

Administering social care in the European Union: moving towards one-stop shops?

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Abstract

Protection and inclusion have for long been some of the guiding principles of the European welfare states. The crisis of 2008 placed social investment high on the social policy agenda in the EU and specific policies that the new paradigm embraces have been in focus. Unfortunately, little attention is paid to administering policies. Creating one-stop shops, as a new way of easier and more efficient use of available resources for citizens, is perceived as the most suitable way for administration of specific policies. This paper is a contribution to this debate, looking at ways social policy is administered across the EU, from a double perspective. First, having social investment as the theoretical but also practical approach and second, looking at different welfare state regimes. This approach should point to major differences in social policy administration but also present which models perform the best. Most importantly, the paper aims to show how administering social care influences implementation of policy changes across the European Union.

Keywords: one-stop shop, European Union, social investment, decentralisation, activation.

JEL Classification: K23, K33

1. Introduction

Social care has been in focus of the public debate for a long time in Europe, but in the last decade, after the 2008 crisis that has seen an increased debate. Finding ways to improve efficiency of specific policies and improve quality of life has been the key aim of the measures the European Union has undertaken. However, it has been proved that unified approach is not possible, on the one hand and on the other, measures have to be well coordinated between all of the actors involved. Policies and their outcomes have been in the focus of the EU's attention but increasing awareness of the relevance of the way policies are administered has paved a way towards thinking of one-stop shops. Permanent changes in the way policies are organised and administered, in addition to already different social models across the member states created a need of studying how social care administration is organised and how they function.

The paper is looking into administration of social care, with the focus on administering employment policies. It is a contribution to a missing debate, in comparison to studies on policies and outcomes, on how to improve functionality of the administration and enable citizens easier and more friendly use of services.

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The paper is divided into four main parts. The first part is looking into relevance of studying social care administration and provides the methodology and the research question of the paper. The second part defines one-stop shops and focuses on their development. The third part represents the study of the countries the paper uses and fourth part is a discussion of the findings.

2. Welfare state in Europe: why study administration?

Welfare state has been one of the most recognisable features of the European continent and it is especially after the Second World War that it has been expanded and social rights were recognised². There have been incommensurable changes throughout the period of the golden age of the welfare state and up to now. In other words, there is a significantly greater instability of the social circumstances we live in, concerning both the individual and systemic level and alterations became an essential part of everyday life. Sources of the change are external (globalisation, introduction of service based economy, instability of markets and unexpected labour market shocks, moving from cyclical to structural risks)³ and internal (declining fertility, ageing population, new family forms)⁴, just to name a few. This paper is interested in structural transformation of administration of the social services as a response to these alterations.

The literature on the welfare state is in most instances focused on policy effects and outcomes and a detailed research of social policy administration is substantially less represented. Governance of social policy is crucial for providing citizens with quality services, especially having in mind increasing unemployment and a need for institutional support. Governance can here be defined in Rhodes'⁵ sense, as new processes, conditions and methods the society is governed. The focus of the paper is on social policy, with stress on employment policies, due to importance of the issue, rising unemployment and important policy changes in the recent years. The European Union has recognised relevance of the issue on several occasions⁶, especially having in mind the effects of the 2008 crisis, rising new

² Marshall, Thomas Humphrey. *Citizenship and Social Class*. The University Press, Cambridge, 1950.

³ Clasen, Jochen., Clegg, Daniel. Beyond Activation: Reforming European Unemployment Protection Systems in Post-Industrial Labour Markets. *European Societies*, 8, 4. 2006. pp. 527-53; Esping Andersen, Gosta., Gallie, Duncan., Hemerijck, Anton., Myles, John. *Why We Need a New Welfare State*. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2002; Hemerijck, Anton. *Changing welfare states*. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2013.

⁴ Esping Andersen, Gosta., Gallie, Duncan., Hemerijck, Anton., Myles, John. *Why We Need a New Welfare State*. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2002; Hemerijck, Anton. *Changing welfare states*. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2013.

⁵ Rhodes, Roderick. The New Governance: Governing Without Government. *Political Studies*, 1996, p. 653-4.

⁶ European Commission. *An Agenda for new skills and jobs*. COM(2010) 682 final, 2010.; European Commission. *Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. COM(2010) 2020, 2010.; European Commission. *Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*. COM(2013) 778 final, 2013.; European Commission. *Towards Social Investment for Growth and*

social risks⁷, reorientation to services and austerity⁸ and fiscal consolidation measures that are still in effects in some member states. Coping with each of these requires adaptation of administration and authors speak of different ways it can be performed.

Van Berkel et al. speak of four guiding principles of the new modes of governance: centralisation and decentralisation of policy making and implementation responsibilities; introduction of quasi markets; promoting inter-agency cooperation and partnerships; introducing new public management instruments⁹. Minas uses the arguments of Stuart, stressing vertical and horizontal shifts in linkages between centre, regions, localities and neighbourhoods¹⁰. The same author also speaks of two ways of reforms, the first concentrating at “rationalization, activation and classification of rights and obligations of job seekers” and the second addressing structural and long-term unemployment¹¹. All of these aim at increasing capacities and effectiveness of the social services administration, through allowing citizens to use the services in the most efficient and friendly way. Employment services are relevant due to their rising usage by the unemployed but also due to the rising number of services offered, especially active labour market policies.

As already mentioned, due to the vast amount of changes observed in administration of social care, a considerable attention will be paid to employment administration. It is also one of the policy areas where a vast amount of reforms has happened, especially towards investment oriented policies. Accordingly, as the scope of administrative reforms goes beyond this paper, the focus will be on the two aspects of the process: the level of decentralisation or centralisation and organisational segment, in the sense responsibilities of each of the levels of administration. One-stop shops represent an example which encompasses these processes and it is also placed high on the social policy agenda of the EU. Due to its relevance for social investment approach, which is becoming a leading paradigm in European welfare discourse¹², it will be a perspective from which the process will be analysed. Therefore, the hypothesis of the paper is: administration

Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020. COM(2013) 83 final. 2013.

⁷ Bonoli, Giuliano. Varieties of Social Investment in Labour Market Policy. In Morel, N., Palier, B., & Palme, J. (Eds.). *What Future for Social Investment?* Institute for futures studies: Research Report, 2009, pp. 55-66.

⁸ Pierson, Paul. *The welfare state over the very long run*. ZeS-Arbeitspapier, No. 02/2011. 2011.

⁹ Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. The Governance of Active Welfare States. In Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 5.

¹⁰ Minas, Renate. *Activation in integrated services*. Institute for Future Studies. Stockholm. 2009, p. 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹² European Commission. *Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*. COM(2013)778final, 2013.; European Commission. *Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020*. COM(2013) 83 final. 2013.

of employment policies in the European Union is moving towards creation of one-stop shops, creating similar types of administrative units which offer majority of the services at one place. The paper aims at showing whether one-stop shops are becoming a leading model for administering social care and especially employment, whether these are becoming similar in an organisational way and what is the relationship of these to the social investment approach. The study will cover twelve countries: Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, France, United Kingdom, Italy, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia. This selection offers a broad scope of overview of reforms in the chosen policy area but more importantly, it will show how different welfare regimes respond to new challenges. Moreover, it will show whether Nordic countries, as leaders in social investment, are leaders in policy administration reforms as well.

3. One-stop shops: a new approach to administration

One-stop shop appeared as the concept in Australia for the first time, during 1970s¹³. Other OECD countries began to adopt the model by the end of the previous century. The literature on the concept stresses various aspects it encompasses: administrative, collaborative, organisational, procedural and locational. In other words, one-stop shops aim at redirecting the ways system of support for the individuals is organised. Consequently, definitions vary, stressing one of the aspects or the other, but as Minas stressed, organisational points of view prevail¹⁴. The same author mentions Stroheimer's definition¹⁵, saying that one-stop shops are lower level coordination initiatives based on either complete merger, collaboration or partnership but without mayor reorganising of the system. Looking at the scope of functions, there can be service models, oriented towards providing services only or more multi-function oriented centres, proving also help, support or any other part of the process¹⁶. Askim et al. emphasise cross-sectoral partnerships on the wider geographical arena, having all of the relevant partners represented¹⁷. The most appropriate definition of one-stop shops is to delineate them as the instances which offer several services on the same or similar location, in the same administrative unit. This way, the major advantage of one-stop shops is simplification of procedures and easier access to services.

¹³ Wettenhall, Roger. & Kimber, Megan. *One-stop shopping: Notes on the concept and Some Australian Initiatives*. Public Sector Papers 2/96. Centre for Research in Public Sector. Canberra, 1996.

¹⁴ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶ Kubicek, Herbert. & Hagen, Martin. One stop government in Europe: An overview. In Hagen, Martin & Kubicek Herbert, (Eds.), *One stop government in Europe. Results from 11 National Surveys*. University of Bremen. Bremen. 2000, pp. 1-36.

¹⁷ Askim, Jostein., Fimreite, Anne Lise., Moseley, Alice., & Pedersen, Lene Holm. One-stop shops for social welfare: The adaption of an organizational form in three countries. *Public Administration*, 89, 2009, pp. 1451-1468.

Organising administration in this way offers advantages for the government as well, allowing it to benefit from transaction cost reductions, elimination of duplications, better communication between agencies and easier coordination between specialised units¹⁸. Having in mind a changing nature of welfare benefits and measures, especially unemployment, there is a growing attitude that simplification and better understanding of the procedures by the users are essential for their effectiveness. Employment measures have also been in the focus of reforms of the labour market, having active labour market policies become an irreplaceable segment of it¹⁹.

One-stop shops represent an example of an integrated and individualised approach to social services administration. European Commission's Social Investment Package points to the need of sustainability and adequacy of social systems through simplification and better targeting and one-stop shops are an example in this sense²⁰. People's needs are met in a friendlier manner and there is a tendency of providing different benefits for a single contingency²¹. Tailor-made services, which are individualised and aiming at specific needs, offer the best possible solution when offered in this type of administrative organisation²². On the other hand, decentralisation of services aims at increasing effectiveness because local administration is more familiar with the circumstances and the way people live. Therefore, familiarity with local circumstances increases the possibility of administration to fulfil its functions in a more fruitful way.

Creating one-stop shops is in accordance with the social investment agenda the Commission has undertaken and they are recognised as a way of optimisation of the investment strategy²³. Social investment is an approach that combines activation and human capital development and the interest of the literature for it has been on the increase since 1990s. However, the prime interest for it arose after the 2008 crisis, many now seeing it as the leading approach or paradigm of social policy²⁴.

¹⁸ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 42.

¹⁹ Bonoli, Giuliano. Active labour market policy and social investment: a changing relationship. In Morel, Natalie, Palier, Bruno, & Palme, Joakim. (Eds.). *Towards a Social Investment Welfare State?* Bristol University Press, Bristol. 2012, pp. 181-204.

²⁰ European Commission. *Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020*. COM(2013) 83 final, 2013, p. 8

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Bouget, Denis, Frazer, Hugh, Marlier, Eric, Sabato, Sebastiano, Vanhercke, Bart. *Social Investment in Europe: A study of national policies*. European Social Policy Network (ESPN). Brussels: European Commission, 2015, p. 36.

²³ European Commission. *Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020*. COM(2013) 83 final, 2013, p. 22

²⁴ Ferrera, Maurizio. From the Welfare State to the Social Investment State. *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*, 2009, 117, 3/4, pp. 513-528.; Hemerijck, Anton. *Changing welfare states*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 2013; Hemerijck, Anton. The Quiet Paradigm Revolution of Social Investment. *Social Politics*, 2014, 22, pp. 242-256.; Hemerijck, Anton. Social Investment and Its Critics. In Hemerijck, A. (Ed.), *The Uses of Social Investment*. Oxford University Press, Oxford,

Social investment emerged as a set of policies or measures which aim at developing human capital and enable individuals for easier and smoother life transitions. It supports “regenerative and promotional side of social policy, including education, health, childcare, parenting and family services, lifelong learning, and long-term and elderly care” which are essential for high productivity of the economy²⁵. Bouget et al. highlight major policy areas of social investment: early education and care policies, support for labour market participation and policy measures addressing social and labour market exclusion. Authors of the report conclude that just as social investment is unevenly developed throughout the European Union, the same conclusion can be made for one-stop shops²⁶.

Synergy between employment and social services, which one-stop shops are able to offer²⁷, may increase attention for active labour market policies, but more importantly, their visibility and use may increase as well. It is of the special interest here because implementation of the specific policies depends on the way they are administered. Consequently, strengthening of stocks, flows and buffers is more closely interlinked and monitored. In Hemerijck’s words, the three major functions of social investment are encouraged and developed: people’s skills and capacities, so they are prepared for future life-course contingencies (stocks); allocation of labour resources is put into most effective use over the life-course, resulting in higher employment rates (flows); there is a good basic protection of income and economic stabilisers are effective (buffers)²⁸.

Rising inequalities and uneven distribution raise further problems for the welfare state, which cannot be discussed here due to the lack of space, but optimising social policy administration rests on institutional complementarity and one-stop shops are an example of this approach. Consensus on the need of the reform has been reached in the EU, however, it remains the question whether it is confirmed in practice.

4. Administering employment in the European Union: country specifics

Relevance of social care administration and especially employment agencies has already been explained and specific countries will be examined in accordance with the interest of this paper. Countries are chosen as representative

2017, pp. 3-39.; Jenson, Jane., Saint-Martin, Denis. Building blocks for a new social architecture: the LEGOTM paradigm of an active society, *Policy & Politics*, 2006, 34, pp. 429-51.

²⁵ Hemerijck, Anton. Social Investment and Its Critics. In Hemerijck, A. (Ed.), *The Uses of Social Investment*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, p. 19.

²⁶ Bouget, Denis., Frazer, Hugh., Marlier, Eric., Sabato, Sebastiano., Vanhercke, Bart. *Social Investment in Europe: A study of national policies*. European Social Policy Network (ESPN). Brussels: European Commission, 2015, p. 36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Hemerijck, Anton. *Changing welfare states*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 2013; Hemerijck, Anton. Social Investment and its Critics. In Hemerijck, A. (Ed.), *The Uses of Social Investment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, pp. 3-39.

cases of welfare-regimes²⁹. More importantly, the paper will show if path-dependence can be observed for administration reforms as well and not just in policies formation and outcomes.

Nordic countries are often recognised as leaders of the welfare state reforms, but also as countries that perform the best in the sense of employment rates, inequality and quality of life. LAFOS (the Labour Force Service Centres) in Finland represents an example of one-stop shop, due to its ability to provide multiple services at one place. It included reforms of social and employment services, social insurance, together with voluntary and private companies, gathering them at one place³⁰. A tendency towards comprehensive service provider can be observed together with decentralisation and more autonomy. However, some of the services are not comprised by LAFOS so there is a need of cooperation with other institutions³¹. Employment services in Finland are oriented at providing activation services, focusing on detailed interviews and discouraging long unemployment spells and passivity, especially having in mind passivity of job seekers³². LAFOS is perceived as local offices but being steered from the national level and this is important as payment of benefits is not provided by LAFOS³³.

Danish job centres provide a number of services as well: informing, advising, follow-up of jobseekers' job efforts, interviews, training, education, rehabilitation, but similar to Finland, payment of benefits together with support in cases of social problems is not a part of their activities³⁴. One of the major activities of jobcentres is providing and organising activation programmes, but some of the programmes must be outsourced³⁵. Larsen refers to Danish case as decentralised centralisation, as there is decentralisation of responsibility but centralisation of control³⁶. Financing of benefits remains in the control of the state but longer unemployment spells mean transferring of the responsibility to municipality³⁷. It can be seen here that employment administration in Denmark has been adapted to activation models, as Denmark was one of the forerunners of tightening activation criteria for unemployment benefits³⁸.

²⁹ Esping-Andersen, Gosta. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990.

³⁰ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 44.

³¹ Duell, Nicola, Grubb, David., Shruti, Singh. *Activation Policies in Finland*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper, no. 98. OECD Publishing, p. 16.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 45.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 46.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Ima li nesto??

Most recent reforms Swedish employment services aimed at sustaining centralised system, having central government as the principal actor³⁹. However, implementation of decisions is made by the local PES (Public Employment Services), which have considerable autonomy for deciding in individual cases⁴⁰. PES provide information to jobseekers, check their insurance status and decide on the payment of unemployment insurance⁴¹. Despite centralised system in Sweden, this is a significant feature and responsibility of employment services. However, municipalities offer some of the services and private providers deliver some of the services as well. Despite institutional cooperation, it can be concluded that central government still plays the major role in employment services in Sweden, having control of the greatest part of the process. Swedish case is also interesting due to important role of trade unions, which play effective part in unemployment insurance funds handling⁴².

Although not the EU member state, Norway is used here as an example of the Nordic welfare state model, with the aim of presenting its distinctiveness and relevance for the research question of the paper. NAV (Norwegian Welfare and Labour Administration) offices provide majority of the state and local government services: delivery and governing of social security benefits, labour market measures and services, social assistance benefits and the Qualification program, having only some of them transferred to special units outside NAV⁴³. Norwegian employment administration is decentralised and local NAV have significant autonomy in organising their activities.

German's Jobcentres represent a mix of central and municipal services, due to constitutional ban on creating joint venture between municipal and federal PES⁴⁴. Jobcentres deal with receiving, paying benefits, activation and employment services⁴⁵ and due to the legal provisions, there is constant cooperation between different levels of government. Unemployment benefits are regulated by federal employment offices and social assistance is delivered together with the municipalities⁴⁶. However, municipal centres have certain autonomy and their operations comprise multiple services. Social partners' role has been marginalised and moves to creating one-stop shops resulted in fragmentation of financial and organisational structure⁴⁷. Due to federal organisation of the country, both public

³⁹ Minas, Renate. Decentralization and Back to Centralization: the Swedish Case. In Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 198.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁴³ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 44.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ D'Ingeldey, Irene. Fragmented Governance Continued: the German Case. In Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

and private providers, despite their minor role, have to cooperate, but federal authorities are in charge of the largest share of the responsibilities and centralisation remains one of the features of the German employment administration⁴⁸.

Dutch UWV Work Company has encompassing range of responsibilities, with the aim of simplifying the procedure in the managing process⁴⁹, offering face-to-face services to unemployed. However, many of the services have been deregulated in the last decade or so⁵⁰. Municipalities have a certain degree of independence in financing, which depends on their performance. Unemployment benefit administration is managed by autonomous agency UWV (Employee Insurance Agency) and social assistance by municipal welfare agencies⁵¹. Two trends can be observed in the Dutch system of employment administration: marketization of employment services and a decline of corporatist governance⁵². Processes of centralisation and decentralisation can be observed simultaneously: centralisation of benefit agencies and decentralisation of activation policies, but decentralisation has given significant autonomy to municipal agencies which offer these services⁵³.

French employment administration is characterised by multiple trends: decentralisation, developing new public management, creating quasi-markets by outsourcing services and promoting inter-agency cooperation and merging of previously separated institutions into a new Employment Bureau⁵⁴. A move towards activation has characterised French PES recently, with negotiations between social partners as its essential element⁵⁵. Social partners administer a range of employment institutions, resulting in decentralisation in some of the areas: competency transfers for vocational training and social inclusion, but also activation programmes and job-search support⁵⁶. However, activation policies are steered from the central level.

The United Kingdom has also witnessed significant changes in employment administration. The Jobcentre Plus provides intake, interviews, follow-up and sanctioning, together with the payment of benefits⁵⁷. Consequently,

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴⁹ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 45.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Van Berkel, Rik, de Graaf, Willibrord. The Liberal Governance of a Non-Liberal Welfare State. In Van Berkel, Rik, de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 134.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 137-9.

⁵⁴ Eydoux, Anne, Berand, Mathieu. Accelerating Governance Reforms: the French Case. In Van Berkel, Rik, de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 38-9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40-1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁷ Minas, Renate. One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation. *International Journal of Social welfare*. 2014, 23, p. 45.

the role of centres is complex but the wider picture offers a similar outlook, due to the number of other actors, private and voluntary, but Jobcentres Plus still play the major role in delivering employment services⁵⁸. Major focus of the centres is on activation policies and they are managed from the central level of the government, their financing being performance dependent⁵⁹. Wright singles out this characteristic of employment administration of the UK, stating that such level of centralisation is unparalleled in Europe⁶⁰, especially knowing how the process of devolution has been developed in the UK. However, organising administration in this way allows quick implementation of reforms and adaptation with little resistance⁶¹.

Social policy administration in Italy has been reformed from hierarchical to multi-level⁶². Providing unemployment benefits and social assistance is divided among instance, the former being governed by national authorities and the latter by the sub-national⁶³. The post-crisis period saw introduction of new roles for regions and regional social partners, which effectively meant that two processes were being developed: decentralisation and marketization⁶⁴. Vocational trainings and specific unemployment benefits provision was decentralised and new private actors emerged, while provision of the employment policies remained at the national level⁶⁵. Reforms of social policy delivery were also guided by the two main principles: promoting citizens' wellbeing in accordance with 'selective universalism' thinking and strictly defined state powers while preparing decentralisation and public activation⁶⁶. All of this implies that processes towards moving to creation of one-stop shops have been designed, but the number of agencies and administration involved in the process of policy delivery questions this conclusion. However, expansion of benefits⁶⁷ will create more need for it.

Czech Republic had to make significant reforms due to its communist background, having PES understaffed and underfinanced, but also poorly managed

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47-8.

⁶⁰ Wright, Sharon. Steering with Sticks, Rowing for Rewards: the New Governance of Activation in the UK. In Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf, Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 93.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶² Graziano, Paolo, R., Raué, Annelies. The Governance of Activation Policies in Italy: from Centralized and Hierarchical to a Multi-Level open System Mode? In Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 113.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁶⁶ Bifulco, Lavinia., Bricocoli, Massimo, Monteleone Raffaele. Activation and local welfare in Italy. *Social Policy & Administration*, 42/2, 2008, pp. 143–59.

⁶⁷ Graziano, Paolo, R., Raué, Annelies. The Governance of Activation Policies in Italy: from Centralized and Hierarchical to a Multi-Level open System Mode? In Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 129.

at the beginning of 1990s⁶⁸. Employment administration is divided between national and local authorities, local offices delivering unemployment benefits and implementing ALMPs, while they are governed by the PES governing body – ESA⁶⁹. It also provides financial resources for local offices and defines relevant strategies. However, local employment offices have a wide scope of independence in decision making and it is a result of EO's higher level of adaptability and knowledge of the circumstances⁷⁰. Consequently, although central authorities have formal control, it is not practiced in the same manner. Municipalities deliver social assistance benefits only, because it is PES that has resources and competences for delivering activation measures⁷¹. The number of public-private partnerships is growing at the regional level as well, mainly serving for administrative functions and not policy delivery⁷². Effects of the reforms have been hampered due to low quality of monitoring on the national level and the administration has not developed in the expected manner⁷³.

Poland is also moving towards decentralisation in employment administration, the country already having decentralised structure of public authorities⁷⁴. Implementation of activities is fragmented between different levels of government, leading to division between processes that lead to social integration from those aiming at labour market reintegration⁷⁵. Labour offices on the district level are responsible for benefit payments, provision of placement services, vocational counselling, activation policies, including individual plans creation⁷⁶. Providing services is divided among several administrative units, social assistance centres being responsible for social services and cooperation between them and labour offices is not efficient⁷⁷, implying that quality coordination between multiple levels and units of government is the area of employment and social care is missing.

Slovenia has been moving in direction of creating one-stop shops and Centres for Social Work are delivering for a number of measures: means-tested cash social benefits (child allowances, cash social assistance, income support and education grants), subsidies (early childhood education and care) and payments

⁶⁸ Sirovátka, Tomáš., Winkler, Jiří. Governance of Activation Policies in the Czech Republic: Uncoordinated Transformation. In Van Berkel, Rik., de Graaf Willibrord., Sirovátka Tomáš. (Eds), *The Governance of Active Welfare States in Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan. New York. 2014, p. 174.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁷⁴ Minas, Renate. *Activation in integrated services*. Institute for Future Studies. Stockholm. 2009, p. 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁶ Heidenreich, Martin, Aurich-Beehreide, Patrizia. European Worlds of inclusive activation: the organisational challenges of coordinated service provision. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 23, 2014, p. 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

from public sources⁷⁸. Responsibilities of centres for social work include social services and providing assistance in activation of the unemployed⁷⁹. A very good cooperation between the centres and other agencies, most importantly PES, provide ample space for labelling them as one stop shops, due to their decentralised nature but also due to the activities they perform.

5. Discussion

A study on social investment in Europe⁸⁰ indicates that movement towards development of one-stop shops in social policy delivery can be observed across the European Union. However, there is also a cautionary tone, adding that this is not an all-encompassing trend and results vary from country to country. This study was looking into developments in twelve countries, belonging to different social models, to see whether one-stop shops are being developed as a part of administration of social care and especially employment policies. Inability of the study to include all member states resulted in the choice of the mentioned countries. There are several observations that can be made.

Firstly, the hypothesis of the paper is partially confirmed. The case studies used here show that reforms in social policy administration, with the focus on employment administration, are moving towards creating units that provide the majority of services for citizens, especially unemployed. However, the process is not unified and the way reforms are undertaken varies significantly. In some of the cases the reforms of the social policy administration have been happening for decades, creating similar units to one-stop shops long before the 2008 crisis. On the other hand, in some of the countries, reforms began just before the crisis or after it, resulting in their uneven effectiveness. The case studies also show that movement towards all-encompassing units, what one-stop shops ideally aim to be, offering service at one place, is often difficult to implement due to the way the state administration is organised. Table 1. shows how administration is organised, in accordance with the principles this paper reflected on.

⁷⁸ Stropnik, Nada., Prevolnik Rupel Valentina. *ESPN Thematic Report on Social Investment Slovenia*. European Commission, ESPN. 2015, p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Bouget, Denis, Frazer, Hugh, Marlier, Eric, Sabato, Sebastiano, Vanhercke, Bart. *Social Investment in Europe: A study of national policies*. European Social Policy Network (ESPN). Brussels: European Commission, 2015.

Table 1. Organisation of one-stop shops in twelve countries.

Country	Decentralisation	Multi-institutional services provision	Privatisation of services (quasi-markets)	Multipurpose administrative unit (one-stop shop)	Providing activation policies
Finland	Yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Denmark	No	yes	yes	yes	yes
Sweden	No	yes	yes	yes	yes
Norway	Yes	no	no	yes	yes
Germany	No	yes	yes	no	yes
the Netherlands	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
France	Yes	yes	yes	no	yes
United Kingdom	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Italy	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Czech Republic	yes	no	no	yes	yes
Poland	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Slovenia	yes	yes	no	yes	yes

Secondly, decentralisation is happening in the majority of countries, but it is not a universal approach. It is very interesting to notice that two Nordic countries (Denmark and Sweden) have kept centralised administration in the area of employment. Despite the fact that new private providers are gaining significant place in services provision, central administration kept crucial functions, e.g. funds provision. The other two countries represent interesting cases as well, as Germany is a federal state and the UK is based on the devolution model. However, steering employment policies and measures is left to central governments. Other countries have moved towards decentralisation, but examples of the four countries mentioned here imply that one-stop shops are not necessarily related to decentralisation. On the contrary, they can exist even in centrally organised administration.

Thirdly, in almost all countries services are still provided by a number of institutions. It does not exclude existence of one-stop shops but confirms that social policy and especially employment administration is still divided among first of all, different hierarchical instances and secondly, between different agencies on the same level. This study also shows that multi-institutional administrative organisation does not coincide with inclusion of private providers and creation of quasi-markets. The research shows that non-state actors are becoming more

numerous, as it has been already implied in the literature⁸¹ but it is not a unique approach. All of the countries with centrally organised employment administration have introduced private providers and all with decentralised system did not. It is an unexpected result which confirms that no unified model can be applied across different models of administration and governance.

Fourthly, in the majority of countries, a multipurpose and multifunctional administrative unit could be observed, only Germany, France and Italy not having one. Not having this type of service does not exclude existence of one-stop shop, but having it confirms a strong tendency towards creating a comprehensive unit. The nature of this organisation differs across countries, as has been explained in the paper. The scope and range of its functions differs and different models are applied in practice. This shows that one-stop shops are essentially multi-purposeful agencies that can combine very different functions. More importantly, it can be seen that it is not only employment services that can be offered. Social care services in some of the countries are an essential part of the activities of the administration. It is only Norway that could be labelled as an ideal-type case of one-stop shop, having no private actors and one administrative unit offering basically off of the services.

Finally, activation policies are being provided by all of the administrations included in this research. It shows their commitment towards social investment and enrichment of human capital. Consequently, one-stop shops are in close relationship to social investment but the approach of the administration may be different. Approach of United Kingdom or Sweden could be contrasted here, the first aiming at increasing employment with the responsibility solely on the individual, while Sweden has more protective system, with more generous unemployment benefits. Activation policies are an essential part of the social investment approach and all of the employment administrations have provision of activation policies as their portfolio. Activation is stressed as the activity of all of the centres in this study and more importantly, there is a move towards comprehensive activities that can be labelled as activating⁸². Active labour market policies can help individuals overcome their skills deficiencies⁸³ and improve their employability, therefore, one-stop shops can be seen as investment oriented administrative units. Increasing unemployment and a need of establishing activation policies only contribute to the need of creating one-stop shops in employment administration, but even further, in administering social care.

This study showed that social care administration and especially organising employment in the European Union are moving towards creation of one-stop shops. However, it is not a unified project, in the sense of similarity in their

⁸¹ Jenson, Jane. Modernising the European Social Paradigm: Social Investments and Social Entrepreneurs. *Journal of Social Policy*, 46, 2017, pp. 31-47.

⁸² OECD. *OECD Employment outlook 2013*. OECD Publishing, Paris. 2013.

⁸³ Bonoli, Giuliano. Active labour market policy and social investment: a changing relationship. In Morel, Natalie., Palier, Bruno., & Palme, Joakim. (Eds.). *Towards a Social Investment Welfare State?* Bristol University Press, Bristol. 2012, pp. 181-204.

organisation and the scope of functions. There is tendency towards decentralisation but some countries still kept centralised system. The services offered differ as well, from fairly limited to the wide array of functions that these centres provide. Finally, providing activating policies which aim at enrichment of human capital is present in all countries, making one-stop shops closely related to social investment approach.

6. Conclusion

Administering of social care in the European Union differs greatly across the member states and this study has proved it as well. Focusing on one-stop shops as a novel approach, despite its application even before, showed variations in the countries this paper studied, but also discovered similarities. Looking at level of decentralisation and the scope of functions disclosed how administration is organised, revealing the basic principles of each of the model. It proved that decentralisation is not necessary for creation of one-stop shops, as cases of Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the United Kingdom show. One-stop shops exist irrespective of the vertical organisation of the administration, but majority of countries tend to be more decentralised. The scope of functions of one-stop shops also differs, Norway being the only country with the ideal-type organisation, having state organised administration and no private providers and one administrative unit offering majority of the services. There is a movement towards inclusion of private providers, creating quasi-markets, as the cases of seven countries from this study shows. Finally, all of the countries are moving towards social investment approach, which can be seen in representation of the activation measures, which are offered by all of the one-stop shops.

The study shows that path-dependency can be observed in a limited extent, as administration in all of the countries show great effort towards reforms. It is rather the very nature of policies that can be stressed to be path-dependent, but this study did not cover this and focused on administration only. One-stop shops represent a novel way to offering services to citizens and movement towards social investment requires a need of careful planning and coordination between different administration units. Additionally, it offers easier and friendlier approach to citizens, as the majority of services is offered in one place. Increasing unemployment and a need of improving skills and knowledge has brought this issue to the front of the agenda of the European Union and this study showed that not only the results are present but also the need of future improvements as well.

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