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**Stream 27: Linking ‘doing policy’ and ‘policy delivery’: Frontline delivery of welfare-to-work policies in Europe (Van Berkel/Caswell/Larsen)**

Title: **Worlds of individualization: The delivery of active labour market services in Italy, Germany and the UK**

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**Main issue analysed in the paper (about 100 words):**

The individualization of employment and social services is a key component of the European Employment Strategy (Van Berkel and Valkenburg, 2007). Nevertheless, empirical research on the delivery of individualized employment and social services is still underdeveloped. This is lamentable because despite a universal policy discourse of employability, activation and individualization emanating from the EU and the OECD, the delivery of individualized services is organized differently across welfare states, with indeterminate outcomes for citizens. In this paper, we explore different approaches to service individualization in three European welfare states: Italy, Germany and the UK.

**Type of methodology and sources of data/information used for the analysis (about 200 words):**

The main goal of this paper is to shed light on the individualization of employment services in three country cases, focusing on the final stage of the policy-making process: service delivery at the street-level. The focus is on the interplay between two factors: the instruments available to street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) and the discretion that SLBs have during client treatment. By showing that several ‘worlds of individualization’ exist in practice, we aim to demonstrate how the interplay between policy instruments/regulations and discretion influences the type and effectiveness of individualization policies at the implementation level.

We compare the delivery of active labour market services in three local employment centres in Italy, Germany, and the UK. The country selection – conducted in the context of a broader research project (LOCALISE) – reflected different activation regimes (Serrano Pascual, 2007), with Germany as a ‘civic contractualism regime’, Italy as a ‘fragmented provision regime’ and the UK as an ‘economic springboard regime’. Our aim is thus to analyse individualization practices in different activation regimes. The selected local employment centres provided sizeable activation services and implemented innovative programmes for long-term unemployed beneficiaries. Our analysis is based on 24 semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analyses.

**Main findings expected from the analysis (about 200 words):**

In the Italian case, resources and programmatic frameworks for activation are designed at the regional and/or national level, leaving little room for manoeuvre to SLBs and local managers during the implementation stage. Individualization is actualized on a project basis and services are delivered according to resource/place availability and pre-defined targets. In the German case, in spite of the existence of efficient horizontal and vertical networks between service organizations, individualization turns out to be relatively standardized in many cases, certainly so for ‘regular’ clients. As for the UK case, the orientation towards results (i.e., the number of people being effectively re-employed) and the great degree of freedom left to private service providers in the implementation of the (now terminated) Work Programme leave room for the substantial risk that SLBs favour promising jobseekers while paying less attention to the most vulnerable ones.

Overall, our paper shows that there is no single type of individualisation but several ‘worlds’ of service individualization, shaped in particular by different policy regulations, local organizational contexts and procedural routines at the street-level.