

ABSTRACTS

Abstracts

Judit Csoba: "Do the unemployed want to work?" The ability and willingness to work of the unemployed

Among the numerous supposed reasons for unemployment, nowadays, it is a more and more frequently mentioned argument that the unemployed do not want to work. According to this view, the supporting system and motivation tools applied so far by the welfare states are ineffective and the arisen situation can be handled only with coercive measures. By studying the historical economic, and social background of the above mentioned opinion, the aim of the present study is to answer the following questions: Which values and interests stand in the background of the endeavors to sanction the indolence of the unemployed? Why do a respective number of people refuse to distinguish working ability from willingness to work? How do the social and economic cycles influence the public opinion on the voluntary unemployment? The present paper reaches the conclusion that thematization of the laziness of the unemployed intensifies always during economic crisis cycles, and the problem can be solved only by well-targeted economic decisions made on the political level.

Shlomi Segall: Unconditional welfare benefits and the principle of reciprocity

Stuart White and others claim that providing welfare benefits to citizens who do not, and are not willing to, work breaches the principle of reciprocity. This, they argue, justifies placing a minimum work requirement on welfare recipients. This article seeks to rebut their claim. It begins by rejecting the attempt to ground the work requirement on a civic obligation to work. The article then explores the principle of reciprocity, and argues that the practice of reciprocity depends on the particular conception of distributive justice adopted. An examination of different interpretations of egalitarian justice and their corresponding patterns of reciprocity demonstrates that unconditional welfare benefits are compatible with, and sometimes even warranted by, the principle of reciprocity. Thus, imposing a work requirement on welfare recipients is by no means a mandate of reciprocity.

András Gábos: Government interventions aiming at reducing child poverty: a literature overview

Child poverty is a particular concern in the European Union. The search for the best policies for reducing child poverty has been the subject of much research and debate. The studies carried out have invariably found that welfare state policies, and child-related measures, especially play an important role in determining child poverty. The evidence suggest that the best policies are those that result in an increase in labour force participation among parents. Accordingly, policies aimed at facilitating the labour market participation of women with children should be regarded as a central component of an effective anti-poverty package. However, one might be aware of cross-country differences in underlying factors, as well as of variations in behavioural responses across individuals and households in different positions and with different resources, when designing policy mixes. Furthermore, the unavoidable trade-off between adequacy of benefits, work incentives and the cost of assistance strongly affect the decisions on these packages.

Francesco Figari, Alari Paulus and Holly Sutherland: Supporting families with children through taxes and benefits

Families with children receive significant support from government to reduce the risk of child poverty and assist parents with childcare responsibilities to balance jobs and family life. All EU Members States provide some forms of support for children, typically in the shape of universal cash benefits. Child-related tax concessions are generally complements to cash benefits and vice versa. Many measures are related to income, and some to the employment status of parents. The results of the analysis based on EUROMOD suggest that shifting from tax to benefit instruments would enable a country to redistribute income to the poorest children without any additional budget cost. Universal benefits are appropriate tool to support children and to fight child poverty in particular, given their efficient provision generally on a weekly or monthly basis, as well as the absence of social stigma and their high take-up. On the other hand, means-tested instruments are an efficient way of targeting support on the most needy, despite having higher costs in terms of non take-up and adverse impact on employment incentives for the second earner in a couple.

István Budai: Inter-professional collaboration and social work. What we can already really on (perhaps)...

It is a common experience in Hungarian social services that the extremely complicated human-societal problems and situations – the users' needs, and the professional interventions – the results are not in harmony. The matters and problems related to people, groups and communities exposed to risks, suffering from exclusion or living in disadvantaged areas or settlements need an integrated and complex approach, cooperation and collaboration from various services and professions working in different areas (health and social care, education, employment etc.) Based on the experiences and results of the relevant international and national initiatives and projects the study argues for the approach of interprofessional cooperation, which is introduced, examined and analyzed with its antecedents, essential ideas, conditions, values, difficulties, areas of utilization and practice with special regard to its relevance in social work.

John Solas: What kind of social justice does social work seek?

Before considering conceptions of social justice, it is important to understand why it matters, since this is a matter of opinion rather than fact. People might concede that poverty is bad, but not consider inequality unjust. As a corollary, they also differ over what, if anything, is owed to the poor. However, no one can deny that the gap between rich and poor not only persists, but is becoming progressively wider. Social justice matters, then, because of increasing immiseration. What kind of theory of social justice do we need, then? It is necessary to have a theory of social justice that does more than respond to inequality as though it were bad but inevitable. Rather, such a theory must offer a stronger response to inequality, one that recognizes it as a gross and unwarranted injustice. The question is, however, is this the type of theory that informs social work? There is, as will be argued, a question mark about this. But, again, before I argue the point, it is important to consider the range of theories of justice on offer.