

ABSTRACTS

Ágnes Simonyi: Assessing Social Policy Variations across CEE Countries

This study assesses challenges of social cohesion in the EU NMS and the changing public policies to support inclusion. The study gives a summary of social challenges and social protection interventions analyzed in the GRINCOH project and other recent international research. It presents experiences of diverging tendencies of NMS in dealing with different challenges of social protection following CEE transformation and the most recent economic crisis (labour market exclusion, social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, combatting poverty and inequalities, etc.). The paper underlines the supportive character of social policy fostering economic growth and social cohesion; social policy interventions (both in transfers and in services) are considered as investments in the social resources of growth, competitiveness and innovation.

Klaus Petersen and Jørn Henrik Petersen: Confusion and divergence: Origins and meanings of the term 'welfare state' in Germany and Britain, 1840-1940

It is often stated that there is no standard definition of a 'welfare state'. A survey of the standard textbooks supports this claim. It is also often the case that academic works on welfare state and social policy history earmark lines or even pages to discussing the origins of the term welfare state. However, these brief accounts are often wrong in the details and are missing important aspects. In our article we offer the first detailed study of the origin of the term 'welfare state' tracing it back to the mid-19th century Germany and following its diverse and changing definitions in the German and British context until the 1940s. The study adds decades to the conventional understanding of this history and offers a more nuanced understanding of the different definitions attributed to the term before its political breakthrough in the late 1940s. Projecting this post-war understanding backwards in time - what the literature generally does - is too simple and anachronistic. Both in Germany and Britain the dominating understandings differ from our present day understanding of the 'welfare state' as a social security system.

Mária Neményi and Judit Takács: Discrimination practices and perceptions in the Hungarian adoption system

Examining adoption families – i.e. families where adoption occurs as an important factor in family formation – in the context of pluralisation of family forms can highlight the socially constructed nature of family life on the one hand, and challenge the normative concept of the family, on the other. The Child Protec-

tion Act in its article regulating child adoption practices gives priority to married couples, which can be interpreted as a means to reconstruct the traditional nuclear family form – however, it does not exclude single women and men either from adoption. Through successful adoption practices the ethnic homogeneity of Hungarian families can be altered, and planned one-parent families as well as families including same-sex couples and a child or children adopted by one of the partners can be constructed.

Our present study, based on qualitative and quantitative data, focuses on the potential occurrences of discrimination in the adoption process in Hungary. On the one hand we examine the relationship between adoptive parent candidates and representatives of (state and private) adoption agencies, and on the other hand, we focus on how the preferences of adoptive parent candidates relate to the realities represented by children who are available for adoption. On the basis of analysing all the adoption applications submitted within one calendar year (2011) to the Budapest based main state adoption agency (TEGYESZ), it can be seen that there are certain pre-selection mechanisms in place that adversely affect mainly Roma children and those with certain health problems, and might reflect the “traditional” or “special” situation of the adoptive parent candidates. Discrimination in the Hungarian adoption system is a multidimensional issue: discrimination is done by the law that prioritises certain family forms, while it excludes others; discrimination can be done by the official persons participating in the process of who decides on the eligibility of the applicants; it can also be done by the adoptive parent candidates who tend to reject older, not completely healthy and non-white children; and ultimately class-based discrimination can also be observed, when children of the disadvantaged can get into more well-to-do families.