

Paper abstract submitted to Stream 9.3. European Welfare States and Labor Markets in Situations of Crises

Social protection responses to the employment crisis: short-time schemes in Italy in a comparative perspective

In all European countries, emergency policy measures have been introduced in order to counteract the employment consequences of the economic crisis. Countries which already had short-time work schemes, such as *Kurzarbeit* in Germany and Austria and the *Cassa Integrazione Guadagni* (CIG) in Italy, have loosened the eligibility requirements and extended their maximum duration. The goal is to compensate the worker for reduced working hours, while securing his or her work contract. Nowhere has this strategy been used more extensively than in Italy: in order to contain formal unemployment CIG has been extended, at least in principle, to previously excluded sectors, employers and workers. However, this is based on a discretionary decision on the part of the public authority, and in any case it does not cater to the problem of unemployment benefits effectively available only to some segments of the labour force, leaving large groups of workers (in particular: non standard workers) unable to qualify. In the absence of a generalized minimum income scheme, this still leaves a considerable number of workers totally uncovered by the social protection system in the event of job loss.

This paper focuses on the measures introduced to counteract the employment crisis in Italy as compared to Germany and Austria. It estimates through panel administrative microdata how many workers may have access to standard unemployment benefits in the Italian case, showing how the emergency measures introduced to face the crisis have worked so far, and estimating how many workers may now have access to the whole package of monetary compensation in case of job loss. While it is too early to assess systematically the effectiveness of the emergency measures, some conclusions on their effects in terms of coverage are drawn relying on data available at the local level and on national aggregate data, and systematically considering the evidence available for Germany and Austria, where emergency measures have complemented, rather than replacing, an extensive income maintenance system in case of non employment.

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