

Mateja Peternel

The Minimum Wages in European Welfare States -To be or Not to be, and in What Form- That is the Question!

European countries have different social security systems, depending on their traditional understanding of the role of labour and capital. Nevertheless, over the last 30 years all (three) welfare states have been hit by the growing inequality, poverty and unemployment. The institute of the minimum wage has been under scrutiny for a long period of time; the characteristics of the minimum wage concerning the bargaining parties, coverage, differentiation, level, and indexation differ across Europe. Discussion has recently focused on the role and form of the minimum wage in the unified Europe. A model which brings together a centralised wage bargaining system and a restrictive monetary policy suggests that the European Central Bank independence calls for a harmonised (by no means a fully harmonised) wage bargaining system in the Union, which should buffer the pressure of the growing unemployment. A convergence of social policies will be difficult to achieve in view of the fact that Member States do not share the same ideology of a welfare state.

dr. Pavle Sicherl in Matija Remec

An analysis of the survey on labour force flexibility in Slovenia

The results of the survey on Slovenia's labour force flexibility have shown that fixed-term employment has become an important form of employment; the share of workers employed for a fixed term has reached about 12%, about the same as in the EU on average. Part-time work, on the other hand, is much less common and is therefore not an important category of employment. Work for an indefinite period of time still prevails, representing a 64% share, followed by fixed-term employment (12%) and self-employment (8%). Most respondents reported a 40-hour working week in their main activity. Men worked more hours a week than women both in their main and all other activities. Further, 18% of respondents said they did voluntary work, while 50% of them said they did unpaid work for friends and relatives at least once a month. A standard working time prevailed (45%), work in shifts was done by 22% of respondents, while 11% of them enjoyed a flexible working time. About 30% of respondents said they would like to work fewer hours and 5% said they would like to work more hours. As much as 39% of men and 50% of women commuted to work, while 6% of them worked at home.

Most Slovenians were generally satisfied with their positions in the main activity of work as regards various aspects of work satisfaction, except earnings. Work was placed high in their value systems. Close to 50% of respondents said that work never or rarely prevented them from doing household chores or spending time with their family or friends. The reconciliation of work and private life did not seem to be a major problem. As regards families, work played a different role, but the reconciliation of professional and private lives was also satisfactory. Slovenian households were relatively well equipped with household appliances. About 78% of respondents were owner-occupiers.

The last part divides employees into three categories, depending on the desired and undesired forms of flexibility. These flexibility categories showed statistically significant differences in (objective) work-related characteristics and very few statistically significant differences in (subjective) opinions concerning possible work/family conflicts or consensus about family issues.

dr. Milan Vodopivec

Invite a jazz trio to play in the class. How to reform Slovenia's higher education?

Transition has not yet brought about any major changes in Slovenia's higher education. One of the main new features is the entry of new independent higher education institutions following the new legislation and progress made in granting concessions. Nevertheless, the two universities have retained their dominant positions and, as a result, education and science are still influenced by politics and ideology. Curricula continue to be too academic and burdened with fact-learning, while

teaching methods suffer from the lack of student-oriented approaches, innovation, imagination and joy.

These weaknesses are most evident in the persisting gap between teachers and students. Unfortunately, we are still far from a creative environment seen in some institutions abroad where it is contemptible to cheat at exams, where students and teachers go on a trip to the mountains at the beginning of the academic year, where teachers invite students to their homes to discuss professional issues, where a jazz group is invited to play in the class for students to see how they can improve their team work, where teachers are willing to lend an ear to each student etc. This is in stark contrast to the situation in Slovenia, where a teacher once said to a student that his individual consultation is on Tuesdays instead of giving the student information he wanted.

The article first lists the main weaknesses of Slovenia's higher education. Then it summarises approaches to reforming higher education seen in other countries (where circumstances are frequently similar to Slovenia's). We focus on two mechanisms which we believe will contribute the most to improving the quality and accessibility of higher education, namely the stimulation of competition and the introduction of a deferred fee. Finally, the article summarises the main findings and recommendations.

dr. Milena Bevc

Justice in financing education and other aspects of education-related justice. What does evidence from other countries show?

The article presents some of the main steps necessary to analyse justice in the public financing of education. Firstly, we define various aspects of the notion of justice in education. Secondly, we present the main methodological approaches to measuring justice in financing education. Thirdly, we show the results of an analysis of justice in education systems of OECD countries and European countries in transition. We also show the results of some of the few national analyses of justice in the public financing of education. Finally, we give some conclusions, giving a particular attention to justice in the public financing of education.

dr. Milena Bevc, dr. Tine Stanovnik, mag. Valentina Prevolnik-Rupel

An analysis of justice in Slovenia's public financing of education

The article presents the first empirical analysis of justice in the public financing of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Slovenia. Its main part consists of an analysis of public expenditure distribution between different socio-economic groups of the population. This distribution is compared to the income distribution of households by deciles. In order to arrive at a synthesised assessment of justice (presented at the end of the article), we also show income distribution between different heads of households depending on their education levels (as well as income distribution depending on the socio-economic position of the schooling family members). Finally, we propose possible directions for further analysis of the finding from this article that the financing of higher education in Slovenian public institutions is unjust.