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Fakulteta za socialno delo

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## Precarity and the shrinking welfare state

10. September 2015, Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work, Topniška ulica 31,  
1000 Ljubljana, room 4

Organisers of the conference: Work and Employment Research Unit (University of Greenwich) and Faculty of Social Work (University of Ljubljana)

### **Description**

Similarly as many other countries also Slovenia faces the rise in unemployment, deepening of poverty and social exclusion and the increase of the working poor, which indicates structural changes linked with the global expansion of the markets, deregulation, flexibilization and transformation of the welfare states. Austerity, competition, activation, entrepreneurship are contemporary buzzwords that guide Slovenian social and active labour market policies and legitimise the downloading of responsibility, not only upon local institutions and non-governmental organizations of the growing 'social economy', but also upon users of social care programs and services. The conference will focus on the effects of these structural changes and policies upon precarization of the employed within the overall network of public services and their users. The concept of the conference derives from a wider understanding of precarity as a process of structural change on local and global scales, which is geared towards the shrinking of the welfare state, downloading the responsibility upon individuals and their exclusion from the field of work and wider social networks, which used to provide material and social security. With empirical findings from Slovenia and other EU countries the conference aims to highlight the structural changes that affect the shrinking of the welfare state, the marketization of social care and the precarization of work and life for those within and outside of the labour market. Apart from empirical findings, the last part of the conference will focus on challenges posed by increasing precarization. With the representatives of trade unions and movements we will discuss the problems they face in addressing increasing precarity and in organising the atomised precariat.

## Conference program

9.00 – 10.30 Introductory lecture with discussion

Labour market reform through welfare reform: How not to activate the jobless  
*Prof Ian Greer (University of Cornell and Greenwich University)*

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee Break

11.00 – 12.30 Precarity in the light of marketization of social care

Social activation – its purpose and reach

*Mag Martina Trbanc (Social Protection Institute)*

Projectarization of social care network

*Dr Barbara Samaluk (University of Greenwich)*

Enterprising social care: shiny game of zero sum

*Mag Romana Zidar (Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana)*

12.30 – 13.15 Lunch

13.15 – 14.45 Precarization of work and life: the shrinking of employment and social rights

A multiplicity of (legal) faces of Slovenian precarization

*Dr Barbara Rajgelj (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana)*

Precarization of life of teachers in secondary and primary education

*Tjaša Podpečan (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana)*

Criminalizing the poor – conditioning the access to social rights

*Dr Vesna Leskošek (Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana)*

14.45 -15.00 Break

15.00 – 16.30 Challenges in addressing precarity and in organising precarious workers

*Dr Miroslav Stanojević (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana) will moderate the discussion with movements and trade unions:*

- Marko Funkl (Movement for decent work and welfare society)
- Zala Turšič (YoungPlus - The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia)
- Tina Divjak (Centre of Non-governmental organizations in Slovenia)
- Branimir Štrukelj (Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia - Confederation of Public Sector Unions)
- Goran Lukič (The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia)
- Perica Radonjič (Trade Union of Centres for Social Work: SINCE 07 – Pergam)

## **Abstracts**

### **Labor market reform through welfare reform: How not to activate the jobless**

*Prof Ian Greer (Cornell University and University of Greenwich)*

Many countries are reorienting their welfare policies around the task of moving jobless people on benefits into paid employment. So-called active labour market policies sometimes have this effect on the jobless. But they can also have separate effects on working people, of increasing the disciplinary power of 'the sack' and creating new forms of insecure and low-paid work. In this talk I will argue that active labour market policies may contribute to the precarity of those in work, but without having clear overall effects on labor market participation. Drawing on the experiences of Britain, Germany, and Denmark I will discuss some persistent administrative failures that help to explain why. In these countries, the privatization and marketization of services have failed to deliver on their promises of improved performance and reduced costs. They have also generated new dilemmas for policymakers who face the possibility of increasing transaction costs, declining service quality, creaming-and-parking effects, restriction of clients' choices, and the destruction of the capacity of service providers. In the conclusion I will provide a brief overview of 'worst practices' observed in other countries that combine several of these problems at once. Policymakers may want to avoid them as they devise new active labour market policies.

### **Social activation – its purpose and reach**

*Mag Martina Trbanc (Social Protection Institute)*

The understanding of activation (both employment and social) within national documents as well as in policy practice in various European states and policy discourse on the EU level is double sided. On one hand there is a clear aim to decrease the number of (long term) receivers of social benefits, mainly by imposing tighter conditions for claiming benefits or to condition benefits with social and employment activation and with that creating 'new' relations between rights and duties of the unemployed, which actually means total transfer of risks upon an individual. The context of this is in social science literature described as a move from welfare to workfare. On the other hand the understanding of social activation is also linked with disabling social exclusion, i.e. enabling inclusion of marginalised individuals and groups. In this context the main aim of social activation is to enable the

marginalised individuals to re-integrate into society through their empowerment, personal growth and development of skills, which they need for everyday functioning within society. We can thus talk about two dimensions of activation: conditional and supporting, in other words about dimensions of making demands and dimension of empowerment. The activation policy emphasis vary within various countries, from the regulation of minimum income – lower minimum income is supposed to act as an incentive to look for work (characteristic for more liberal countries), to regulating of the ‘right’ proportion between rights and obligations (characteristic for paternalistic states of continental Europe) and to emphasising the provision of resources and empowerment of individuals (through training and competence increase programs) in order for them to achieve employment and social integration (characteristic for Scandinavian activation approaches). Regardless of the emphasis the key problem of all activation approaches is their assumption that within the structurally changed conditions in the sphere of work, it is still possible to maintain a strong link between social politics and employment and thus maintain all basic assumptions and the order of a welfare state as it was set after the II. World War. Also in Slovenia the concept of social activation is present in all national strategic documents, including the new Operational program for receiving European funds. Nevertheless it is still unclear, both the conceptual understanding of social activation, as well as the aim and reach of planned programs of social activation, which will be in detail discussed at the conference.

### **Projectarisation of social care network**

*Dr Barbara Samaluk (University of Greenwich)*

This paper explores precarity within social care network in the context of austerity measures and Slovenian EU policy integration. Slovenian social and active labour market policies are being increasingly subjected to austerity measures and integrated into EU policy and its financial levers, therefore it is important to discuss, how this impacts on social care provision, workers within the social care network and their users. The research bases its findings upon analysis of (trans)national policy documents, reports, agreements and fieldwork notes and in-depth interviews with workers within Third sector organizations that provide social care programs and services to various vulnerable groups, key informants within state institutions and trade unionists. The findings demonstrate that Slovenian welfare provision is becoming increasingly subjected to austerity measures and dependent upon EU structural funds conditioned by implementation of distant social and active labour

market policy approaches. These policy approaches are supposed to increase the insertion of various vulnerable groups into the labour market, but in fact create public sector workers, whose employment depends upon project financing (so called 'projectariat' (Baker2014)), increase the vulnerability of and competition among Third sector projectariat and turn users into invisible precarious workers, whose work is condition upon the retention of their social rights. The projectarisation of social care network creates a paradoxical situation, in which those who are supposed to empower and help re-integrate vulnerable groups into society and the labour market, increasingly themselves face precarity and become more frequent users of various active labour market schemes. With this the actual possibilities to permanently re-integrate various groups into the labour market are rather decreasing than increasing, social security and the quality of social services is falling and new possibilities for abuse are emerging.

### **Enterprising social care: shiny game of zero-sum**

*Mag Romana Zidar (Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana)*

Social care is subjected to paradoxes, which have to be controlled and managed. One such paradox is gap between organisational rhetoric's and practices. On one hand sector is characterised by rather activist language of social work, bound to the principles of human rights and social justice (see Global definition of social work, IFSW, IASSW 2014). And on the other hand the constant need for survival requires the adoption of expectations and demands from (state) funders and the logic of competitiveness. The presentation will talk about the discourse of transferring public services upon private providers, which are financed upon projects. Based upon the analysis of secondary data on human resource structure within Centres for social work (N=62) and providers of social care programs (N=141), the amount of financing available for particular issues and not others, the presentation demonstrates a move towards a so called philanthroetatism. It is a form of philanthrocapitalism (Bishop, Green 2008) in which the state and its institutions act as corporations, which enforce competition amongst social care providers and commodification of users of social care programs and services.

## **A multiplicity of (legal) faces of Slovenian precarization**

*Dr. Barbara Rajgelj, Assist. Prof., (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana)*

Besides the employment contract for indefinite period – as the traditional and systemically the most desirable form of employment – Slovenian legal system governs more than ten atypical labour and civil-law forms of work. But national law is merely a track, on which the train of Slovenian labour market precarization is rushing. Its engine are requirements of the global market, that force Slovenian business in limitless cost reduction race and atomize the Slovenian economy, which after the collapse of the big economic systems has become increasingly fragmented and unable to follow the competitive pressure and, consequently, to ensure the basic rights of workers. The globalization process also changed the role and power of national states, that are pushed in a similar position as the business: on one hand the state is unable to be an exemplary employer in the public sector, on the other hand the sovereignty in forming economic and social policies – particularly of the smaller and economically weaker states – is essentially limited. Due to entrapment in a long-term crisis situation the authorities are not looking for innovative solutions to safeguard decent and safe working and living conditions of the population, but - more and less successfully – insist on policies and achievements of the workers' struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The paper will present flexible forms in which under Slovenian law work for another person can be performed. Without a doubt, the heaviest burden of uncertainty and the resulting exclusion from social rights and opportunities is borne by persons working under atypical labour- or civil-law contracts (ie. fixed term contract, part-time contract, temporary agency work, private entrepreneur, personal supplementary work, contract for a copyrighted work, work contract, temporary and occasional work students). But legal form in which work is performed does not exclusively define precarious situation of a person. Existential security and comprehensive social inclusion of individuals depends on many other factors such as the extent of the social security system, type of work, the extent of autonomy at work, career prospects, the level of remuneration for work, etc. Therefore, by only minor shifts in the direction of equalizing social and labour rights it is difficult to expect a substantial reduction of precarization in the Slovenian labour market.

## **Precarization of life of teachers in secondary and primary education**

*Tjaša Podpečan (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana)*

This contribution is a part of the doctoral research and focuses on issues of precarization of life of the teachers in primary and secondary education system in Slovenia. Based on qualitative interviews with teachers, the results of this research show the role of precariousness within the teaching profession and its consequences for the everyday life of the teachers. Due to an increasing flexibilization of employment and labour market, the number of precarious or insecure employments is growing, which causes new forms of poverty or the emergence of the working poor. This emerging flexibility is not balanced by adequate social security and social rights, which results in uncertainty and insecurity in the everyday life of people. The increasing insecurity and fear among the individuals working in education is also due to the austerity measures and constant threats of the government representatives to change the standards and norms in the education system. The research takes into account the broader concept of precariousness/precarization as a process of structural changes at the global as well as at the local level. This process leads to the shrinking welfare state, the shifting of responsibility upon individuals and towards their exclusion from work as well as wider social networks, which otherwise enable material and social security. The results of this research have shown that the precarious forms of employment are a factor of uncertainty in the everyday life of the employees. Teachers working on fixed-term contracts reported on negative aspects that this type of contract has in their everyday life: it affects their health, material security, housing standard, family life, future plans, etc.. The research has found that precarious types of employment change the everyday life of the individuals. Therefore it is important to use the term the precarization of life not only the term precarization of labour.

## **Criminalization of the poor – conditioning the access to social rights**

*Dr Vesna Leskošek (Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana)*

Perception that social security of a worker and her/his family should be secured by her/himself is the imperative of most of European social legislation. Conditioning the access to rights is nowadays based upon the following assumptions: that people abuse rights and become dependent on them, which is a result of the post-war welfare state model in Europe. The strategies to prevent these behaviours (based upon generalised assumptions, while there

are no serious research evidence supporting them) are closely linked with the right to work, in other words employment. Although the rights were also in a classical welfare state to a great extent linked with employment, the security during unemployment or when employment was not at all possible was equally important. In order to strengthen the link between tribute and employment, there is a need to condition one with another, which is the basic characteristic of social policies in the EU and beyond. The amount of conditions to access rights is thus increasing and is representing a major obstacle in access. Apart from obstacles users are also subjected to behavioural engineering, which is grounded upon many generalised assumptions about the poor and unemployed. Exactly the link between conditioning and behavioural regulation is nowadays the object of intense research in countries that were subjected to change. Findings show that new politics serve the demands of cutting funds for benefits, but they increase the poverty and homelessness and create all sorts of ethical dilemmas.