



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

Europe 2020: Social Policies

Demography, Migration, Social Innovation, Civil society

SOCIAL POLICY EXPERIMENTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Examples in Member States

This document provides with a non-exhaustive list of social experiments implemented in Member States of the European Union. It is established in the perspective of the Ministerial conference "Innovative responses to the social impact of the crisis" organised by the Polish Presidency of the European Union in Wroclaw on 26 September 2011, where these achievements are presented and discussed (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/innovationconference>).

15 Member States are involved in these projects which cover a large spectrum of policy issues: education, employment, homelessness, minimum income benefit and youth.

The principle of social experimentation is to test a policy intervention on a small population so as to evaluate its efficacy before deciding whether it should be scaled up. The potential of social experimentation for facilitating change based on evidence and helping policy-makers and stakeholders to improve the impact and cost-effectiveness of policies is acknowledged by the European Commission in the context of the support to social innovation and of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

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EDUCATION:

Education maintenance allowance (United Kingdom)

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a post-16 educational allowance paid to youth with eligibility dependent on parental income. The piloting of EMA began in 1999 with a view to raising participation, retention and achievement in post-16 education among 16-18 year olds. EMAs were rolled out nationally from September 2004. The Department for Education and Skills funded a large-scale study over a five-year period. The overall impact of EMA was estimated to increase year 12 participation in full-time education by 5.9% and in year 13 by 6.2%. However, it seems that EMA have had a much greater impact on labour market entry than on reducing the number of young people entering the NEET (not in employment, education or training group) group.

The United Kingdom Government confirmed on 20 October 2010 that the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme in England was to be cancelled as part of a programme of budget cuts. The EMA schemes in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland continue.

Getting parents involved (France)

In an underprivileged educational district near Paris, 37 schools offered a programme of group meetings and discussions designed to make parents aware of the structure of the school and the staff who were available to support them. After allowing parents to volunteer for these meetings, researchers selected a random group of classes from which volunteer parents would be accepted. The comparison between the test and the control group showed that parental involvement campaigns significantly increased parents' interaction with schools and improved student behavior, and that effects spilled over onto classmates whose parents did not participate in the programme.

Parents who attended meetings were significantly more likely to understand local schools and be involved in their children's education. Children in classes where parents attended group meetings were absent from school less frequently and were more likely to receive high disciplinary marks. The behavior of all students in the selected classes improved, including those whose parents did not participate.

www.povertyactionlab.org/publication/getting-parents-involved

www.iza.org/conference_files/SUMS2011/guyon_n6794.pdf

EMPLOYMENT:

Four social experiments for newly unemployed insurance benefit recipients (Danemark)

The project started 18 February 2008 and involved newly unemployed people who were registered at selected job centres for a five month period until 15 July 2008. The project ended 18 January 2009. 4 different schemes were implemented, as well as control groups. The first one consisted in intensive and collective contact, by which the unemployed people participated in group interviews once a week for the first 13 weeks of their unemployment period. In the second one, they participated in an individual and intensive contact scheme, which included individual interviews every other week for the first 13 weeks of their unemployment period. In the third one, they participated in an advanced employability enhancement scheme of minimum three months' duration. In the last one, the unemployed people were involved in an intensive and collective contact scheme, in which they participate in group interviews once a week for the first 13 weeks of their unemployment period. After the first 13 weeks, they started employability enhancement for at least three months.

Counseling and Monitoring of unemployed workers (Netherlands)

In line with an increasing interest in stimulating re-employment of unemployed workers by so-called active labor market policies, the Netherlands introduced two of such policies: counseling and monitoring. Counseling and monitoring (C&M) are provided by the local unemployment insurance (UI) agencies to UI recipients with relatively good labor market prospects. C&M consists of monthly meetings with an employee of the local UI agency for a period of 6 months starting immediately after inflow into UI. During these meetings, recent job search activities are evaluated and a plan for the next period's job search activities is made. The main purpose of

C&M is to reduce the duration of unemployment and consequently the total amount paid on UI benefits. The results of this randomized social experiment did not provide evidence that counseling and monitoring affect the exit rate to work. Monitoring causes a shift from informal to formal job search.

www1.fee.uva.nl/scholar/wp/wp25-01.pdf

HOMELESSNESS:

Housing first Europe (Austria Belgium Denmark Finland Hungary Ireland Portugal Sweden and United Kingdom)

The “housing first” approach calls for a shift from using shelters and transitional accommodation as the predominant solution to homelessness towards increased access to permanent housing. This includes the capacity for both prevention and the provision of adequate floating support to people in their homes. Different intervention methods to re-house homeless persons with complex problems have been tested and evaluated in the USA, which completely transformed the policy approach at federal and local level. By contrast, this had never been done systematically in any EU Member State.

Housing First Europe, funded by the European Commission, started on the 1st August 2011 and is planned to last for 24 months. It will evaluate Housing First projects in five European cities from a European perspective, leading to greater clarity on the potentials and the limits of the approach, as well as the essential elements of Housing First projects. It will also facilitate mutual learning with additional partners in five “peer sites” cities where further Housing First projects are planned or being implemented and with a steering group including FEANTSA and HABITACT as European stakeholders, experienced researchers, representatives of national homelessness programmes and Sam Tsemberis, the founder of Pathways to Housing in New York.

http://www.housingfirst.fi/en/housing_first/housing_first_in_finland/international_cooperation/housing_first_europe

Hope in stations (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and Poland)

The project "Hope in stations", funded by the European Commission, aims to strengthen the integration of social services delivered to homeless persons at and around train stations. Homeless persons are present at train stations throughout Europe. While they are in the focus of social policies as well as local management strategies, the problem of exclusion from society in several dimensions (housing, employment, social security, health care, etc.) remains unresolved. The current situation is characterised by a diversity of involved stakeholders (public administrations, railway companies, NGOs, etc.), which are guided by different objectives and values, resulting in a fragmentation of service provision and its public and private support. The actual level of support still highly depends on the local political and cultural context instead of systematic and evidence based approaches. 'Hope in Stations' brings these stakeholders together to develop an integrated approach to homeless persons based on a reference authority in charge of the coordination of all interventions. The project takes place at four different train stations in Europe: Berlin (Station Zoologischer Garten), Brussels (Central Station), Paris (Gare du Nord) and Rome (Termini Roma).

<http://www.solidarites-actives.com/juin-parution-de-lanalyse-scientifique-du-projet-hope-stations>
(reports in French and English)

MINIMUM INCOME BENEFIT / GETTING BACK TO WORK:

The creation of Active Solidarity Income (France)

The Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA – "active solidarity income") was introduced in France on 1 June 2009. It complements earned income for recipients who are working but whose income falls below the acceptable threshold for their family situation. It also acts as a minimum income for unemployed beneficiaries. Objectives are to integrate and simplify existing benefit schemes, to combat poverty more efficiently and to foster the transition into work.

Before being implemented nationwide, the RSA was experimented in 33 of the 101 French "départements" in 2007-2008. An evaluation committee, bringing together researchers, representatives of the national and regional administrations and qualified persons was set up from the beginning to analyse whether the RSA was reaching its objectives. The evaluation proceeded mainly by comparison between test and control territories. It showed that the experimental RSA had a positive impact on the exit rate to work for the unemployed.

<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/094000222/index.shtml>
(only in French)

Targeted negative income tax (Germany)

Financial incentive schemes and social experiments are standard in the USA. Mixed experimental evidence on Negative Income Tax (NIT) schemes in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the implementation of in-work benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. In Germany, financial incentive schemes attracted very little attention prior to the 1990s and social experiments with randomized control groups were rejected for reasons of equity. An innovative financial incentive scheme called "Targeted Negative Income Tax (TNIT)", a time-restricted employee subsidy for means-tested welfare recipients, was designed for the German tax-and-transfer system by Spermann (1996). This program was tested by field experiments with program and control groups which were conducted between 1999 and 2002. Some field experiments were designed - for the first time in Germany - as social experiments with randomized control groups. In Mannheim, data showed that the TNIT increases the participation probability in the labour market.

<http://econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/24163/1/dp0568.pdf>

YOUTH:

VIDA Project - Knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in day-care (Denmark)

VIDA is a research project hosted by the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University. The aim is to document which types of pedagogical day-care efforts are most successful in providing better opportunities in life for socially disadvantaged children.

The project has been commissioned and is financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs from 2010 to 2013. The researchers will test various pedagogical models and thereby explore which types of efforts generate the best effect. The research project comprises some 6000 children in 120 day-care centres in four municipalities in Denmark and implements and examines two types of pedagogical efforts. The day-care centres are divided into three groups. In the first group, the focus is on the children's well-being and learning (i.e. the VIDA model programme). In the second group, the focus is also on the children's well-being and learning (as in group 1) as well as parental involvement (i.e. the VIDA + parents model programme). A third group (the control group) is left to continue with their ordinary practice.

<http://www.dpu.dk/en/research/researchprogrammes/organisationandlearning/vida/>

Counselling and job placement of young graduate job seekers (France)

Youth unemployment remains high in France, and even those with college degrees often have difficulty finding a job. Some have suggested that more intensive forms of career counselling and support, such as that provided by some private firms in France, may improve the efficiency of matching between employers and employees. However, the relative effectiveness of public and private operators is not known. If private employment agencies are given strong incentives to find long-term employment for job-seekers, will labour market outcomes improve?

The programme was implemented in 10 regions of France, among 57,000 young people currently looking for a job through the public employment service. The targeted population included individuals aged 18 to 30 who held a college degree and had been unemployed for more than 6 months. Approximately half of the 57,000 job seekers had their information sent to a private provider, who was in charge of contacting them to set up career counselling and placement.

Sending job seekers to receive counselling with private firms did significantly increase their likelihood of finding employment, however this is only true when the private providers are for-profit (as opposed to NGOs, for example).

<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/counseling-and-job-placement-young-graduate-job-seekers-france-jeunes-dipl%C3%B4m%C3%A9s>