

Innovative Employment Initiatives

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Aldershot (UK), 2000

Book series "Public Policy and Social Welfare", Volume 24

ISBN 0-7546-1336-4

558 pages

Price: Euro 43.50

Innovative Employment Initiatives was the focus of an international expert meeting, organized by the European Centre at the invitation of the Austrian Federal Government, to host the first and so far only U.N.-European Regional Follow-Up to the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), Copenhagen 1995, at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV/VIC) in 1998. It was asked to work out a series of suggestions for the implementation of WSSD Commitment 3 "to promote the goal of full employment".

Leading economists and social scientists together with experts from governments, social partners and intergovernmental institutions looked for answers to the basic query of how to generate sufficient employment as to overcome mass unemployment, as well as to more specific puzzles such as:

- Is there still a role for macroeconomic management by governments in complementing structural and market-oriented policies?
- How and why do the United States and Europe differ with respect to labour markets, employment policies and economic performance?
- Is there a variety of viable political economies within the world of advanced OECD-countries?
- What are the specific employment problems of Central-Eastern European countries in transition?
- Why is the role of flexibility for employment generation quite different regarding employment relationships, social protection, wages, working time or work organization, product or labour markets?
- What can transitional labour markets contribute to new forms of full employment?
- Is unemployment to be fought best or even exclusively by increasing employability?
- Or can it be reduced by reducing working time, and if so, which forms of shorter work hours may work economically and what are prerequisites of successful implementation?
- Why are lowering wages by pay-cuts, easier dismissals, early retirement, or cutting employers - payroll taxes and social security contributions generally no way out of massive joblessness?
- Can market incentives be designed and social security arrangements be redesigned such that new employment opportunities are created and unemployment be reduced?
- How do mainstream labour market and employment policies interact with or even counteract equal opportunity goals and objectives?
- What is the impact of demographic changes and corresponding fiscal pressures on longer-term employment opportunities?
- Can and should we develop employment indicators for policy-makers to assess employment performance

analogous to the "Maastricht criteria" regarding price stability?

- Are there strategies available for coping successfully with youth or long-term unemployment or with the promotion of non-agricultural rural employment in order to revitalize a declining countryside, covering about four-fifth of overall European territory?

The European Centre had contributed to the Conferences of U.N.-European Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs in Warsaw 1987 and in Bratislava 1993, by producing an official report on Welfare in a Civil Society, which was the U.N.-European Regional input to the WSSD. Innovative Employment Initiatives is a European Regional follow-up product in the process set in motion by the World Social Summit.

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