

Flexicurity in Europe. History and possibilities.

Contributed by Peter Ludvigsen & Udo Wiesinger
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Preliminary concept for a possible cooperation in WORKLAB about the European working market - actual and historical.

See also an article about flexicurity by Per Kongshøj Madsen, Carman Institute, University of Aalborg for information.

Introduction

Companies, sectors, national governments and, last but not least, the European Union as a whole are currently facing a double bind or a twofold expectation. On the one hand there is strong demand for further flexibilisation of labour markets, employment and the work organisation, while at same time an equally strong demand exists for providing security to vulnerable groups of employees and to other outsiders in the labour market.

In the modern labour markets, many employers are beginning to realise that they might have an interest in stable employment relations and in retaining employees who are loyal and well qualified. On their part, many employees have realised that to be able to adjust their work life to more individual preferences, they too have an interest in more flexibility in the organising of the work and e.g. in the balance between work and family life.

During the last years the model from a start in Holland has been developed specially in Denmark and is now known as the Danish Flexicurity Model.

The starting point for the project is that a model of that kind does not materialise itself overnight. The state of flexicurity in Denmark is a result of a gradual process of political and social struggles. It started exactly in 1898 and has been filled with strikes, conflicts and compromises during the years. The first result is the Welfare state as it was developed after WW2 the second is the win-win level of flexicurity as it has been developed during the last ten years.

The model is obviously of great interest for the whole EU. Therefore the aim of this project is to analyse the individual background for each involved country and thereby the different possibilities for developing a flexicurity model

Flexicurity (a portmanteau of flexibility and security) is a welfare state model with a pro-active labour market policy. The model is a combination of easy hiring and firing (flexibility for employers) and high benefits for the unemployed (security for the employees). It was first implemented in Denmark by the social democratic prime minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in the 1990s.

The EU has investigated flexicurity as a possible future European model, mainly because the model has contributed to near-full employment in Denmark with under 4% of the population unemployed, according to the OECD. Unlike the controversial youth labor laws proposed in France, this law does not discriminate against youth, but rather holds the same expectations for all Danes: an unemployed person is required to constantly seek employment or further education in order to receive full benefits.

Intercultural dialogue could be one way to find out starting points for solving the problems?

Historical background:

1. A historical analysis of the different labour markets and social systems in the involved countries in five main groups

Flexicurity as the "Nordic model" (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Austria)

- "Mediterranean Model" (Italy, Spain, Greece)
- "Continental model" (France, Germany, Luxemburg)
- "Anglo-Saxon model" (Ireland, Great Britain, Portugal)
- the countries from the former east-block

2. An actual analysis within the same grouping of countries on the linking of flexibility in the working market to security concerning

- job security "ability to stay in the same job"
- employment security "security of staying employed (training and education, active labour market)"
- income security "in cases of unemployment, sickness and accidents (public transfer income system)"
- combination stability "possibilities for combining working and private life (retirement schemes, maternity leave etc.)"

3. 1-2 are developed through a network that meets in 2-3 conferences to create the contents in

4. www. FlexicurityEU.dk

- a interactive presentation of the historical background the actual situation
- an analysis of the conditions for futher development.The target group is the average EU-citizen with access ti the internet.

All the partnes are linked to the web-site.

The model could be www.danmarkforfolket.dk (You donâ€™t understand the language, but can see the model) an interactive site, where everyman has the possibility to understand and take part in intercultural understanding and exchange opf knowledge within the EU-countries.

5. Campain for mutual understanding within EU on Flexicurity

All levels af information in the local societies, Books, articles â€” and www.flexicurityEU.dk

6.Supported by or connected to local exhibition in the partner-museums â€œFlexicurity seen with our Eyesâ€?

The golden triangel is high mobility between jobs, combined with a reasonable high social security and an active labour market policy and it is important to understand that is has been developed over generations and that everybody has to understand the history behind it to understand the actual situations and the great varieties within EU.

(Up to here Udoâ€™s concept overwritten by Peter. I think I know the mediacompagny that can deliver the production)

The rest is still Udoâ€™s original, but please, see my comments in ()

Subjects of the project:

1.A small overview about social and economic history in Europe (after WW II)

- a.Western versus Eastern Europe before 1989
- b.Economical change in Eastern Europe after 1989
- c.Enlargement of the European Union2.The differences in development and present situations in European countries
- 3.The problems of employment as results of globalization
- 4.The different ways of solving these problems (the different â€œmodelsâ€?)
- 5.The effects of the different models on

- a.Employment
- b.â€œFeelingâ€? of people
- c.Intercultural dialogue â€” relations between the European countries
- d.Mobility of employees in Europe â€” cultural exchange
- e.Flexicurity as the main strategy of EUProducts:

Conferences

TV-documentary

www.flexicurity.org

Publications / Studies

A travelling exhibition with contents of all countries of the partnership? or

Local exhibits?

Partners:

Denmark /Copenhagen:

- The Workersâ€™ Museum, Lynx Media
- University of AalborgAustria
- Museum Arbeitswelt Museum,
- University of Linz?

Sweden?

- Museum

Great Britain (Manchester)

- The Peoples History Museum

Spain (Terrassa?)

- Museum

Germany ?
Luxemburg?

- Government -Cultural section

Slovenia (Ljubljana)

- Academy of Sciences

Poland

- WSINF, Wyzska Szkola Informatyki

Croatia?

Turkey?

A Baltic country? Probably Lithuania

Starting September 2007 – August 2010

(The coordination and initiation can start in 2007 – it will take some time and many discussions to get hold of this. We can go after a while. As the first product, but it cannot be ready before the end of 2008. The European Year of dialogue is perfect!!)

A first product should be ready in 2008, the European Year of dialogue

The European importance:

Finland, the current holder of the EU Presidency, organised in cooperation with the European Commission an Informal Tripartite Social Summit in Lahti on Friday, 20 October. At the meeting, which took place prior to the informal meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government, and which was chaired by the Finnish Prime Minister, Matti Vanhanen, and the European Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, European social partners discussed ways to develop European labour markets and working life. The meeting focused on the management of change by means of "flexicurity" - flexibility and security on the labour market.

"The meeting was very constructive," said Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen. "In March 2006, the European Council invited the Commission, Member States and social partners to begin work on developing flexicurity. The work has now begun here in Lahti. Flexicurity means being ready for change, managing change and establishing a balance between flexibility and security on the labour market. We are ready for that. Equipped with the right skills, old Europe can succeed in global competition. "Well-functioning labour markets and quality in working life are key to the kind of innovative Europe we shall be discussing with the EU leaders later on today," said Prime Minister Vanhanen.

In his address to the meeting, Prime Minister Vanhanen also referred to the ongoing negotiations on the Working Time Directive. He said that he had brought the subject up several times in discussions with other EU leaders. The common view is that the position of the European labour market organisations on the Directive is of central importance. Finland's efforts to bring the matter to a successful conclusion received support at the meeting.