

ASSESSMENT OF FLEXICURITY IMPLEMENTATION IN SELECTED EU COUNTRIES

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Zhodnotenie implementácie flexiistoty vo vybraných krajinách EÚ

Abstract: *The flexicurity approach has taken official shape with the release of the Europe 2020 strategy, which recommended this approach for employment policies for all EU Member States. As Europe 2020 is in its final phase, the aim of the paper was to analyse the development of flexicurity implementation during the validity of the Europe 2020 strategy in selected countries (the Slovak Republic, the Netherlands, France and Poland) based on individual flexicurity indicators and to find out to what extent this development correlated with employment rate in the countries concerned. The results show that the positive development within the four proposed components of flexicurity may contribute to increasing employment rate in the given countries. On the other hand, it is important to perceive that the employment rate reflects the overall situation in the country and is influenced by many different determinants. At the end of the article, we present our view of the further development of flexicurity.*

Keywords: *flexicurity, labour market, employment rate, life-long learning, active labour market policy*

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1 Introduction

The concept of flexicurity, which is based on an integrated strategy aimed at increasing both labour flexibility in terms of employers' needs and job security from the point of view of employees, has naturalised in the vocabulary of labour market policymakers since the beginning of the 21st century. At the time, Netherlands and Denmark, the countries of origin and development of flexicurity, showed very good results concerning employment rates, therefore the approach also received increasing attention at EU level. In 2010, the European Commission issued the Europe 2020 strategy, in which the flexicurity approach and objectives became recommended for all EU Member States in designing their labour market policies (European Commission, 2010). As more than ten years have passed since then and the strategical period is coming to the end, it is necessary to examine the implementation of flexicurity and analyse if it has led to reaching the target set in the Europe 2020 strategy, an employment rate of 75%, despite the serious economic crisis in 2009 – 2011. In this paper, we have limited our scope to labour market development in four selected EU countries: France, the Netherlands, Poland, and Slovakia. The aim of the paper is to analyse the development of flexicurity implementation during the validity of the Europe 2020 strategy in selected countries based on individual flexicurity indicators and to find out to what extent this development correlated with employment rate in the countries concerned. At the end of the paper, we consider the possible prospects of flexicurity in the future.

While implementing flexicurity, EU member states have faced several obstacles. Calmfors (2007) points out four issues. The first is the tendency toward confusion between tools and objectives. The author considers creating more and better jobs and strengthening the European social model to be the main goals of flexicurity. The tool to achieve these goals is to create new forms of flexibility and security to increase adaptability, employment, and social cohesion. The second problem is the tendency to believe that all results can be achieved without difficult and unpleasant compromises between stakeholders. The third problem is the belief that social dialogue and consensus are always desirable means of achieving a well-functioning labour market. Many of the changes that have been adopted so far to make the labour market more efficient have not met with a positive attitude of all the social partners, even though their ultimate result has been positive. The last problem is the view that the same principles of flexicurity need to be applied throughout the EU in

all circumstances. Although flexicurity is not intended for one, but the whole community of countries, the adoption and application of common principles may not be equally effective and desirable in every country as they use different types of employment and social policies, which have been shaped during long periods.

2 The Establishment and Development of Flexicurity at European Level

The Europe 2020 strategy was an ambitious plan for the EU Member States focused on three main priorities: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Within these priorities, it has set five main aims to ensure a significant step forward for all Member States by 2020. By inclusive growth, the European Commission (EC) understands an economy with a high employment rate (75%) that contributes to economic, social and territorial cohesion. The application of flexicurity principles should help to achieve inclusive growth not only at EU level but also in individual Member States. According to Bekker et al. (2008), the issue of flexicurity, which has received stronger attention at European level since 2006, has been developed as a social and economic perspective which seeks a balance between flexibility and security in labour markets. The concept itself comes from the Netherlands. One of the goals of the laws introduced in this country in the mid-1990s was to provide greater job security for part-time workers. In Denmark, this concept has been used to reason the dynamics of liberal redundancy rules, high unemployment benefits and active labour market policies (Olsen and Nielsen, 2017; Bekker and Mailand, 2018), and has been dubbed “the golden triangle” (Madsen, 2017). The success of flexicurity in Denmark and the Netherlands has prompted the EU to make this approach recommended for all Member States in the field of employment policy.

The term flexicurity is slightly older than the flexicurity approach. According to Madsen (2006), the term was introduced in the Netherlands in the mid-1990s, and it expressed an integrated strategy to increase flexibility and security in the labour market at the same time. Wilthagen and Tros (2004) proposed a broader definition of flexicurity, which has been adopted by many documents issued by the EC. The authors define it as a policy strategy that aims to increase labour market flexibility, work organization, and industrial

relations synchronously and profoundly, while strengthening employment and social security, especially for vulnerable groups in and outside the labour market. Another definition speaks of flexicurity as a strategy to increase the competitiveness of the EU while maintaining the European social model (Chung, 2012). In this strategy, flexibility and security should not be seen as opposites, but as mutually supportive components of the labour market (Bekker et al., 2008).

The reason why the EC focused on the flexicurity approach was mainly the need to meet the goals of the Lisbon Strategy, namely to increase and improve the number of jobs, while modernizing European social models (European Commission, 2007). The original idea of EC was to support the transition from job security to employability by strengthening the relationship between more flexible redundancy conditions and investment in active labour market policies, modern social security systems and lifelong learning policies (Bredgaard and Madsen, 2018).

Based on the experience and results of the analyses, the EC and the Member States have identified four components through which flexicurity policies can be developed and implemented. The components are as follows:

- *flexible and reliable terms and conditions of employment contracts* (from the point of view of both employer and employee, “insiders” and “outsiders”) arising from the application of modern labour law, collective agreements and work organization,
- *comprehensive life-long learning strategies* to ensure the continued adaptability and employability of individuals, especially the most vulnerable,
- *effective active labour market policies* to help people cope with rapid change, reduce periods of unemployment and facilitate the transition to a new job,
- *modern social security systems* providing an adequate level of income, supporting employment and facilitating labour market mobility.

Economic analyses have confirmed that the four components can mutually support and increase employment, both overall and also employment rate of women, young people and older workers, reduce the number of individuals at risk of poverty and improve human capital (European Commission, 2007).

Experts from the OECD and the IMF consider the components to be tools that can be used to cope with new phenomena in the labour market, such as globalization, population ageing, or the necessity to increase digital skills (Rievajová and Přívara, 2012). The economic crisis of 2009 – 2011, and the post-crisis development, also affected flexicurity recommendations by adding the fifth component to the original four: open and competitive product and service markets accompanied by reduced tax burden on labour, especially for low-income earners, which would not affect the budget, but strengthened job creation (Bekker, 2017). The components provide, on the one hand, a mechanism for protection against the specific risks of the labour market by providing employment and unemployment benefits through various types of employment contracts and modern social security systems, i.e., a certain level of income. On the other hand, they create a framework for increasing education adapted to the needs of the labour market and increase the ability of this market to respond to change through active policies (Noja and Cristea, 2018).

Since the economic crisis of 2009 – 2011, attention to the concept of flexicurity has diminished, both among politicians and academics (Bekker and Mailand, 2018). As a result of the crisis, the need for flexibility was more emphasized, at the expense of declining levels of security (De Pedraza et al., 2019). Bekker (2017) is convinced that the flexicurity approach still plays an important role, especially in the recommendations for the EU Member States under the European Semester, could be an effective tool for increasing employability and employment rate in the European labour market and bear fruit, especially in crises, such as the current pandemic with severe economic and social consequences.

3 Methodology

To monitor progress in the implementation of flexicurity and the achievement of the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy, the EC has identified basic indicators for each of its four components, as well as for general labour market developments. A list of individual indicators can be found in the document *Towards common principles of flexicurity* (European Commission, 2007). As the fifth component was added later, indicators for this area have not yet been completed.

As the Europe 2020 strategy is in its final phase in 2021, we consider it relevant to review to what extent the flexicurity approach has been implemented and thus have met the selected objectives of the strategy. The aim of this paper is to analyse the development of its implementation during the validity of the Europe 2020 strategy in selected countries based on individual flexicurity indicators and to assess to what extent this implementation correlated with the employment rate in the given countries. According to the EC, the purpose of the flexicurity approach is its potential to increase the employment rate in individual EU countries.

Although applying a flexicurity approach is recommended for all Member States, we focus on only four of them: Slovakia, Poland, the Netherlands, and France. They have relatively different starting conditions, which, however, allow a better understanding of the different ways of implementing the approach. Slovakia and Poland are states of the former Eastern bloc, in which we can examine a similar starting situation, although they are different in terms of area and population. France and the Netherlands are founding countries of the EU with different labour market conditions and different approaches to flexicurity. We chose the Netherlands also because it is the country of origin of flexicurity, and so we can regard it as a role model in implementation for other countries. Data on indicators for individual components were drawn from the OECD and EUROSTAT.

We enhance the analysis with the measures of the relationship between flexicurity indicators and the employment rate. We calculate their correlation using the Spearman correlation coefficient separately for each country in the years 2000 – 2019. Although the correlation analysis does not allow to describe the causal relationships, it points to differences in labour market developments in individual countries.

4 Analysis of Flexicurity Implementation

The first component of flexicurity is *flexible terms and conditions of employment*. Two indicators are set for this area: *the strictness of employment protection* – overall, i.e. both for permanent and temporary staff, and *the diversity of employment and working conditions*. The former indicator is monitored in the breakdown into permanent and temporary staff. This indicator can take values from 0 to 6, with a higher value meaning stricter employment regulation. Table

1 shows the data of the indicator of strictness of employment protection (SEP) for permanent employees (RC – regular contracts) and temporary employees (TC – temporary contracts).

Table 1: Strictness of employment protection – regular and temporary contracts

	Slovakia		Poland		The Netherlands		France	
	SEP RC	SEP TC	SEP RC	SEP TC	SEP RC	SEP TC	SEP RC	SEP TC
2010	2.89	1.63	2.33	1.63	3.24	0.94	2.50	3.13
2011	2.89	1.75	2.33	1.63	3.24	0.94	2.50	3.13
2012	2.38	1.63	2.33	1.63	3.24	0.94	2.50	3.13
2013	2.51	1.75	2.33	1.63	3.24	0.94	2.50	3.13
2014	2.51	1.75	2.33	1.63	3.24	0.94	2.50	3.13
2015	2.51	1.75	2.33	1.63	3.24	0.94	2.50	3.13
2016	2.51	2.25	2.33	1.63	3.44	1.19	2.50	3.00
2017	2.51	2.25	2.33	1.63	3.44	1.19	2.50	3.00
2018	2.51	2.25	2.33	1.63	3.44	1.19	2.65	3.00
2019	2.51	2.25	2.33	1.63	3.61	1.19	2.56	3.00

Source: Own elaboration based on OECD (n.d.)

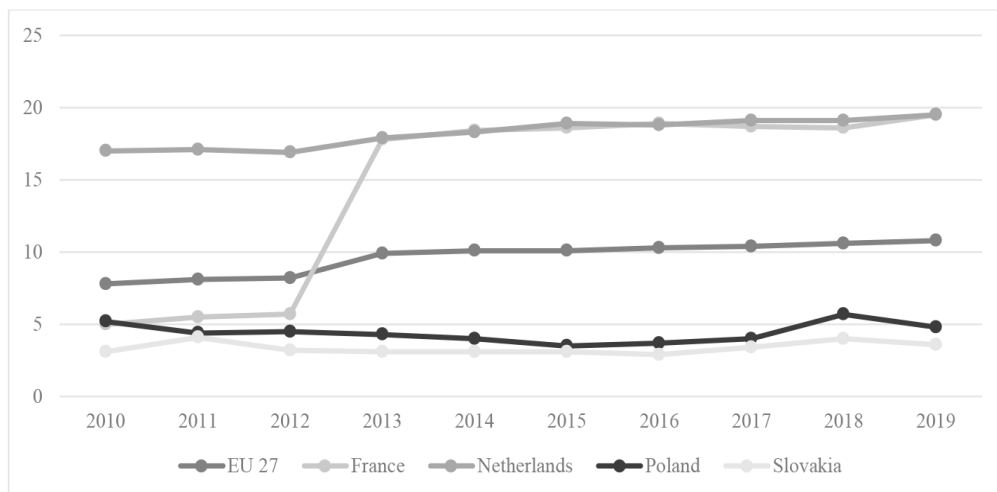
Among the examined countries, the Netherlands is the country with the highest strictness of employment protection concerning permanent employees, i.e. employees with open-ended employment contracts. The indicator in 2019 reached the value of 3.61. Contrariwise, the indicator for temporary staff, i.e. employees with fixed-term employment contracts, or employed based on another type of employment contract, reached the lowest value – 1.19. Furthermore, we can state that the values of both SEP indicators for Slovakia and Poland are similar. A certain specificity can be observed in France, which achieved a high value of the indicator of *strictness of employment protection for temporary workers* – 3.00 in 2019. It would be useful to compare the results with an average level of the indicator for EU countries, but the OECD does not monitor such a figure. From the available data, only the average value for all OECD countries can be obtained. In the case of permanent employees, it was 2.11 in 2019 and 1.69 for temporary employees.

Regarding the development of the indicator of *strictness of employment protection* for the monitored period, the largest change occurred in Slovakia, namely for *temporary contracts*. Its value increased from 1.63 in 2010 to 2,25 in 2019 i.e. by 0.62 points. This increase shows the tightening of employment protection for temporary employees. Conversely, the low value of the indicator for temporary workers in the Netherlands may be a sign of a flexible labour market, where individuals employed for a shorter period may be dismissed more quickly, allowing companies to adapt more flexibly to changing labour market conditions. SEP indicator for regular contracts demonstrates opposite trends of development in Slovakia and the Netherlands. Its value in Slovakia decreased by 0.38 points during the observed period, and in the Netherlands, it increased by 0.37 points. In Poland and France, its values did not change significantly during the analysed period.

The second indicator of the first component of flexicurity, which is *flexible terms and conditions of employment*, is the *diversity of employment and working contract conditions* and their reasons. This indicator is qualitative and a summary indicator is not published. Therefore, we had to limit our analysis to the first indicator only.

The second component of flexicurity is *lifelong learning strategies*, and the EC has set two indicators for this area. The first is *the percentage of adults aged 25 – 64 participating in education and training*. Graph 1 shows the values of this indicator for the analysed countries in the period 2010 – 2019.

Graph 1: Percentage of adults aged 25 – 64 participating in education and training



Source: Own elaboration based on EUROSTAT data available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_04_60/default/table?lang=en

The participation for the EU-27 countries oscillates around 10%, for 2019 it was at the level of 10.8%. Over the examined period, the indicator increased by 3 percentage points, which signals increased participation of adults in education and training. In the Netherlands, the country of origin of flexicurity, the values of this indicator reached almost 20% in 2019. This means that one in five adults has taken part in educational activities in this country for a certain number of days. The development of the given indicator for France is interesting, as its value increased significantly in 2013, and since then it has remained at the same level as in the Netherlands. As the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques in 2013 significantly modified the questions used in the employment survey, which are focused on education, it is not possible to calculate homogeneously the participation rate of adults in education and training in 2012 – 2013, and also is it impossible to compare data acquired in those two years in relation to the total number of training activities or vocational training (DARES, 2014). We assume that in the case of France, this was not a real radical increase in those involved in education and training in those years, but that the sharply rising part of the curve on the graph is due to a given change in the survey methodology. The situation in Slovakia and Poland is different, as the percentage of adults in education and training is less than 5%, and there has been no significant improvement during

the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. The development of this indicator signals insufficient participation of adults in education and training, which can negatively affect their employability, i.e. the perceived certainty that they will find a new job after the loss of their current one.

The second indicator for the area of education is the *achieved education of the age groups 25–34 and 45–54 years* (the share of the population with at least upper secondary education).

Table 2: The share of the population with at least upper secondary education in the age groups 25–34 and 45–54 years in 2019 (%)

	Upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary, tertiary education		Tertiary education	
	25 – 34	45 – 54	25 – 34	45 – 54
EU 27	84.5	76.9	39.4	28.3
France	87.4	80	48.1	34.5
Netherlands	87.6	78.2	49.1	36.2
Poland	94	92.1	43.5	24.8
Slovakia	90.9	93.4	39.2	19.7

Source: Own elaboration based on EUROSTAT data available at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00065/default/table?lang=en>

The indicator of *the share of the population with at least upper secondary education* in Slovakia in 2019 reached higher values than the average for all EU countries. The overall trend in the development of this indicator is increasing in all analysed countries for the observed period, just in Slovakia in the age group of 25 – 34 years its value decreased between 2010 and 2020 from 94.1 to 90.9, i.e. by 3.2 points.

Within the tertiary, i.e. higher education of the first, second or third degree (according to UNESCO international standards), Slovakia does not reach the average value of EU countries in the age group of 45 – 54 years. On the other hand, according to other data, which are not listed in the table, there has been a significant increase in the share of the population with completed tertiary education in the age group of 25 – 34. For the observed period 2010 – 2020, this indicator increased by 15.2 percentage points, which will later be reflected in the higher age category. Similarly, there was a growing trend of this indicator in all countries for both age groups, although at a slower pace

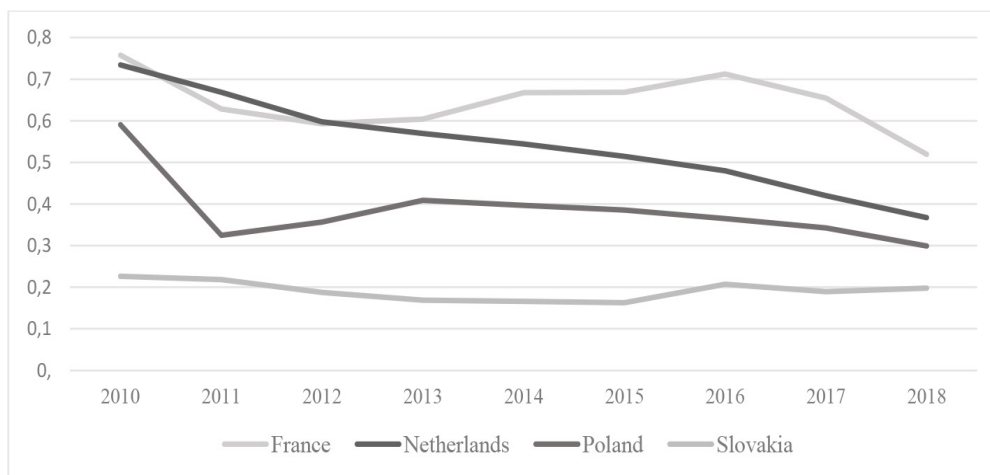
than in Slovakia (age group of 25 – 34: 5.4 points in France, 8.8 points in the Netherlands, 6.4 points in Poland).

The third component of flexicurity is *active labour market policies*. They are assessed by four indicators, which is the largest number among the individual components of flexicurity. This fact also points to the emphasis that the EC puts on active labour market policies as a tool to speed up and to facilitate the transition between jobs. We focused on the first two indicators: *expenditures on active and passive labour market policies as a percentage of GDP* and *expenditure on active and passive labour market policies per unemployed person*. The remaining two indicators – *the number of participants in active labour market policies* and *the share of young or adult unemployed not having been offered a job or an activation measure within 6 or 12 months* are not analysed for the observed period to respect the extent of the contribution. However, we assume that the first two indicators will provide a relevant view of developments in active labour market policies.

As active labour market policies are the component of flexicurity, in the first monitored indicator – *expenditure on active and passive labour market policies as a percentage of GDP*, we focus on these policies. Graph 2 shows expenditure on active labour market policy measures (categories 2–7 according to the EUROSTAT breakdown). The latest published data are for the year 2018. The average value of this indicator for the EU is not published.

The development of expenditures on active labour market policy was to some extent influenced by overcoming the consequences of the economic crisis, which fully erupted in 2009. For this reason, it is natural that the share of monitored expenditures gradually decreased from 2010 to 2018. This trend can be observed in all compared countries except Slovakia. Here, the share of expenditure on active labour market policy in GDP was low throughout the period under review. If we compare the share of the examined expenditures for Slovakia before and after the economic crisis, the average value of this indicator increased by approximately 0.05 percentage points, and even after the crisis subsided, it did not decrease significantly.

Of the countries under comparison, the Netherlands underwent an interesting development, in which the share of expenditures on active labour market policy in 2003 was 0.922%, followed by a year-on-year decrease. The lowest measured value was 0.367% in 2018, and the development of the indicator in absolute value also corresponds to this decrease.

Graph 2: Expenditure on active labour market policy (% of GDP)

Source: Own elaboration based on EUROSTAT (n.d.) data available at https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/empl/redisstat/databrowser/view/LMP_EXPsumm/default/table?lang=en&category=imp_expend

The second indicator of the third component of flexicurity is *expenditure on active labour market policy per unemployed person*. This indicator is monitored as expenditure on active labour market policy by a person who wants to work, i.e. is registered at the labour office. The given indicator enables a valuable comparison, as it also considers the current number of unemployed persons (Table 3).

Table 3: Expenditure on active labour market policy per unemployed person (purchasing power parity dollars)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
France	2 810.41	2 826.99	2 922.01	2 990.16	3 213.98	3 148.07	2 628.79
Netherlands	3 421.54	2 768.33	2 580.13	2 665.79	2 709.35	2 774.4	2 904.04
Poland	712.48	802.25	874.16	1 032.16	1 089.19	1 215.86	1 295.24
Slovakia	433.75	382.98	414.18	468.05	706.56	734.06	973.75

Source: Own elaboration based on EUROSTAT data available at https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/empl/redisstat/databrowser/view/LMP_IND_EXP/default/table?lang=en&category=imp_indic

The share of expenditures in the Netherlands and France has developed similarly: it has been declining since 2010 and is currently between 2500 and 3000 in purchasing power parity dollars. On the contrary, the share of expenditure on active labour market policies per unemployed person in Poland and Slovakia has been growing since 2011, which is probably also related to

the positive trend of the unemployment rate, which has been declining in both countries since 2013. However, it is important to point out that the share of these expenditures in the analysed period in Poland and Slovakia did not reach even 50% of their volume in France and the Netherlands.

The fourth component of flexicurity, in which two indicators are monitored, are *social security systems*. The first indicator is *net replacement ratios in the first as well as after five years*. This indicator is defined as an individual's net pension entitlement calculated based on net earnings before retirement, which takes into account the individual's income tax and pension savings. According to the latest published data from 2018, this indicator was 80.2% in the Netherlands and 73.6% in France. For Slovakia, its value was at the level of 65.1%, which roughly corresponds to the average of the EU-28 countries – 63.5%. The lowest value of this indicator among the four analysed countries was in Poland, namely 35.1%. It is not possible to follow the longer development of its values, as the OECD published previous values only for 2014.

The second indicator for the area of the social security system is the *unemployment trap expressed as the net replacement rate in unemployment*. This indicator measures the share of income that is guaranteed after a certain duration of unemployment. The share can be measured in different ways, for our analysis, we have chosen a comparison to the average wage. From OECD data, we can calculate the unemployment trap for different income groups, as relevant we have chosen the data for a single person without children.

Table 4: Net replacement rate in unemployment in 2019 for a single person without children according to the duration of unemployment (%)

	1 month	12 months	24 months
France	68	68	68
Netherlands	74	70	70
Poland	42	39	22
Slovakia	65	14	14

Source: Own elaboration based on OECD (n.d.) data available at <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=102913>

France and the Netherlands guarantee a high rate of income compensation during unemployment over a relatively long period. A more significant change during the implementation of Europe 2020 strategy took place only in the Netherlands when in 2016 the net replacement rate in unemployment of 70% was extended from 22 to 28 months. Subsequently, it falls to 37%. In Poland, this rate is not high and is gradually declining with increasing duration of unemployment. In Slovakia, it is higher only during the first six months of unemployment and then falls to 14%.

From the point of view of the labour market, we consider the second indicator of the fourth component of flexicurity to be relevant because it documents the fact that an individual is provided with a certain level of income after a job loss, which will help him overcome periods of unemployment and ensure that he does not fall into the so-called unemployment trap. On the other hand, the high rate of unemployment benefit provided over a relatively long period may not sufficiently motivate the unemployed to return to work as quickly as possible.

5 Relationship between Flexicurity Indicators and Employment Rate

We characterize the relationship between individual indicators of the level of implementation of the flexicurity and the employment rate based on the Spearman correlation coefficient. We calculated the correlation coefficients separately for each country for the years 2000 – 2019. We assumed that a higher employment rate would be observed in periods of lower strictness of employment protection (both for regular and temporary contracts), as well as in periods with higher adult participation in education and training and that it would be linked to higher spending on active labour market policies and with higher net replacement rate in unemployment. The correlation coefficients of individual indicators with the employment rate is shown in Table 5.

The analysis of correlation alone does not enable us to describe the causal relationships between the variables or to determine the most important determinants of the employment rate. However, it illustrates the diametrically different development of the labour market in the former centrally planned economies (Slovakia, Poland) and in traditional market economies (France, the Netherlands), as well as the fact that the implementation of flexicurity is not directly proportional to employment growth.

Table 5: Correlation between flexicurity indicators and employment rate expressed by Spearman correlation coefficient

	SR	PL	FR	NL
Strictness of employment protection – regular contracts	-.698**	-	.042	.238
Strictness of employment protection – temporary contracts	.663**	.560*	-.741**	.694**
Share of adults aged 25-64 participating in education and training (%)	-.240	-.304	.831**	.690**
Expenditure on active labour market policy (% of GDP)	.091	-.210	-.095	-.683**
Expenditure on active labour market policy per unemployed person	.597*	.932**	-.006	-.386
Net replacement rate in unemployment for a single person without children	-.731**	-.977**	.615**	.285

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own elaboration

The correlation analysis showed a medium indirect relationship between the strictness of employment protection for permanent contracts in Slovakia (for Poland it was not possible to calculate the correlation coefficient because the level of protection of employees did not change during the period); in France and the Netherlands, the correlation proved insignificant. On the contrary, in three countries (Slovakia, Poland, and the Netherlands) there was a moderate direct relationship between the strictness of employment protection for temporary contracts and the employment rate.

The percentage of the adult population participating in education and training is not related to the employment rate in Slovakia and Poland; on the contrary, a strong direct association can be observed in France and the Netherlands.

The indicators related to employment policy are particularly noteworthy. For Slovakia and Poland, active labour market policy indicators are positively correlated with the employment rate, while higher government involvement in mitigating the effects of unemployment (expressed as the net replacement rate in unemployment) is strongly indirectly related to the employment rate. In France, active employment policy is not correlated with the employment rate; in the Netherlands, there is even a negative correlation.

Given that Spearman's correlation coefficient does not take into account the absolute value of the indicator, but its ranking within the country (from "best" to "worst"), it can be said that the contradictory context of flexicurity implementation in individual countries is the result of the fact that employment rate responds not only to the change in the indicator but also to its absolute value. It can therefore be assumed that an increase in the employment rate is related to higher participation of the population in education and training only if the participation in them exceeds a certain critical threshold. The data also suggest the possibility of "declining returns" on active labour market policy expenditure.

6 Conclusion

The further development of the concept of flexicurity will depend on several factors. First, it will be necessary to get rid of its persistent ambivalence (Keune and Pochet, 2009), to define it more clearly so that it can be used more concretely for economic policymaking. The development of flexicurity will also depend on the ability and courage of national governments to find mutual compromises in cooperation with the European institutions and to remove the remaining barriers to labour market inflexibility quickly and effectively.

According to Caune (2013), the future of flexicurity also depends on the tools that the EC's political-administrative actors, close to The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, can mobilize to convince potential opponents about the need to define and build a European flexicurity model that could be a social-democratic alternative to current economic neoliberalism, acceptable to trade unions as well. One of the problems in building such a model is the fact that European executive powers in the field of employment policies are insufficient. Since the EU started to enlarge, it has to face increasingly various views of the level of integration and mutual co-operation among Member States (Horeháj et al., 2017). Although the European Open Method of Coordination (OMC) contains recommended rules and several flexible instruments based on a harmonized and cyclical approach, they are not legally binding for the Member States, while their application could be a rich source of data and comparative indicators of flexicurity (Horehájová et al., 2014).

If we incorporate the results of our previous research (Kuráková et al., 2020) and the analysis presented in this paper into the concept of flexicurity and its

further probable evolution, this leads us to conclude that from the employees' point of view, their employability in the labour market will increasingly depend on their ability to permanently integrate change into their profession and the skills associated with it. Change is a ubiquitous and essential feature of the functioning of a post-industrial enterprise. The constant process of change that characterizes the business environment, especially in recent years, requires employees to have a strong ability to be flexible and adaptable, although these changes often destabilize their work and the profession that is part of their identity, says Galambaud (2014).

From the employers' perspective, the further development of flexicurity will depend on their ability, willingness, and success to invest in human capital through lifelong learning and professional and personal development of their employees, even though in the context of constant change they lack the prospect of a stable future for the company which gives meaning to every managerial activity. However, they will prove to employees that, despite the uncertainty of the environment in which they work, by enriching their knowledge, qualifications and skills, they will increase their chances of employability. Thus, paradoxically, in this world of an ever-changing environment, an approach based on flexicurity can contribute to eliminating the age-old antagonism between the economic and social goals of a company.

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