a "single referee" for RSA recipients in France did not change the fact that local institutional network is very complicated and many people circulate between different organisations without really knowing who their "single referee" is. The same problem of lack of transparency of street-bureaucrats' tasks division and fragmentation of services might be observed in one organisation, the Centres of Vocational Activation in Polish PUP, which were created with the intent of regrouping all employment services in one place. These findings confirm a need to study daily encounters between service users and frontline staff in order to continuously confront policy planning with policy practice.

Moreover, there are several aspects of relations of long-term unemployed with street-level bureaucrats that impact the well-being of clients (and also their work prospects, even though this influence is not straight forward). All interviewees seem to appreciate a stable contact with one trustworthy person. They value a possibility to be listened to, without time pressure and when the need occurs. It means they are in favour of the idea of case management, provided that – since there is a personal connection involved – they have a right to change their caseworker. Also it is important to keep a margin of manoeuvre when it comes to the frequency of meetings. They criticised administrative requirements, imposing dates of meetings, if a caseworker had nothing to offer at all. What also disrupts the trust is a combination of contradictory roles played by caseworkers: the one of counsellor with the one of controller.

However, case management is not as widespread as one might think. Many interviewed unemployed were officially assigned one person, but in practice s/he was often inaccessible due to difficult working conditions. We discovered that assigned caseworkers change a lot with staff turnover (e.g. case study in Germany), referrals to other organisations (e.g. case study in France) and shift to other stages of activation (e.g. of "regular" job seekers in Sweden). Moreover, it is difficult to establish a personal connection in a certain setting or with too standardised communication tools. For instance, transparent or open-space rooms tend to shape impersonal relations. Possibilities to meet in a friendlier atmosphere or even outside the office were highly appreciated. The negative experience of being the passive object of intervention also occurs when members of staff use mostly standardised interviews and information technologies instead of conversation. However, for this purpose, street-level bureaucrats need experience, personal and professional skills.



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## Appendix 1 - Socio-Economic Statistics

Below are presented certain rates indicating the scale of the problem of unemployment and social exclusion in countries which participate in the project and regions in which the WP4 cases have been conducted. The data comes from EU-SILC and has been worked out for the WP3. Available data is diversified in the aspects of time and territory. In most of the cases the latest data is from 2011. Not all the cases have the regional data available. Taking it into consideration we adopted a principle to present both the national data and, if available, regional data. As a part of WP7 the research has been conducted in only one city per country. But because the data is anonymous, we decided to present the rates for all three cities per country. The presented rates do not show the whole complexity of social-economic situation, they are only meant to present the wider context of the analysis presented above.

Gini index presents the general image of the economic stratification in society. It takes only a look at figure 1 to realize that this index is very similar for all the countries participating in the project. Only in Sweden the inequality level is lower compared to other countries. The regional rates also are on similar levels. The data presented in table 1 indicates the diversity of the Gini index in the years 2000-2010. According to the data, this rate is stable in the Western Europe countries. But in contrast one can notice significant changes in the case of Poland. In 2000 the rate stood at 0,29, but in 2005 it grew to 0,34 and again fell in 2010 to 0,3. It denotes the economic changes of the first decade of 20th century in Poland, which had an essential influence over the economic stratification.

The available data concerning the levels of long-term unemployment indicates a big diversity among the compared countries and regions (figure 2). In 2011 the lowest long-term unemployment level was in Sweden (19%), the highest levels were in Italy (52%) and Germany (48%). The long-term unemployment has a diversified dynamics in each country (table 2). It's most stable in France (where between the years 1999 and 2011 it oscillated between 37,4% in 2009 and 43,5% in 2011) and in Germany (45,5% in 2009 and 56,6% in 2008). The biggest variability is seen in Italy (it oscillates between 44,4% and 62,2%) and in Poland (30,3% and 57,7%).

In 2011 in the majority of researched countries the unemployment rate among young people exceeded 20% (figure 3). Only Germany stands out, the unemployment rate among young people there is two times lower when compared to the next (when it comes to the percentage of unemployment) Sweden. In the case of Germany the regional diversity is also big. The difference between the regions with the lowest and the highest level of unemployment of young people can exceed almost three times. Additionally the presented data shows the percentage of unemployed and not in any education and training young people (figure 4). This data indicates that in 2011 the problem of young people unemployment was the biggest in Italy, where 25% of people between the age of 18 and 24 had no job and at the same time they did not study. In other countries this rate is lower.

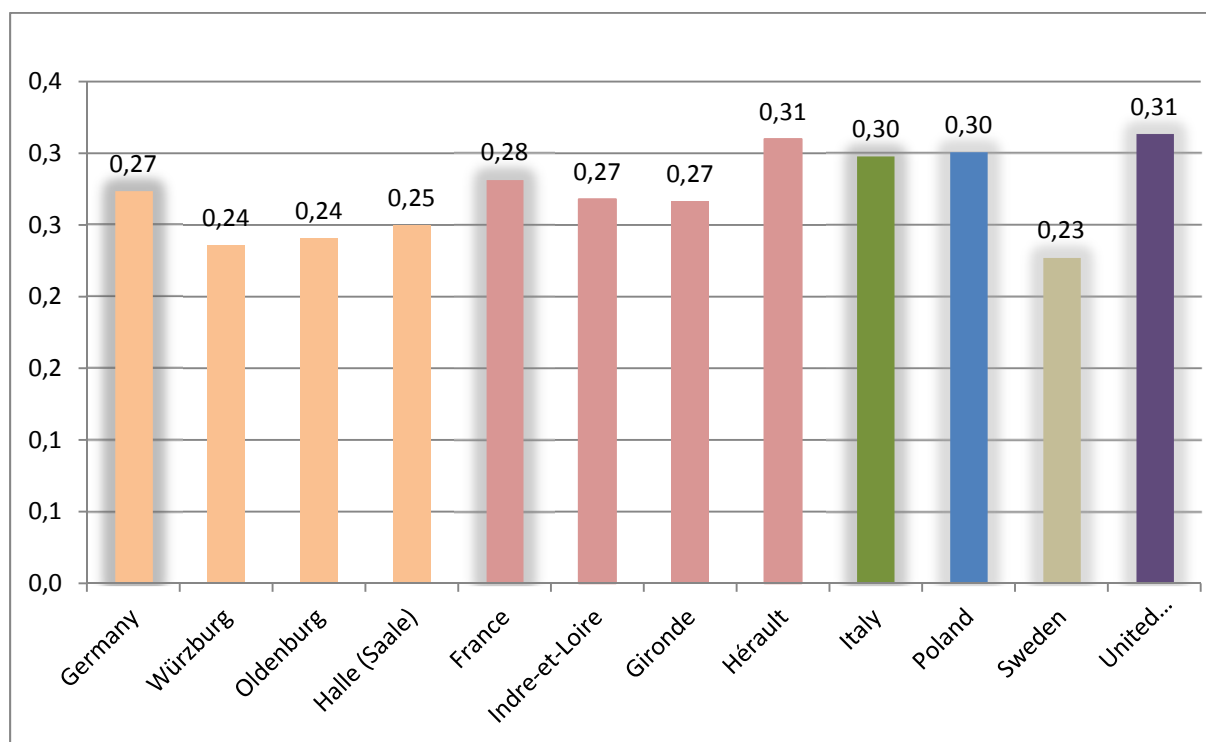
Two last charts present the rates indirectly measuring the scale of social exclusion and poverty. Firstly the population of people living in households with very low work intensity (aged 0 to 59 years, in % of population)<sup>32</sup> has been presented. This rate oscillates between 6% in the case of Sweden and up to 13%

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<sup>32</sup> The intensity of housework is calculated by dividing the total amount of months worked by the working-age members of the household, by the sum total of the months in which these members can work during the year preceding the survey. Working-age people are defined as individuals aged 18-59; excluded people aged 18-24 who are students. The work intensity is measured in values ranging from 0 to 1.

in the case of UK. According to the data, these rates are stable for all the countries excluding Poland. Next the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, in % of population<sup>33</sup> (figure 6) has been presented. The biggest percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion lived in 2010 in Poland (28%) and Italy (25%), the lowest rate is seen in Sweden (15%). The big diversity among the regions in Italy stands out – in the case of Naples it's 44%, but only 15% in the case of Milan.

**Figure 1 Inequality of disposable household income (Gini index), 2010**



**Table 1 Inequality of disposable household income (Gini index)**

	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Germany	0,280	0,280	0,290	0,248	0,250	0,280	0,281	0,277	0,274
Würzburg	0,231	0,240	0,271	0,252	0,265	0,261	0,268	0,243	0,236
Oldenburg	0,246	0,240	0,241	0,220	0,248	0,253	0,249	0,255	0,241
Halle (Saale)	0,204	0,218	0,212	0,219	0,230	0,226	0,227	0,239	0,250
France	0,280	0,270	0,267	0,266	0,260	0,252	0,274	0,277	0,282
Indre-et-Loire			0,230	0,223	0,218	0,238	0,255	0,264	0,268
Gironde			0,269	0,274	0,263	0,243	0,276	0,278	0,266
Hérault			0,287	0,293	0,273	0,274	0,290	0,296	0,310
Italy	0,290		0,315	0,309	0,308	0,310	0,297	0,301	0,298

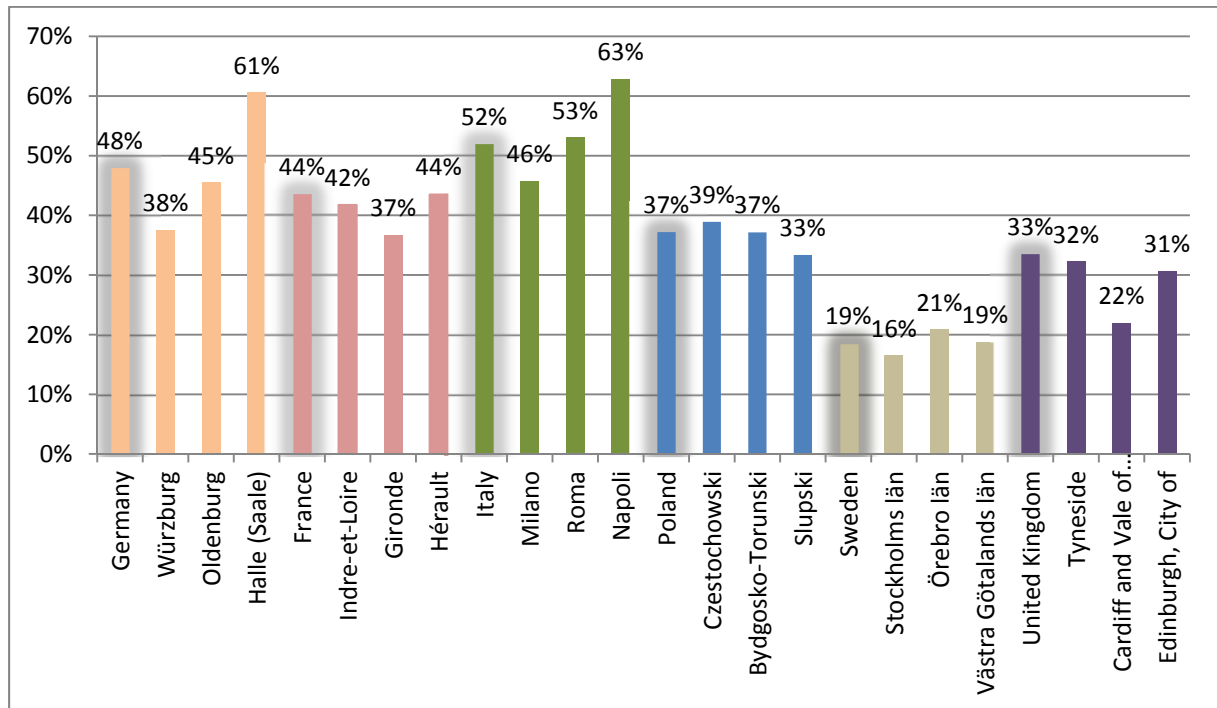
People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 living in households where the adults (aged 18-59) work less than 20% of their total work potential during the past year. Source <http://www.idescat.cat/economia/inec?tc=7&id=8511&lang=en> (available 29.04.13)

<sup>33</sup> People at risk of poverty are persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income. <http://www.idescat.cat/economia/inec?tc=7&id=8510&lang=en> (available 29.04.13)

Milano	0,250								
Roma	0,280								
Napoli	0,270								
Poland	0,293			0,343	0,324	0,310	0,307	0,299	0,301
Czestochowski	0,247								
Bydgosko-Torunski	0,303								
Slupski	0,294								
Sweden	0,240	0,230	0,220	0,221	0,226	0,222	0,224	0,232	0,227
Stockholms län	0,290								
Örebro län	0,220								
Västra Götalands län	0,220								
United Kingdom	0,317	0,315	0,311	0,311	0,315	0,317	0,313	0,314	0,313
Tyneside	0,310								
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	0,330								
Edinburgh, City of	0,260								

Source: Calculations based on the EU-SILC

Figure 2 Long-term unemployment rate (in % of total unemployment) 2011



**Table 2 Long-term unemployment rate (in % of total unemployment)**

	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Germany	51,8	50,4	50,0	53,1	56,6	52,6	45,5	47,4	48,0
Würzburg	48,1	49,3	34,4	41,3	43,8	38,8	31,5	36,8	37,5
Oldenburg	45,6	46,3	53,5	51,9	54,0	49,8	43,5	44,9	45,5
Halle (Saale)					64,1	63,6	57,7	56,6	60,6
France	38,9	37,9	40,9	42,5	42,6	40,3	37,4	42,0	43,5
Indre-et-Loire	32,8	31,3	31,5	33,9	37,2	30,0	34,5	39,2	41,8
Gironde	36,1	33,8	39,3	35,2	35,6	32,9	31,4	37,0	36,7
Hérault	44,6	45,8	42,3	39,8	46,8	44,9	42,7	47,2	43,5
Italy	61,5	62,2	58,1	49,9	47,4	45,7	44,4	48,5	51,9
Milano	43,4	40,7	35,1	33,8	34,4	34,6	33,6	42,0	45,7
Roma	68,9	71,4	66,1	52,8	51,1	44,2	50,3	48,9	53,0
Napoli	75,5	77,1	74,5	60,4	54,2	57,1	57,3	59,3	62,8
Poland	41,6	50,2	56,0	57,7	51,3	33,5	30,3	31,1	37,2
Czestochowski	37,0	59,7	60,2	63,9	58,8	32,3	29,6	32,6	38,9
Bydgosko-Torunski	41,3	50,3	55,7	58,4	56,8	36,4	28,9	31,0	37,2
Slupski	42,2	41,9	42,0	50,1	42,4	27,4	18,7	25,2	33,4
Sweden	29,5	20,9	17,7	17,2	13,8	12,7	13,3	17,8	18,6
Stockholms län	18,5	11,9	13,7		15,6	14,2	13,9	16,7	16,5
Örebro län	28,0	20,9	19,8		18,8	16,4	17,3	20,5	20,8
Västra Götalands län	28,8	19,7	17,7		13,5	11,3	12,2	19,4	18,8
United Kingdom	29,6	25,3	21,4	21,1	23,8	24,1	24,6	32,7	33,5
Tyneside	32,9	33,0	21,2	21,7	26,1	24,0	30,8	35,9	32,2
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	21,9	30,8	12,3	22,4	21,2	18,6	23,4	32,8	21,9
Edinburgh, City of	28,3	27,9	20,5	18,0	22,3	18,6	22,1	26,9	30,7

Source: Calculations based on the EU-SILC



Figure 3 Youth unemployment rate (less than 25 year) 2011

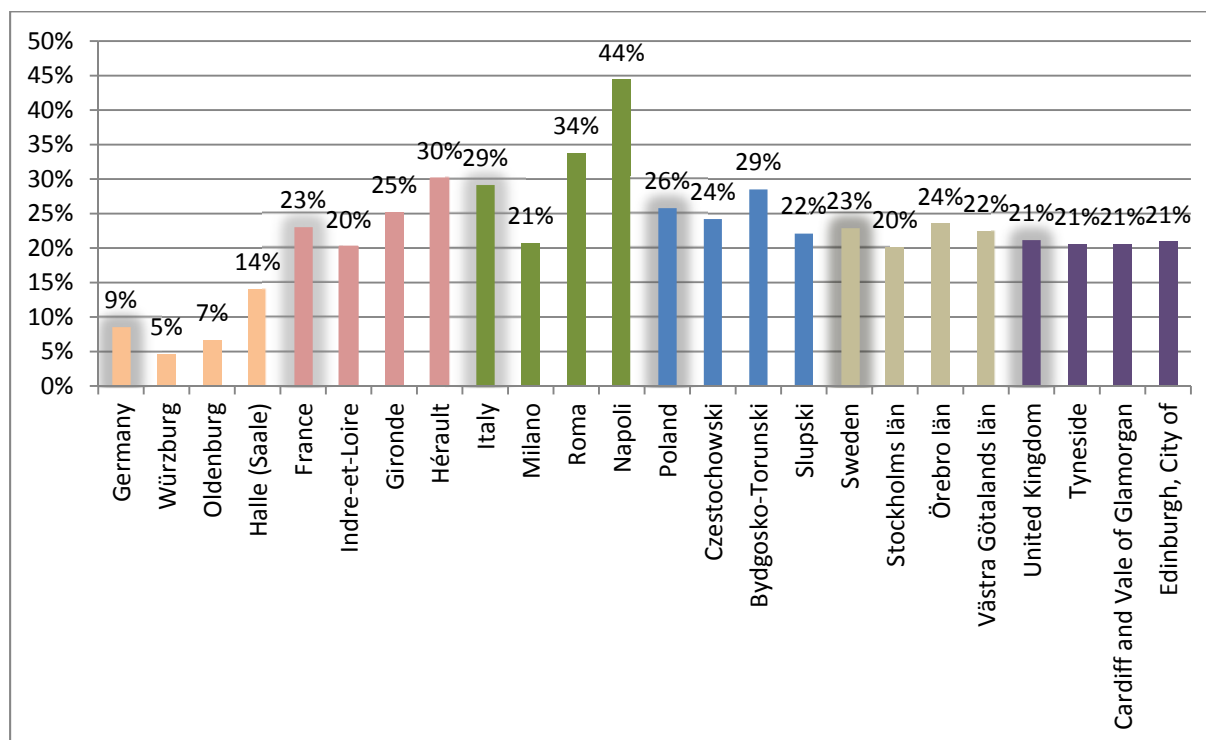


Table 3 Youth unemployment rate (less than 25 year)

	1999	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Germany	8,9	7,8	11	15,5	13,7	11,9	10,5	11,2	9,9	8,6
Würzburg	9,4	3,8	8,2	15,9	10,3	10,6	6,7	9,7	8,5	4,6
Oldenburg	7,8	7,6	9,2	14,1	13	10,3	9,1	9,2	9,4	6,6
Halle (Saale)						19,3	18,3	16	13,1	14
France	26,3	19	19,1	21,2	22,3	19,6	19,1	23,3	23,4	23
Indre-et-Loire	21,1	16	15,7	20,7	19,8	15,1	14,2	18,3	16,2	20,2
Gironde	28,5	23	17,8	17,1	19,6	20,1	20,7	21,9	24,4	25,2
Hérault	31,5	30,8	23,6	26,1	28,1	26	26,1	32,9	33,1	30,1
Italy	32,9	28,2	27,1	24	21,6	20,3	21,3	25,4	27,8	29,1
Milano	14,5	10	10,9	13	12,3	12,9	12,5	18,5	19,8	20,7
Roma	43,2	35,7	33,7	26,5	25,7	24,9	26,2	30,6	31,1	33,7
Napoli	62,6	59,8	58,4	38,8	35,4	32,5	32,4	38,1	41,9	44,4
Poland	29,6	39,5	41,9	36,9	30,1	21,7	17,3	20,6	23,7	25,8
Czesochowski	23	40,5	46,1	38,8	29,8	17,5	17,2	18,3	24	24,2
Bydgosko-Torunski	31	39,9	45,2	39,1	31,1	22,9	19	21,5	25,5	28,5
Slupski	16,4	37,1	41,4	36,3	27,3	20,8	11,3	16,2	21	22,1
Sweden	16,3	11,7	13,7	21,9	21,5	19,3	20,2	25	25,2	22,9

Stockholms län	8,5	8,9	12,7	21,6	19,5	20,1	18,1	22,1	21,5	20,1
Örebro län	20,9	13,5	14,9	22,3	23,1	20,2	22,1	26,2	27,1	23,5
Västra Götalands län	14,7	10,4	11,9	21,3	20,4	17,7	20,5	24,8	25,7	22,4
United Kingdom	12,4	11,8	12,3	12,8	14	14,3	15	19,1	19,6	21,1
Tyneside	17,4	14,4	14,3	16,1	14,6	14,8	19,3	23,3	21,2	20,5
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	17,5	10,5	11,5	9,7	11,5	14	14,1	16,1	20,8	20,5
Edinburgh, City of	16,7	12,5	12,7	12,8	15,8	15,3	14,8	20,5	19,7	20,9

Source: Calculations based on the EU-SILC

Figure 4 Young people aged 18-24 not in employment and not in any education and training, 2011

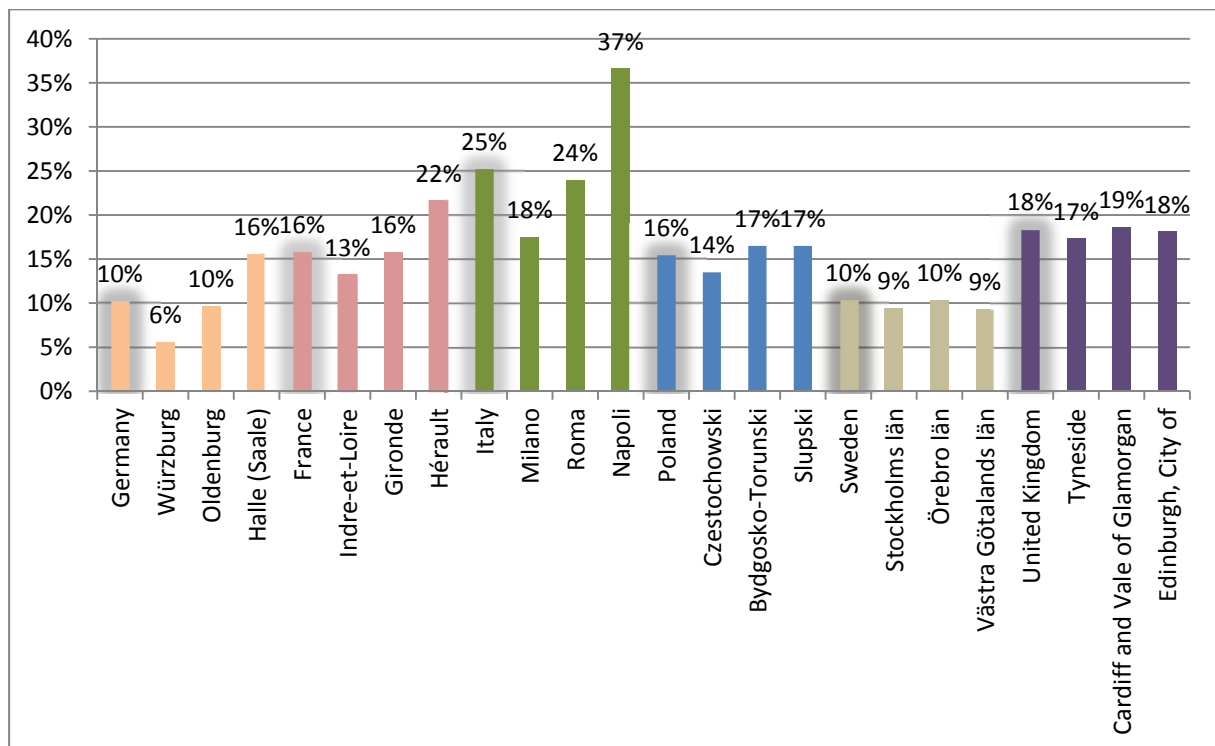


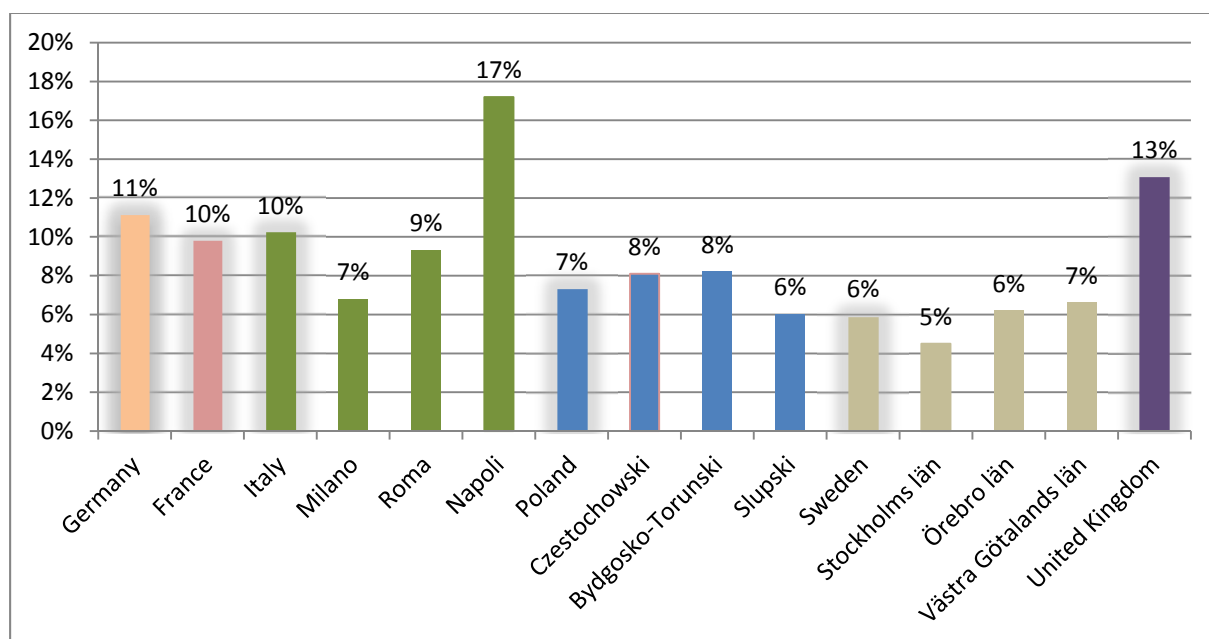
Table 4 Young people aged 18-24 not in employment and not in any education and training

	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Germany	10,8	13,8	14,6	15,6	13,8	12,6	11,8	12,1	11,4	10,2
Würzburg	7	11,4	12,8	15,6	10,8	10,6	7	8,7	9	5,6
Oldenburg	12,3	14,2	13,4	16,4	13,8	12,3	11	11,4	11,8	9,7
Halle (Saale)	0	0	0	0	0	17,1	17	15,7	14,5	15,6
France	13,2	13,5	14,2	14,5	14,7	13,7	13,5	16,5	16,3	15,8
Indre-et-Loire	12,7	12,2	15,4	16,7	12,6	10,3	12,6	14,5	12,1	13,2
Gironde	15,1	12,8	12,1	12,8	13	13,8	12,4	16,7	14,7	15,8
Hérault	19,8	16,3	18,4	21,5	20	19,7	18,1	23,4	24,2	21,6
Italy	22	20,2	20,3	21,1	20,6	20,1	20,7	22,4	24,2	25,2

Milano	8,8	8,7	12,2	12,4	11,9	11,7	13,7	15,9	18,1	17,5
Roma	21,5	20,3	18,6	19,2	18,5	16,7	16,9	17,7	20,8	24
Napoli	41,1	36,6	33,1	32	32	34,2	34,3	34,2	36,6	36,6
Poland	23,7	22,8	20,4	18,7	17,2	14,5	12,3	13,8	14,5	15,5
Czestochowski	24,6	24,1	20,7	18,6	17,3	12,4	11,1	11	14,1	13,5
Bydgosko-Torunski	28,5	27	24,1	22,4	19,8	17,2	13,8	17,1	17,6	16,5
Slupski	22,1	21,9	20,8	18,5	18,5	16,6	13,1	13	14,8	16,5
Sweden	9,3	9,6	10,6	12,8	12,3	10,1	10,7	13,1	10,6	10,3
Stockholms län	9	9,1	11,3	12,3	12	10,2	10,4	11,4	9,7	9,4
Örebro län	10,2	9,4	11,6	13,2	13	11,1	10,9	13,4	11	10,3
Västra Götalands län	8,5	8,8	9,7	13,8	10,6	9,2	10,3	12,6	9,5	9,3
United Kingdom	14	10,8	10,1	10,2	10,5	14,9	15,4	17,1	17,7	18,4
Tyneside	14,6	9,9	10,2	12,5	8,9	12,9	17,2	19,8	21,6	17,3
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	14,2	10,3	0	0	0	14,5	14	17,7	21,2	18,6
Edinburgh, City of	12,2	8,4	8,4	9,7	11	16	12,8	18	17,9	18,1

Source: Calculations based on the EU-SILC

**Figure 5 People living in households with very low work intensity (population aged 0 to 59 years, in % of population), 2010**



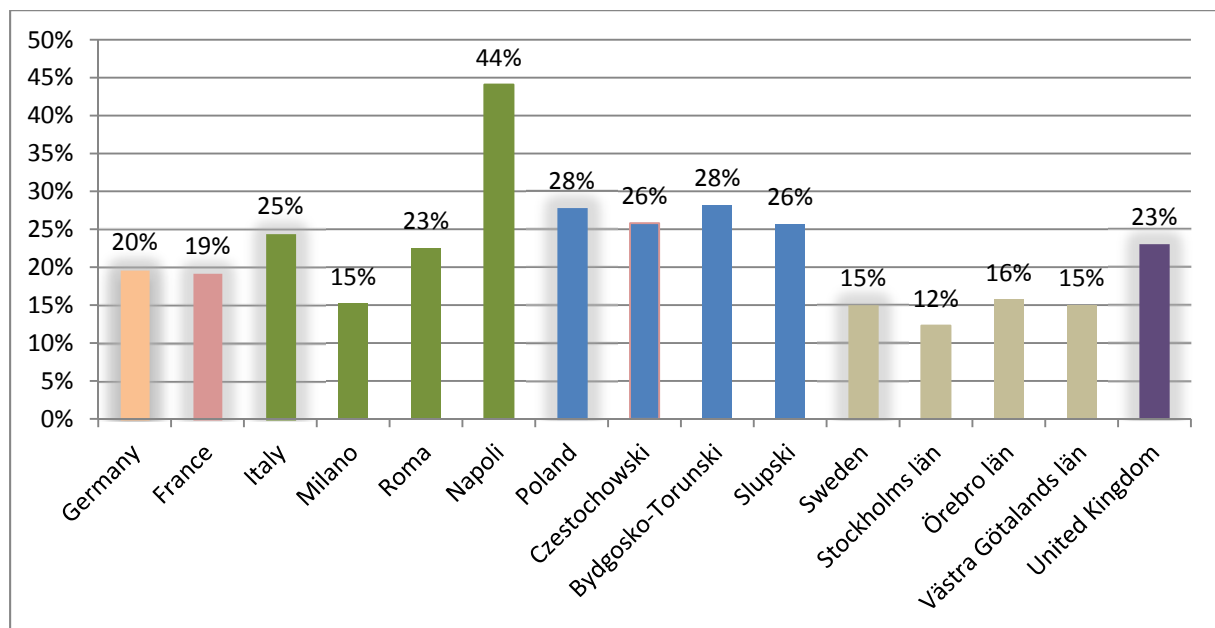
**Table 5 People living in households with very low work intensity (population aged 0 to 59 years, in % of population)**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Germany		11,9	13,5	11,4	11,6	10,8	11,1
France	10,2	8,6	9,1	9,5	8,8	8,3	9,8

Italy	12	10,3	10,8	10	9,8	8,8	10,2
Milano	7	6	7,2	6,6	5	5,9	6,8
Roma	12,5	8,8	11,1	10,4	10,4	8,7	9,3
Napoli	20,6	20,5	18,4	14,9	18,1	15	17,2
Poland		14,2	12,3	10	7,9	6,9	7,3
Czestochowski		15,4	12,9	10,9	9,9	8,4	8,1
Bydgosko-Torunski		15,5	14,6	11,8	9,8	8,5	8,2
Slupski		16,6	12,3	9,8	6,4	6,2	6
Sweden	8,5	7,5	6,6	5,9	5,4	6,2	5,9
Stockholms län					5,3	5,6	4,5
Örebro län					5,6	7,6	6,2
Västra Götalands län					5,4	5,4	6,6
United Kingdom		12,8	12	10,3	10,4	12,6	13,1

Source: Calculations based on the EU-SILC

**Figure 6 People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, in % of population, 2010**



**Table 6 People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, in % of population**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Germany		18,4	20,2	20,6	20,1	20	19,7
France	19,8	18,9	18,8	19	18,6	18,5	19,2
Italy	26,4	25	25,9	26,1	25,3	24,7	24,5
Milano	15,6	13,6	15,3	15,9	14	15,1	15,2
Roma	25	21,8	22,8	23,9	22,8	22,9	22,5
Napoli	44,8	42,5	44,7	46,3	46,9	42,6	44,1

Poland		45,3	39,5	34,4	30,5	27,8	27,8
Czestochowski		39,1	34,3	30,6	29	26,7	25,8
Bydgosko-Torunski		48,5	42,7	36,9	29,2	25,8	28,2
Slupski		45,1	40,1	36,3	31,6	28,4	25,7
Sweden	16,9	14,4	16,3	13,9	14,9	15,9	15
Stockholms län					14	13,8	12,3
Örebro län					15	15,7	15,7
Västra Götalands län					14,5	14,6	15
United Kingdom		24,8	23,7	22,6	23,2	22	23,1

Source: Calculations based on the EU-SILC