

7. The ‘activation turn’ and the new horizontal division of labour at the local level: the case of social assistance services in Austria, Belgium, Norway and Switzerland

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we focus on social assistance *services*, such as housing, childcare, counselling, food and other types of benefits, that are provided to people receiving a guaranteed subsistence income from the state, defined here as social assistance beneficiaries. These services are delivered by social workers in public agencies, often collaborating with other public and non-profit service providers at the local level. We will specifically address how the ‘horizontal division of labour’ (Martinelli, Chapter 1, in this volume) among government actors and a variety of social service providers (public, non-profit and for-profit) has been affected by the so-called ‘activation turn’ (Kazepov, 2010; Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2013) in social assistance.

In recent decades, most European countries have made a transition to an ‘active’ welfare state, whereby social policies are aimed at facilitating the transition of people in poverty to the labour market. This shift is defined as the ‘activation turn’. In most European welfare states, this turn has reallocated the tasks of social workers and caseworkers at the local level from supporting the vulnerable target group of social assistance beneficiaries by providing services in different life domains towards supporting labour market activation (Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2013). In some countries, such as Switzerland, a trend towards vertical subsidiarity is observed, whereby responsibilities concerning services for and the activation of

social assistance beneficiaries are shifted from the state to the local level. Other countries, such as Finland and Norway, show a trend towards an upward re-scaling, whereby specific regulations and responsibilities of local governments and municipalities are taken over by the central state. In all countries, however, even when an upward re-scaling is observed, local actors still exhibit a high level of discretion regarding how and what types of services are delivered (Kazepov, 2010; Sabatinelli and Sempredon, in this volume; Andreotti et al., 2012). In this chapter we analyse the extent to which the freedom local actors experience when providing these services goes hand in hand with horizontal subsidiarisation (Kazepov, 2010; see also Leibetseder et al., in this volume). More specifically, we examine four case studies developed in the context of the COST Action IS1102 *SO.S. COHESION – Social services, welfare states and places*, to document the horizontal division of labour between local government actors and a variety of service organisations (public, non-profit and private) to provide services and activation trajectories in four European cities: Graz in Austria, Antwerp in Belgium, Berne in Switzerland and Oslo in Norway. Our analysis shows that in all cases a horizontal division of labour has emerged between actors involved with the activation of social assistance clients, on the one hand, and a variety of service organisations providing different types of services, on the other hand (housing, food, material aid, counselling, etc.). We hypothesise that this accrued horizontal division of labour results in a selection mechanism we define as ‘creaming the crop’. This mechanism appears when local actors favour the ‘best’ clients, i.e. those who are able to make the transition towards the labour market, over the ‘worst’ clients, those who are not capable to find a job.

1. SUBSIDIARISATION AND ACTIVATION POLICIES

According to Lorenz (2001), the growing emphasis on activation has had important consequences for social policy and the provision of services in European countries. Some authors even propose that a new welfare state has emerged grounded in the new activation paradigm (Cantillon and Vandenbroucke, 2014). Because of this change, local service providers are increasingly challenged when confronted with the need to activate people falling through the cracks of the labour market.

Two different activation policy approaches can be found in the literature: a narrow, ‘disciplining’ perspective and a broad, ‘emancipatory’ perspective (Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2013; Mätzke et al., in this volume). When adopting a disciplining approach, access to services is

made contingent upon the client's individual motivation and efforts to find a job. Additionally, social assistance beneficiaries are seen as unwilling and/or incapable of work and, as a consequence, their behaviour must be changed through conditionality and stimulus (Wright, 2012). This disciplining perspective stems from the idea that social assistance beneficiaries are themselves responsible for their (un)employment (Dalrymple, 2001). Accordingly, social policies must focus on disciplining beneficiaries instead of supporting them. The right to cash benefits and in-kind services is thus contingent upon the efforts beneficiaries deploy in job seeking.

Other scholars, however, stress the detrimental effects of disciplining strategies (Standing, 1999). A primary argument is that disciplining policies do not take into account the specific needs and contexts of vulnerable groups such as social assistance beneficiaries (Quaid, 2002), who are confronted with significant problems across different life domains, such as lack of access to basic services. Consequently, these beneficiaries need support to meet these different needs *before* they can be activated and do not benefit from disciplining strategies. Scholars critical of disciplining strategies defend a broad and emancipatory conceptualisation of activation. According to this perspective, the transition towards the labour market is not the sole goal: integration into the broader social community is central, ultimately leading to reduced social isolation (Lødemel and Moreira, 2014).

Throughout Europe, local governments have attempted to reconcile these different perspectives and aims through new organisational arrangements, which have changed the horizontal division of labour among different local actors. According to Kazepov (2010), the horizontal dimension of subsidiarisation refers to the multiplication of actors involved in the production and delivery of social services (see also Leibetseder et al., in this volume). This entails the formation of local welfare systems consisting of a mix of formal and informal actors (Andreotti et al., 2012). The new horizontal division of labour involves a mix of local actors that may include state (public institutions), market (for-profit) or non-profit organisations, all of which are involved in the provision of welfare services.

2. SOCIAL SERVICES FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFICIARIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The case studies addressed in this chapter – Graz (Austria), Antwerp (Belgium), Berne (Switzerland) and Oslo (Norway) – were assessed on the basis of national policy documents and earlier empirical investigations conducted by the authors in their respective cases (Altreiter and

Leibetseder, 2015; CAP Gubrium, 2013; CAP Gubrium and Øverbye, 2012; Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2013; CAP Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2012; CAP Leibetseder, 2016; CAP Hauri et al., 2012).

In a comparative perspective, our four case studies are relatively homogeneous (Yin, 2013). In all four countries, social policy was significantly influenced by the activation paradigm. Furthermore, all four countries exhibit high levels of discretion at the local level in the way service delivery and activation trajectories are implemented. We therefore argue that these cases are relevant to understanding the extent to which a specific horizontal division of labour influences the activation trajectories and provision of services to social assistance beneficiaries. In Table 7.1, basic information on the cases is provided.

In the remainder of this section, we first elaborate on how activation policies and the provision of services to social assistance beneficiaries are regulated at the national level, and the extent to which local actors are entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the national regulatory framework. Subsequently, we focus on how service delivery and activation are implemented in the four cities.

Austria

The Austrian regulatory framework

In Austria, the new Needs-Oriented Minimum Income Framework (*Vereinbarung zwischen dem Bund und den Ländern gemäß Art. 15a B-VG über eine bundesweite Bedarfssorientierte Mindestsicherung*) was approved and accepted by all provinces in 2010. This regulatory framework, which was to be adopted and implemented at the provincial level, determined activation trajectories and the provision of social services for social assistance beneficiaries. Within this new framework, the task of the provinces was to ensure that social assistance beneficiaries obtained counselling and support, ‘to avoid and overcome situations of social needs’.

An important aspect of the reform is that the local Public Job Centres (*Arbeitsmarkterservice*), which are financed by unemployment insurance and the national state and are centrally organised, must focus on the activation trajectories of social assistance beneficiaries and unemployment benefit beneficiaries. They offer job search advice and provide job offers and other job-related programmes and courses (*Vereinbarung zur Mindestsicherung*, 2010, Article 7). The national government supports the Job Centres with funds to establish specific programmes for the long-term unemployed. Nevertheless, the regulation leaves the implementation of these programmes to provincial agreements between Job Centres and provincial governments. More specifically, the provinces and their respec-

Table 7.1 The four case studies

Case studies	Inhabitants (2014)	Social assistance beneficiaries (2014)	% of social assistance beneficiaries (2014)	Regulatory framework	Local government level	Local actors involved
Graz (Austria)	269997	8961	3.31	Needs-Oriented minimum income framework (2010)	Municipality	Municipality, Public Job Centres, non-profit service providers
Antwerp (Belgium)	514532	10526	2.06	Law on Public Centres for Social Welfare (1976); Law on the right for societal integration	Municipality	Public Centres of Social Welfare
Berne (Switzerland)	1 009 418	42 760	4.23	No Federal Law. Only guidelines and criteria for the determination of poor law support	Canton	Cantons and municipalities, non-profit service providers
Oslo (Norway)	647 676	19 797	3.05	Act in Social Assistance Services in NAV (2009)	Municipality	Municipal or district 'One-stop shops'

Source: Authors' compilation.

tive municipalities can decide which services are offered to social assistance beneficiaries (Vereinbarung zur Mindestsicherung, 2010, Article 17). In addition to the Job Centres that provide activation trajectories, the provinces may organise 'low-threshold' services (*niederschwellige*), such as, for example, employment in sheltered work for social assistance beneficiaries (Vereinbarung zur Mindestsicherung, 2010, Article 16). Those services are mostly organised by non-profit organisations and provide an activation trajectory for vulnerable people unable to enter the regular labour market. The Job Centres provide services for target groups who are considered (almost) ready for the regular labour market.

The reform has thus introduced a new vertical and horizontal division of labour in activation. First, the services for beneficiaries are now co-financed by the Job Centres, the province and the municipality. Second, the reform enables a harmonisation of the services provided to social assistance beneficiaries within the province, whereas in the previous regime these varied from one municipality to another. More specifically, the province and the Job Centres have now implemented a province-wide delivery of outsourced activation services. Third, some municipalities have handed over the main responsibility for activation to the local Job Centre. On the other hand, social services for adults with multiple problems still vary within the province and rely on the administrative and financial resources of municipalities.

Activation and services in Graz

In Graz, the municipality grasped the opportunity offered by the new legislation and transformed its administrative procedures. Now, a service centre provides an initial access point established on the ground floor. New beneficiaries pick a number and receive an invitation to have an initial discussion within half a day. The caseworkers, as trained administrators, are experienced in the financial and legal aspects of the minimum income protection. When caseworkers identify further social problems, they refer the beneficiaries to other services, such as child welfare service or crisis counselling. Their role is limited to screening beneficiaries, assessing eligibility and demanding employable recipients to register at the Job Centre (Altreiter and Leibetseder, 2015).

In the new scheme, the ongoing check of eligibility only requires beneficiaries to attend short meetings every three months. Nevertheless, strict compliance for those classified as employable with the requirements of the Job Centre is enforced. Every morning, the municipal caseworkers monitor their beneficiaries online. They check whether Job Centres have reported any sanctions due to missed appointments or courses or failed attempts to contact potential employers (CAP Leibetseder, 2016).

In Graz, the Job Centre offers activation trajectories, but only for social assistance beneficiaries who are classified as employable. The Job Centre controls the applications and job interviews of beneficiaries and, depending on individual characteristics, offers training and courses or further education. In specific circumstances, beneficiaries who are considered as hardly employable obtain a case manager who places them in step-wise programmes, which are outsourced. These services are mostly delivered by non-profit organisations, which take over the beneficiary when they are referred from the local Job Centre. Services of these non-profit organisations concern social employment or intensive training and job search support to find employment in the regular labour market.

The new framework and the provincial regulation also allow support in different life domains through case management. For the beneficiaries considered as non-employable, however, the municipality of Graz has limited its services to the provision of financial means and some minor services from other departments and non-profit organisations. In contrast, for beneficiaries who are able to enter the labour market, services have been improved and are provided by the Job Centre. We conclude that the discretionary clauses in the new framework and in the provincial legislation have generated a gap between beneficiaries who are not employable and those who are at least classified as somehow employable. The former receive a low level of services while the latter receive a more intensive level of support.

Belgium

The national regulatory framework in Belgium

For the Belgian context, we focus on the role and responsibility of the *Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn* or Public Centres of Social Welfare (PCSWs). The policy context of these centres is shaped by two federal laws, both defining their main tasks: *de Wet op de Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn* or Law on Public Centres of Social Welfare (1976) and *het Recht op Maatschappelijke Integratie* (Wet van 26 mei 2002) or Law on the Right for Societal Integration (2002).

According to the Law of 1976, the Public Centres of Social Welfare (PCSWs) are responsible for the welfare of their beneficiaries in different life domains, such as housing, financial means, education, childcare, etc. The Law gives PCSWs the responsibility to provide a wide variety of services, including financial aid (social assistance), but also social housing, home care, activation trajectories, support for financial debt, psychosocial support, judicial guidance, and support for participating in cultural activities. The Law of 2002 confirms that PCSWs maintain their responsibility

to provide a *Leefloon*, i.e., a guaranteed subsistence income, based on relatively well-defined conditions, such as nationality, age, family situation, residence, willingness to work, and need; however, the PCSWs are also required to 'activate' their beneficiaries towards the labour market.

The centres thus have two main goals. The first goal is to support the well-being of their beneficiaries by providing different types of services in a variety of life domains. The second goal concerns the insertion of beneficiaries into the labour market. In what follows, we elaborate on how the PCSW of Antwerp combines these two tasks in everyday practice, stressing the high level of discretion in the way these tasks are implemented at the local level.

The case of Antwerp

In the case of Antwerp, we draw a distinction between the Local Centres (*Sociale Centra*), which operate at the neighbourhood level, and the Activation Department (*Departement Activering*), which operates at the city level, although both are part of the Public Centre of Social Welfare (PCSW) of Antwerp.

In Antwerp, the PCSW consists of 25 Local Centres, each taking care of the residents of their respective neighbourhood. In these centres, the beneficiaries are prepared for an activation trajectory. The municipal Activation Department specialises in activating social assistance beneficiaries and takes over beneficiaries from all Local Centres when they are ready for activation. Below, we provide a more specific outline of the division of labour between the Local Centres and the Activation Department in Antwerp, relying on a study written for the Federal Public Service for Social Integration (Raeymaeckers et al., 2009) and other research we conducted for the PCSW of Antwerp (Raeymaeckers and Vranken, 2009; Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2013; CAP Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2012).

We will stress that the PCSW of Antwerp organises a trajectory that can best be described as a succession of steps. In this 'staircase' model, the activation process starts with a broad perspective on the general welfare of the beneficiary. Only when 'all problems are solved' is the beneficiary considered ready to start the activation trajectory.

The first step is defined as 'working on preconditions', i.e., eliminating obstacles that prevent the client from entering the actual activation trajectory (as yet). One of the most common obstacles is housing (Raeymaeckers and Dierckx, 2013). Other problems such as childcare, educational needs, problems related to addiction, insufficient knowledge of the Dutch language and physical or psychological problems also appear. In Antwerp, this stage is the main responsibility of the Local Centres at the neighbourhood level. The social workers in these centres provide the neces-

sary services or refer beneficiaries to other specialised providers of services, such as childcare, in-kind material aid (food, clothing), housing services or other service agencies in different life domains. These agencies are both public and non-profit service providers.

The second step concerns the start of the actual activation route, after the main obstacles have been removed. The screening phase is still carried out at the Local Centre. When collecting information on the beneficiary, attention is given to his or her labour market history and to the problems he or she experiences when looking for a job. In some cases, beneficiaries are sent to training courses to learn how to do job interviews and write a résumé. The tasks of the counsellor at this stage are very diverse. They must have knowledge of screening, guidance on and away from the shop floor, they must network with external organisations and they must keep up to date on activation measures. After this stage, the counsellor of the Local Centre can start the beneficiary on a social activation trajectory or a professional trajectory. Both of these further stages are organised by the Activation Department of the PCSW in Antwerp.

Step three can be defined as a social activation process and is organised for beneficiaries who experience difficulties finding a job on the regular labour market. Social activation can be either a step towards full employment or an end point. This means that beneficiaries in this group are engaged in a useful activity, in an easily accessible and protected work environment (employment care). They are not pressured to find employment in the social or regular circuit.

Step four, the professional trajectory, is a step closer to employment in the regular labour market. The PCSW provides time-limited (one year) work experience by allowing social assistance beneficiaries to work in employment settings where there is still some guidance. Three months before the end of this form of employment the counsellors of the Activation Department organise job interview training to prepare their beneficiaries for employment in the regular labour market. At the end of the professional trajectory, beneficiaries are sent to the local Job Centres or *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling*. These Job Centres are publicly funded agencies, regulated at the level of the Flemish Government, that guide the beneficiaries in finding a job on the regular job market.

According to the Belgian regulatory framework, thus, the goals of the PCSWs are twofold: on the one hand, they seek to enhance the well-being of vulnerable target groups; on the other, they seek to enhance their position in the regular labour market. However, our analysis shows that in Antwerp the goal of activation has become prominent. To enhance the welfare of vulnerable target groups is considered important, but only in order to complete the activation of social assistance clients. Clients make

progress on the staircase model when they are capable of finding and maintaining a job on the regular labour market. To meet this goal, the collaboration between the different non-profit and public actors is crucial. As the target group of the PCSWs is affected by needs that decrease their chances of finding a job in the regular labour market, social workers find it important to collaborate with a variety of non-profit service agencies that are able to face the many problems of their clients. Moreover, our analysis shows that collaboration with the specialised job centres is key to completing the activation trajectory.

Norway

The Norwegian regulatory framework

In Norway, municipalities have been responsible for social assistance and attached services since before the 1845 Poor Law (Vabo and Øverbye, 2009). The 1992 *Kommuneloven* or Local Government Act provided local governments with the power to decide how services should be provided, i.e., whether publicly or through outsourcing to for-profit or non-profit organisations.

In a trend toward re-centralisation, however, in 2006 the management of social assistance was merged with the national unemployment (*Aetat*) and social insurance (*Trygdeetaten*) agencies (the so-called ‘NAV Reform’), creating a new agency – the *Ny arbeids- og velferdsforvaltning* (NAV) or New Labour and Welfare Administration – with NAV One-Stop Offices located in municipalities for service provision. Local governments were required to make formal cooperation agreements concerning the division of labour for the provision of municipal social assistance and social services. At a minimum, the administration of NAV benefits and services were to be physically located in the same building(s) as the local administration of social assistance cash benefits. With this co-location, the administration of social assistance was, in effect, increasingly centralised, in contrast to prior arrangements. The unification of service provision into a one-stop shop opened the possibility for broader programmatic offerings to eligible social assistance clients. There was less emphasis on traditional social work and more emphasis on the sorts of employment services formerly provided only at the national level (by *Aetat*). State-level workers and leaders formerly housed within the national unemployment agency were merged into offices with local social assistance providers, and the strategies implemented were heavily influenced by a state-level ethos focused on the needs and labour market realities of the ‘regular’ unemployed. The move created new arenas for the sanctioning of those social assistance clients unwilling or unable to partake in such work-oriented activities (Gubrium and Lødemel, 2014).

The late 2000s saw further re-centralisation. Building on the foundation laid by the NAV reform and with a heightened state employment agency ethos (Gubrium et al., 2014), the 2007 revision of the 1991 Law on social services – the *Sosialtjenesteloven* or Social Services Act – introduced a semi-compulsory work-directed programme, the *Kvalifiseringsprogrammet* or Qualification Programme. The target group was individuals of working age with reduced working capacity. Emphasis was on preparation for the labour market and participants were to receive a nationally set cash benefit, which was higher than the average social assistance. The programme was nationally managed, with local social service agencies responsible for the provision of services. While the state was initially to provide extra financial support to cover such additional expenditures at the local level, no earmarked grants are available for the Qualification Programmes and local authorities were forced to finance social assistance from their own tax revenues, block grants or other general transfers from the national government (Gubrium et al., 2014).

The 2009 Act on Social Assistance Services in NAV (*Lov om sosiale tjenester i arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen: LOV-2009-12-18 No. 131, 2009*) further centralised services. Cash benefits and the work-oriented Qualification Programme were administratively separated from social care services (e.g., help in case of crises, family counselling, drug abuse, centres for battered women, re-establishment centres, temporary/emergency housing), which had a strong local service tradition. This new arrangement reflected the strong work-oriented ethos driving the new NAV administration. The Act also introduced the possibility for the county governor to review the social assistance services and new requirements for municipalities to carry out internal controls on service provision.

Yet the story is mixed: while there has been increased state intervention in social assistance through the administrative presence of NAV, the moves can also be interpreted as vertical subsidiarisation, in the sense that labour activation strategies that were formerly the exclusive responsibility of the state have been moved into local social assistance service agencies. This shift is in line with broader changes in the Norwegian organisation of social services and in the direction of administrative devolution, such as in the domain of health and care services (the 2011 ‘Coordination Reform’).

To summarise, while in Norway responsibility for social assistance (or poor relief) services had traditionally been the responsibility of municipalities, recent changes highlight increased state governance and a heightened state employment ethos. On the other hand, within social services at large, shifts have occurred away from the county level, primarily to the municipal level, with the introduction of new tasks such as labour activation programming (in the case of the Qualification Programme), formerly the

domain of national agencies. The incentive strategy providing the premise for the Qualification Programme was based on the idea that it would serve as a motivation to move users into work. Yet the strategy did not fit the realities of much of the social assistance target group. Changes to the financing structure have placed further pressure on programme providers to produce 'good outcomes' in the form of moving clients into the labour market. This has resulted in stricter eligibility requirements for the programme across Norway, indicating that the incentive 'to cream' has increased (Herud and Ohrem Naper, 2012; Gubrium et al., 2014).

Activation at the local level in Oslo

As stressed above, Norwegian social assistance cash benefits and services have long been the responsibility of local governments. In urban areas such as Oslo, the 'local' is below the municipal, i.e. at the level of the 15 Oslo districts. Each is considered an administrative unit, with its own elected district council and responsibility for service provision to residents (Oslo Municipality, 2016). In an international comparison, Norway is near the top of the list in terms of economic equality and near the bottom in terms of poverty level. However, within Norway itself, the Oslo region has the highest level of poverty (15.5 per cent, according to the 60 per cent threshold conventionally used as the indicator of those at risk of poverty in the EU) and the highest level of wage inequality. Oslo comprises district areas with relatively high levels of child poverty and large immigrant populations facing chronic unemployment (Langeland et al., 2016). Across Norway, however, a wide discretionary berth is reflected in significant geographical differences in the level of cash benefits and services allocated to beneficiaries of social assistance. This is also the case across the various Oslo districts.

Oslo's socioeconomic realities are not necessarily matched by more generous social assistance allocations. Districts are free to determine the benefit amount as well as the provision of other forms of support, including housing or electricity. Payments depend upon the generosity, priorities and financial resources of the particular local authority (Terum and With, 2007). The national government issues recommended but non-binding 'guidelines' for the award of cash support, including suggested expenditures based on current, daily costs (NMHSA, 2001). Local authorities may decide to adopt an internal organisation of social assistance provision and related services provided within the local NAV One-Stop Offices, to provide a specialised social assistance office, or to provide social assistance in tandem with other forms of cash transfers and services.

Moreover, the local 'street level bureaucrat' (employed by the municipality), the person usually sitting face to face with the claimant,

is the actual deliverer of social assistance. The law specifies that he/she should use his/her 'professional best judgement' both to decide if a claimant should receive a benefit, and how much the claimant should receive, subject to a household means test. However, there are no specified national protocols for conducting the test. The local authorities may or may not issue local guidelines for the caseworker to follow. It is thus up to the professional discretion of the caseworker.

Thus, although the merger of local and state services in a One-Stop Office may represent a form of centralised authority, the decision of whether an individual is eligible for entry to the programme and the types of activation measures and services offered are left to the local level, thereby allowing for great variations according to local (often office level) resources and priorities (Andreassen and Fossetøl, 2011; Ot. prp. nr 70, 2006–2007; Schafft and Spjelkavik, 2011).

The degree of horizontal subsidiarity, i.e., the 'mix' of service providers, has also become more territorially diverse (CAP Gubrium and Øverbye 2012). Since 1992, local governments have had the freedom to choose organisational solutions for their various activities, and recent years have seen a rise in the external provision of activation services. Within the context of the Qualification Programme, the use of private providers has been a strategy employed by many of Oslo's larger NAV offices, as they must manage the expanded set of duties accompanying the programme's new provisions (NAV Directorate, 2011; Norwegian Board of Health Supervision, 2011). There has also been a push toward increased horizontal diversity with a 2004 amendment to the Social Services Act and the more recent Social Assistance Act within NAV (Ot. prp. nr 103, 2008–2009). These acts specify that the social policy department in the municipality should cooperate with other relevant agencies (voluntary organisations, health service providers, the local branch of the national employment directorate, etc.) when setting up and executing individual plans, introducing elements of 'network-management' (by national dictate) at the local level. Again, however, the level of cooperation established with relevant agencies is left to the professional discretion of caseworkers.

In conclusion, despite a re-centralisation trend, especially with regard to activation, there is still a significant degree of discretion in programme eligibility and services at the local level, and a heightened work-orientation further enhances the tendency towards a discretion that values work ability over need.

Switzerland

The national regulatory framework in Switzerland

In Switzerland, regional authorities have great freedom of action and financial autonomy in the implementation of social assistance schemes (Fluder and StremLOW, 1999). For social security, i.e., the compulsory insurance system related to employment, the legislation and the supervision lie at the federal state level, but for social assistance, i.e., supporting vulnerable people in different life domains, the power of legislation is in the hands of the regional governments (i.e., the 26 Swiss cantons). There is no federal law for social assistance. To fill this regulation gap, the *Schweizerische Konferenz für Sozialhilfe* or Swiss Conference on Social Welfare (SCSW) drew up Guidelines and Rates for the Determination of Poor Law Support (*Richtlinien für die Ausgestaltung und Bemessung der Sozialhilfe*), which are recommendations to the cantons and municipalities. Today all cantons refer to these guidelines when determining public welfare measures (Hänzi, 2011).

With the economic and social changes beginning in the 1990s, unemployment in Switzerland has increased rapidly, new social risks have emerged and, consequently, the number of beneficiaries of unemployment and invalidity benefits, as well as social assistance benefits, has increased significantly. In this context, the concept that financial support for these beneficiaries needed to become conditional, meaning that the beneficiary had to do something in return – the so-called ‘activation turn’ – became the dominant guiding idea of the relationship between beneficiaries and the state (CAP Hauri and Fluder, 2012). This concept was introduced as early as the new Guidelines of 1998, and with the revision of the Guidelines in 2005, the promotion of social integration and vocational training was embedded in a system of bonuses and penalties (Knöpfel, 2006). If beneficiaries refused to cooperate, to participate in these integration programmes or to accept the offer of a suitable job, the social worker could reduce or even cancel the benefits. At the same time, the amount of the basic cash benefit was reduced and a supplement for working beneficiaries (*Einkommensfreibetrag/Integrationszulage* or allowance for working) was introduced to eliminate negative incentives for finding employment and to reward efforts at integration.

While the Regional Service Centres (*Regionale Arbeitsvermittlungszentren*) managed unemployment benefits and services, cantons and municipalities had to activate social assistance and provide services to people who were not or no longer eligible for unemployment benefits. These services include employment offers and offers for professional reintegration, as well as support for social integration, e.g., for stabilising the life situation or overcoming isolation.

The case of Berne

In Berne, the canton is responsible for the provision of social integration services and programmes (*Sozialhilfegesetz des Kantons Bern vom 11. Juni 2001* or Welfare Act of the Canton of Berne 2001). With the changing priority towards an activation policy, a shift in responsibility from the municipal to the cantonal level was observed. The canton has taken over the steering of the social integration services by building a cantonal network of employment providers and social integration schemes (*Beschäftigungs- und Integrationsangebote der Sozialhilfe* or BIAS) (Office des affaires sociales, 2015). To this purpose, the canton was divided into ten zones. A strategic partner is responsible for each zone (four of these are public agencies, i.e., in bigger municipalities, and six are private organisations). With each of these partners, the canton has service agreements that regulate the planned provision, the quantity and the financing. The supply is organised by a public or private funding body. The strategic partners are responsible for the cooperation of all concerned parties (municipalities, social service agencies, providers of integration programmes, job networks, enterprises). Five types of measures are relevant: job programmes, qualification programmes, specific offers for young adults, job networks, and long-term training programmes (Neuenschwander and Winkelmann, 2011).

In addition to the services of the BIAS Network, the Regional Employment Centres and the Offer for School Leavers (*Motivationssemester, Brückenangebote und Berufsberatung*) are the most important services in the Berne Canton (Hauri and Zürcher, 2015, p. 18). There are also services in the area of health, professional and financial counselling. In recent years, the supply of services has significantly increased. Only a small part of the BIAS provisions is oriented towards direct job achievement, as reintegration in the labour market is often not a realistic objective and beneficiaries must first regain their employability. For most beneficiaries, the priority is the stabilisation of their life situation and social integration. The low proportion of employable beneficiaries is caused, among other reasons, by the relatively long duration of the unemployment insurance scheme, which covers approximately two years.

In what concerns activation policy, the cantons set up a multitude of specialised offers that support work integration. Only a relatively small number of beneficiaries have access to these services, however, and most of them focus more on the broader perspective of social integration rather than professional integration. The failed chance for reintegration in the labour market, the lack of suitable offers and the high cost are the main factors for the restricted entitlement for integration measurements. Because the beneficiaries in social assistance are often outside the labour market for a long time, the number of employable beneficiaries is relatively

low. For employable beneficiaries there exists a great deal of pressure to re-enter the labour market, i.e., to search for a job and participate in work integration programmes. If they do not cooperate they can be sanctioned, but this enforcement is often dependent on the discretion of social workers. For this target group, social assistance cooperates with the Regional Employment Centres (RAV) of the unemployment administration, and some of these beneficiaries are also entitled to attend the programmes of the RAV. For all others, there are low threshold services (*niederschwellige Angebote*; e.g., employment in sheltered work places), but only a few of them participate in such support programmes (Salzgeber, 2012).

3. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we examined the horizontal division of labour that has emerged among a variety of local actors (public, non-profit and for-profit) under the influence of the ‘activation turn’ in social policy in four European countries and cities: Austria (Graz), Belgium (Antwerp), Switzerland (Berne) and Norway (Oslo). In all four cases, local governments at the level of the municipality (or the canton) have a significant degree of freedom or discretionary power as to how they combine their activation tasks with the provision of both cash transfers and services to social assistance beneficiaries. With the rise of the active welfare state and the introduction of activation policies at the national level, local governments in Graz, Antwerp, Oslo and Berne are confronted with the tension between the task of labour activation and the task of providing social services to social assistance beneficiaries to address their myriad problems in different life domains. In the context of our theoretical framework, we argue that local actors are struggling with the tension between the narrow – ‘disciplining’ – perspective on activation, in which reinsertion into the regular labour market is central, and the broader – ‘emancipatory’ – perspective, in which supporting social assistance beneficiaries via the provision of services that address their needs within different life domains is considered crucial.

To understand how local governments address this tension, assessing the horizontal division of labour and the collaboration among local providers becomes important. In all four cases, the horizontal division of labour between a variety of local service agencies proves crucial in ensuring the delivery of services to support social assistance beneficiaries and to organise activation trajectories. In all four cases, local actors experience some level of discretionary power to develop collaborative structures among a variety of job centres and service delivery agencies in the four cities. In Austria, there is collaboration between the Job Centres and the munic-

palties organising counselling and referral to specialised service agencies. While Job Centres have the main responsibility for supporting activation trajectories for social assistance beneficiaries, provinces and municipalities provide case management for beneficiaries who are not yet employable. In Belgium, the Public Centres of Social Welfare provide support to beneficiaries and organise activation trajectories. When beneficiaries are considered 'ready for labour', they are sent to the Job Centres, which take care of the transition into the labour market. For the beneficiaries requiring additional support for specific needs, social workers collaborate with other specialised service agencies. In Norway, One-Stop Offices are the key actors. Although intensive activation strategies have been introduced at the national level, state and local services have been co-located with these locally managed offices. Social service provision to social assistance beneficiaries thus remains a matter of municipal/district discretion and the scope and aim of activation measures varies widely between local offices. A trend towards networking is observed, but it is dependent on social workers' discretion. In Switzerland, most cantons such as Berne have developed a network of service providers, most of them giving support for integration, and partly also providing counselling in cases of debt and/or in the area of health.

An important question concerns the consequences of this horizontal division of labour at the beneficiary level. The hypothesis we put forward here is that the division of tasks in the field of activation policies results in a stratification of the target group – social assistance beneficiaries – according to their capabilities to enter the labour market. Local actors are de facto involved in a process we define as 'creaming the crop', whereby a distinction is made between three types of beneficiaries: the *deserving and strong* beneficiaries who are able to find a job on the labour market, the *vulnerable* beneficiaries, and the *non-deserving* beneficiaries (those valued within the more traditional social service domain).

The deserving and strong beneficiaries have the skills and the right attitude to enter the labour market, and they therefore gain easier access to activation trajectories. Efforts are made to provide the appropriate route and services to move these beneficiaries into the labour market as soon as possible. In most of our cases, these beneficiaries are sent to specialised Job Centres that guide them to the regular labour market.

The more vulnerable beneficiaries, who seem to suffer from different problems in a variety of life domains, are considered unable to hold a job on the regular labour market. These beneficiaries gain access to a range of different services. Our case studies show that for these people, the collaboration among different specialised service agencies becomes important. In Austria, the Job Centres collaborate with a number of not-for profit

providers that provide different forms of more or less intensive support for beneficiaries. In Belgium, the PCSWs collaborate with various service agencies. In Norway, networks are established at the level of the NAV One-Stop Offices. In Switzerland, networks are established at the cantonal level.

The undeserving beneficiaries, those unwilling or unable to conduct any effort to find a job, are refused access to new services and support. For these beneficiaries, an administrative structure is being put in place to control and sanction them. In Belgium, the PCSWs are responsible for this task. In Austria, this controlling task is a collaborative action between Job Centres and Provinces. In Norway, the NAV One-Stop Offices are responsible, and in Switzerland, the social service agencies fulfil this role.

In conclusion, our analysis suggests that the turn to activation has heightened tensions at the local level. While the traditional provision of services to beneficiaries of social assistance focused on specific local and individual needs, nationally introduced (and EU prescribed) activation measures have been accompanied by rearranged governance structures, as local authorities feel the pressure of the mandate to move beneficiaries into work. This has resulted in additional tasks for local actors, putting pressure on individualised, tailor-made solutions. These findings would then support the claim put forward by Lødemel and Gubrium (2014) that activation trajectories across Europe have moved in the direction of a disciplining perspective on activation.

We nevertheless acknowledge that our exploratory analysis must be supported by further research. First, the horizontal division of labour in activation trajectories and service delivery should be investigated in other types of welfare states, such as those in Southern and Eastern European countries. Next, we believe that further work should also pay attention to the role and training of individual social workers and the way they use their discretionary power to establish collaboration among service agencies in the field. Finally, further research should be devoted to assessing how stronger central regulation – and financial redistributive support – might ensure a more homogeneous supply of social assistance services.

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