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Active inclusion and industrial relations from a multi-level governance perspective



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AIRMULP Project

Objectives of the research

The AIRMULP Project focuses on **the relationship between active inclusion and industrial relations**.

More specifically, the Project is concerned with the analysis of active inclusion issues – e.g. social exclusion, in-work poverty, labour market segmentation, long-term unemployment and gender inequalities, income support and inclusive labour markets – in the framework of social dialogue and collective bargaining, **at three different levels** (European, national and sub-national), and **in six countries** (France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom).

In general, AIRMULP aims at answering the following questions:

- What are the policy objectives and strategies of social partners at European, national and territorial levels to overcome the challenges related to active inclusion?

- To what extent are their actions horizontally coordinated through mechanisms that integrate the policy fields and social groups (e.g. youth employment and vocational training; active ageing and youth employment; in- and out-of-work benefits)?
 - And to what extent are their actions vertically coordinated (either from the top or from the bottom)?
 - Finally, how can social partners, in the future, contribute to the strengthening of an active inclusion strategies at the different levels?
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Methods

AIRMULP uses **a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods** of data collection and analysis. In particular, it carries out:

- Analysis of available statistical data;
 - On-desk analysis of scientific literature and official documents concerning active inclusion policies (included the EU, national and regional legislation, the available texts of social pacts and collective agreements);
 - Interviews with key informants (such as representatives of the social partners at each level, members of EU institutions as well as national, regional and local governments, various stakeholders, and other qualified actors).
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The final conference

The **final conference** of Airmulp project took place in Florence, at Villa Ruspoli, on December, 1st 2016. The following 10 staff members of the Airmulp project were present and presented their work:

Andrea Bellini (DSPS-UNIFI), Luigi Burroni (DSPS-UNIFI), Manuela Galetto (WBS), Laura Leonardi (DSPS-UNIFI), Alejandro Godino (UAB/QUIT), Guglielmo Meardi (WBS), Oscar Molina Romo (UAB/QUIT), Anna Mori (WBS), Noelle Payton (AIAS), Gemma Scalise (DSPS/UNIFI).

In total, more than 80 people participated to the final conference.

Representatives of social partners and stakeholders from five EU countries (FR, SP, IT, SE, PL), from national and local levels, were also invited to speak.

For Poland, France, Sweden and Spain:

Slawomir Adamczyk – NSZZ Solidarnosc, Poland

Anne Eydoux – Center for employment studies, CEE, Paris, France

Steffan Lindstrom – LO, Swedish trade union confederation

Lluiss Torrens - Ajuntamiento de Barcelona, Spain

For Italy, many national and local unions' representatives from CGIL and CILS attended the conference.

AIRMULP final conference obtained a high variety of participants from several 'levels' of social dialogue and collective bargaining (EU, national, local). The conference was characterized by an innovative programme with presenters of universities and social partner organisations. Also video pills with short interviews to industrial relations experts and representatives (Susanna Camusso, CGIL national secretary, Jon Erik Dolvik, FAFO, Susan Hayter, ILO, Paul Marginson, WBS, Valeria Pulignano, University of Leuven) were projected and discussed. The video pills can be found on the Airmulp website (www.airmulp-project.unifi.it) and you tube channel.

The presentations and the discussions at the conference were characterized by the participants as being from a high qualitative and in-depth level and have promoted many and fruitful interactions of ideas, experiences and lessons between academics, policymakers and negotiators from collective bargaining parties in Europe.

The Airmulp project researchers selected and presented the most interesting results and case studies of the project, in particular recent actions in social dialogue and collective bargains on active inclusion in several European countries, in order to promote transnational learning between researchers and social partners. The conference raised awareness among social partners for better integration of the active inclusion logic in social dialogue and collective bargaining, and increased the participants' knowledge of good practices and perspectives for the governance of active inclusion.

The distributed dissemination materials (five reports and the five Policy briefs regarding the 6 country studied) can be downloaded from AIRMULP website. Moreover, the final conference has been filmed and interviews with participants have been carried out. Video pills of the interviews are uploaded on the youtube channel of Airmulp project.

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Key results of the project

The overarching purpose of AIRMULP project was analyzing the role played by the social partners in the field of active inclusion at European, national and territorial levels.

This included:

- the identification of good practices in social dialogue and collective bargaining related to active inclusion for each level, as well as the analysis of possible comparative lessons.
- the study of the interactions between these levels, in particular the extent to which there is vertical coordination between the three levels and how such coordination can be strengthened.

The analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the action of social partners in the field of active inclusion contribute to identify good practices at European, national and territorial level, offering useful insights for many of the policy challenges addressed by EU employment and social policy.

This goal was met through both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

- Firstly, the project analyzed for the European countries statistical data on social inclusion and labour market regulation and highlights the different forms of inclusive labour markets in EU countries. The “inclusiveness” of EU labour markets was explored through both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of employment, and the role played by social partners and public policies for the employment quality is also highlighted. This analysis shows the direct and indirect impact – via public policies – of industrial relations on the rise or demise of inclusive labour markets. In particular, the analysis shows that: firstly, high levels of employment do not always correspond to a high level of inclusion in the labour market in qualitative terms, even if there is a slightly positive relationship between the two dimensions; secondly, that industrial relations practices have a weight in reinforcing employment quality. This analysis has been reported in report n. 4 (WP D report, available on www.airmulp-project.unifi.it).
- Secondly, this goal was met through analysis of relevant academic and professional literature on active inclusion policies, social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour market policies literature, current legislation, relevant case law and available texts of collective agreements and social trilateral negotiations, for six European countries – that belong to the four different ‘clusters’ of industrial relations and traditions of social dialogue: Italy, Spain, France, UK, Sweden and Poland. In order to deepen the policy objectives and strategies of social partners at European, national and territorial level, to overcome the challenges related to active

inclusion, employers ('associations') and trade unions in Brussels and in the six countries (at national and regional levels) have been interviewed by the researchers of the AIRMULP-project. The main outcome here (reported in WP A, WP B and WP C reports) is that since 2008, when the European Commission adopted the Recommendation on Active Inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, the implementation of activation strategies has certainly progressed among the six analyzed countries, but often in a fragmented, only partial and uneven way. A wide array of activation policy programmes took root across countries, but not necessarily in response to the supranational recommendation neither through a coordinated strategy of industrial relations actors. Moreover, the concurrence of the economic crisis has harshly affected the resources available to boost comprehensive activation strategies.

The AIRMULP case-studies show the main active labour market policies (ALMPs) and good practices implemented in the six countries related to, respectively, adequate income support and inclusive labour markets. As far as income support schemes are concerned, the analysis pinpoints the main scheme adopted in each country, distinguishing among unemployment benefits; income support and subsidies directly addressed to activation (e.g. bounded to training and active job-search); and income support addressing low income individuals/households. Concerning inclusive labour market, the project scrutinizes the main measure introduced in terms of matching, training, incentives to firms and direct job creation.

Finally, the project highlights the relevance of the role played by social dialogue in the definition of ALMPs. The analysis concentrates on the strategies displayed by the key actors involved in the process, namely the state, the social partners, the stakeholders and other relevant actors. Their role and actions configure differently according to the national framework of reference. Overall, central governments play an increasingly decisional role in the definition of activation strategies. The relevance of social dialogue is increasing in France, where it has known a recent institutionalization through the issue of the Law no. 130/2007 on the Modernisation of Social Dialogue. Vice versa, in Italy and Spain social dialogue tradition has undergone an opposite process of erosion under the pressure also of the economic crisis. Finally, social dialogue has traditionally been absent in the English tradition of decision-making, where the central government unilaterally establishes reform programmes in the labour market. In Sweden tripartite dialogue has been traditionally important, while in Poland it is only lately emerging under government promotion.

Social partners' involvement in the definition of active labour market programmes therefore differs by country. French unions and employer organisations have been deeply involved through both government consultations (social partners are represented indeed in the National Council against Poverty and Social Exclusion and in the Economic Social and Environmental Council) and bilateral negotiation. Social partners signed several National Inter-professional Agreements since 2008 dealing with labour market reforms, training, employment rights and career paths. Similarly this applies to Sweden. In Italy and Spain consultation and tripartite concertation became rare and weak, while new actors emerged in the form of third sector associations and social movements. In the UK the voice of unions and employer organisations is practically absent and governments unilaterally define policy strategies. In the case of Poland, social partners are formally involved, but this does not necessarily lead to joint decision making.

AIRMULP Project

Another objective of the project was to understand to what extent active inclusion policies are at the various levels horizontally coordinated through actions that integrate the various policy fields and social groups.

This goal was met through the analysis of the relationship between the strategy and implementation of active inclusion and industrial relations at different levels. The adopted analytical approach, based on the multi-level governance analysis, addresses three levels – European, national and territorial – and studies the objectives, strategies and actions of social partner in this field at these levels. This includes the extent to which there is horizontal and vertical coordination between policy-arenas, between actors as well as between the three levels of governance.

The analysis of the *horizontal* governance, namely governance and coordination mechanisms among policies in the field of active inclusion and actors involved in this arena, especially industrial relations actors, has been conducted through a qualitative perspective and a comparative analysis of the findings from the six projects' case-studies.

- The results show that horizontal coordination between policies appears mainly weak in all the analysed contexts (with the only exception of the Swedish case-study, where however overlaps and mismatches have also

been found), due to a strong fragmentation of policies, measures, and of involved actors. In some cases, it is the State that plays a major role in coordinating the policies and although actors and measures are fragmented and conflicting, policies result rather coherent (FR). Coordination between policy programmes and reforms is very limited: different policy areas – such as education and training, employment, social policies – refer to different ministries and departments which constitute detached arenas of decision-making. The analysis points to the need to boost horizontal links between policy areas: the issue of national plans might address social and employment issues jointly and more efficiently. While this is relatively less problematic in well-established systems of welfare and active measures, like in France and Sweden, horizontal coordination seems more urgent in cases such as Poland and the Southern European countries.

- More common are the forms of horizontal coordination at local level around regional- or city-plans or around singular projects, upon which different national and local actors agree. At local level, we find an integrated approach to active inclusion and coordinated measures across policy areas in Sweden. Here horizontal coordination between central and local levels of regulation is implemented by the collaboration and regular consultation among the municipal Labour Market and Adult Education Committee, national PES and the social welfare office (in charge to decide on entitlement to welfare benefits). These actors work in close cooperation also horizontally, around the programs participants and with employers. A high central and formal regulation is associated with a certain degree of local informal autonomy: established practices of local policy and local traditions of collaboration also play a significant role.

AIRMULP Project

Finally, a third objective of the project was to understand to what extent active inclusion actions are vertically coordinated (top-down and bottom-up), i.e. between the European, national and territorial level.

The multi-level dimension is an outcome of the European integration process, based on the idea of the existence of multiple linkages between the EU level and national/sub-national levels, with increased interdependence between levels and

governance mechanisms as well as actors. As such, multi-level governance provides the actors involved in the field of active inclusion - included industrial relations actors- with multiple options for actions and interventions, and for choices between these. The multi-level governance approach goes beyond national-level case studies and allows for the analysis of the interdependence between these three levels – European, national and territorial.

The objective of the research project of understanding of the different forms of coordination between the territorial levels has been met analysing the link between domestic activation programmes and supra-national recommendations. Starting from the question of how the European Framework Agreement on Inclusive Labour Markets 2010 has been implemented and evaluated in the national and regional contexts, the analysis and especially the interviews with social partners at European, national and local levels, highlighted that there is a low level of influence of the EU Active Inclusion Strategy, but there is an important impact of the EU level on national and subnational regulations. Such influence increased during the crisis, related to the different forms of political influence and financial support to national and local policies bounded on strict EU conditions. The EU “governance by conditionality” (see WP A), however, is not a form of vertical coordination between policies, rather an attempt to direct goals and tools in EU countries, aiming at the integration of objectives and results. In this framework, national and local actors carry on their own strategies, shaping their policies by re-interpreting the input “from above” and producing different outcomes which depend on the national and local contexts. Therefore, more than a vertical coordination between the levels of governance, bi-directional dynamics have emerged: top-down and bottom-up processes take place in a dialogic dynamic, where concepts and practices move both from the EU to the national and regional levels but also from below to the European level. The different outcomes and forms of inclusive labour markets in Europe highlight that it is not “one best way” related to the active inclusion strategy and that any measure fits well with all contexts.

Internally, vertical coordination between the national and the local levels is differentiated in the diverse countries, depending especially from the institutional organisation, division of competences between administrative levels and efficiency of institutions: it is weak in some cases (IT, SP, PL) and stronger in some others (Sweden, UK, FR). In some countries, we find a process of re-centralisation of coordination and reinforcement of the national control over the implementation of measures (IT, SP, Sweden, UK).

Looking at the regional level, we observe that Rhône-Alpes is characterized by a strongly centralized policy making, with a vertically integrated system of public policies, whereas Lombardy benefits from the higher autonomy of Italian regional governments. Nevertheless, in both cases there are mechanisms of coordination between central and regional governments.

In Sweden a strong vertical coordination can be found between the national and local (basically, municipal) levels, which is pursued through the cooperation and regular consultations between the municipal Labour Market and Adult Education Committee, the Public Employment Service and the Social Welfare Office (the latter being in charge of deciding on entitlements to welfare benefits). These actors work in close cooperation on programmes with both participants and employers. Forms of coordination are represented by the partnership agreements between the Public Employment Service and local businesses. The main aim of such agreements is to provide the employers the skills they need among young people, the long-term unemployed, persons with a functional disability and newly-arrived immigrants. In general, a highly “formal” regulation at the central level is associated with a certain degree of “informal” autonomy at the local one; local traditions of cooperation and established policy practices also play a significant role.

As for Lower Silesia, policy making in the field of labour policies maintains, in Poland, a highly centralized character, though a process of decentralization has taken place in the 2000s and sub-national authorities have gained an “operational” autonomy from the central government, which since 2004 does not exert any direct influence on the functioning of labour offices.

The British case is also characterized by a still centralized policy making, despite that the UK has recently started a process of further administrative decentralization. Also in this case, decentralization was the result of a process of inter-institutional negotiation, and took the form of “devolution” of powers and resources to sub-national authorities such as the city regions (see the *GM Devolution Agreement* of 2014). As such, this process is nevertheless reversible and may be temporary. At the same time, however, the state has set up mechanisms of “control”, although implicit, over sub-national authorities. The *Public Service Reform*, for instance, has given responsibility to local authorities, since they are required to submit local implementation plans, but, in the meantime, has caused huge financial losses to them, which imply a better use of resources and, generally, cost reductions.

On the other hand, Spain has an extremely low level of vertical coordination between national and regional level, basically due to a process of “disorganized” decentralization. As already noticed, in fact, the state and autonomous communities are in competition with each other in both fields of passive (e.g. minimum income schemes) and active (e.g. the delivery of PES) labour policies. This arrangement means that training and LM programmes may be duplicated. It also risks creating confusion among recipients regarding where to look for support.



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