

Chance or force? Changes in the entitlements of the working-age unemployed in the perspective of social citizenship

(PhD thesis)

Anikó Vida

Eötvös Lóránd University, Faculty of Social Sciences
Doctoral School of Sociology
Social policy Academic programme
e-mail: vida@etszk.u-szeged.hu

The topic, relevance and purpose of the thesis

I came into contact with the long-term unemployed as a social and employment consultant of the Újra Dolgozom (Back to Work) Program in a non-governmental organization more than ten years ago, to be precise in the summer of 2001. Before that I had been unemployed for nine months, which proved to be an advantage not only in the job interviews, but also in the subsequent work with a variety of disadvantaged groups. A few years later, as a social worker I regularly met and worked with social beneficiaries who were obliged by law to cooperate. The tasks of the assigned cooperating institutions included the development of personalized integration programs to encourage reintegration. Breach of the cooperation on the client's side may have had serious consequences: the partial and sometimes complete withdrawal of the benefits. The new role, the pressure to choose between the "professional ethics and bureaucratic rationality" (Kjorstad 2007) significantly changed the professional profile of the social institutions which previously worked largely on the bases of the principle of voluntary. Not to mention the fact that the social institutions were not sufficiently prepared for carrying out the specific tasks and forms of work with the long-term unemployed, partly because extra funds were not assigned to the new task circle, partly because they had to work with so many clients that it made impossible to provide the personalized assistance effectively.

In addition, the most commonly used active labour market policies (training, retraining, and wage subsidies) either did not address the most disadvantaged target groups, or provided only short-term income for them (e. g. public employment). The efficacy of the reintegration of the disadvantaged unemployed was further damaged by the fact that the personal meeting every three months prescribed by law was not sufficient for maintaining motivation in many cases, let alone for the real work. In this way, the new social practice for the social and labour market integration of people on regular social assistance - despite the declared intentions of the law - contained the well-known hazards of the Western European style workfare policies, namely, that the activation programs combined with work and other pressures inevitably lead to the exclusion of those people who cannot meet the requirements or for some reason do not fulfil them. (Castel, 1998, Handler 2003; McDonald. Marston, 2005)

However, my choice of topic was not only based on the self-contradictions in the system - and in particular, their ideological backgrounds -, but also on my personal experience, because every day I had to fight with powerlessness resulting from the lack of resources and the great number of clients and with the frustration of the clients who were forced to cooperate.

During the period between choosing the topic and the completion of the dissertation (2006-2013) there were significant changes in the support system of the working-age unemployed people, which could not leave intact the original concept of the paper either. Between 2007 and 2008 "*the welfare consensus has overturned*" (Zolnay 2013), one of the most prominent feature of which was an open political attack on the support system and the beneficiaries. The "Pathways to Work" program - adopted in 2008 and implemented in 2009 - was launched because of the discontent of rural citizens, their resentment against the beneficiaries, and this raised the sporadic anti-poor and anti-benefit policies of some local self-governments to a national level.

Thus the exclusionary mechanisms of the "inclusion" policy were placed in a wider context and the focus was shifted on the eligibilities of the long-term unemployed, mainly on the change in the equilibria between rights and responsibilities. As a theme, the theoretical framework that interpreted the changes

in the eligibilities of beneficiaries has also changed over the years. My initial hypothesis according to which hostile conditions of integration and adverse participation may sometimes have the same negative consequences as a deliberate exclusion (Sen 2003), did not change essentially but I had more and more doubts in connection with the basic concept of my work. It was not my intention to create a collection of “bad practices” at all. After a while I decided on the positive and openly normative – in critical terms, biased and subjective - use of full social membership because I hoped that in this manner I can avoid the trap of “I see what I want to see”, and I take notice of not only the new manifestations of the institutional mechanisms of exclusion in those facts that long-term unemployed benefits are becoming conditional, that eligibilities are narrowing, or that the enforcement of the principle of reciprocity is growing stronger.

This paper focuses on the analysis of the integrating policies aimed at active age unemployed people, and on following the changes in passive benefits. Because of the approach that focuses on rights and obligations, the so-called active labour market policy instruments are not or only tangentially dealt with. However, it does not mean that the benefits would be considered more important than or primary to the active devices and social policies.

The paper just wishes to raise awareness about the dangers when unconditional right to existence becomes conditional, especially for the most vulnerable groups in society who are in the worst advocacy positions. The most common objective of this study is the examination of the issue of full social membership in the era of the crisis of social welfare consensus.

The structure of the paper and the used methods

The thesis consists of an introduction, six main and a summarising chapters. I discuss the mutual relationship of the chapters, as well as the applied research methods during a brief overview of each chapter:

Introduction: It includes the personal motivations of the choice of subject, the most important domestic and international aspects of the topic, and the purpose and structure of the paper.

Attempt to determine the full citizenship: The chapter defining the central concept of the paper first describes the basic interdependent legal pillars of the full citizenship on the basis of the well-known concept, primarily related to the name of Marshall (Marshall, 1991). This is followed by the legal and demand based interpretation of social security. Another important pillar of the chapter forming the theoretical framework is the exploration of the concept and meaning of social exclusion interpreted as the damage or denial of citizenship rights. The chapter ends with the little-known social-psychological and cultural aspects of the phenomenon: learned helplessness, anomie, system certification mechanisms, and cultural citizenship.

From social citizenship to individual citizenship: The chapter seeks to place the Hungarian forms of the “work for welfare” principle into international context, primarily looking for an answer on the question, how the expansion of activation paradigm altered the full social membership, especially the social citizenship, and what economic, political and general ideological antecedents led to the norm of individual citizenship. The chapter based on the literature analysis ends with the overview of the international debate on the introduction of a basic income to all citizens given equally and unconditionally as a citizenship right and the analysis of the arguments put forward against and in favour of it.

Facts and interpretations of the Hungarian unemployment: The fourth chapter forms a bridge both methodologically and in the choice of topic between the theoretical and the empirical chapters. The purpose is to schematically review the main trends in the labour market developments in Hungary since the regime change and analyse the changes in the pattern of unemployment. The Labour Force Survey database was used for exploring the impact of Hungarian unemployment, particularly for the economic and social changes; and for the presentation of the types and number of beneficiaries I studied the statistics on registered job seekers in the Employment Office.

Rights and obligations in the regulation of the benefits for the working-age unemployed: The chapter examines the changes in the unemployment entitlements over the past twenty years through the normative filter of social citizenship so the main objective of the analysis is to explore how the legislative changes reflect the concepts of the rights and duties of those forced out of the labour market, as well as the individual and social responsibility. The analysis is based partly on the Employment Law which

regulates benefits tied to insurance, partly on the Social Law which regulates the benefits of the working-age unemployed people.

Semantic changes of unemployment in parliamentary debates on the bills of unemployment benefits: The sixth chapter aims to review the parliamentary debates on the bills which regulate assistance and employment practices of the working-age unemployed. Only those bills submitted and accepted in the last two decades were included in the analysis which have brought a fundamental change in the unemployment benefits in cash, and in the conditions for accessing benefits. The main aim of the analysis is to identify normative framework of the bills (problem definition, the leading values and ideologies, concepts on human nature, rhetorical elements), which may serve as the basis for the basic concept and social setting of social legislation and for the presentation of the changes in the interpretation and in the management of unemployment.

The practices of a small disadvantaged area in the field of benefits and public employment: The chapter seeks to explore the characteristics of public employment and relief policies of a small disadvantaged area. In this “local deep drilling”, first of all I wanted to know what changes happened as a result of the legislative changes in 2010 and 2011 - in particular the cutting of benefits, the introduction of the 30-day obligation to work and the criteria of having to keep clean the living environment -, and also what the views of the interviewed experts were. The fieldwork was carried out in five municipalities in the Mórahalom small area between April and June 2012. The interviewed experts belonged basically to three groups. In each village I interviewed the village leaders (mayor, deputy mayor, and clerk), the social administration professionals, as well as the staff that work in basic social services. I mainly analysed statistical data to draw pictures of the economic and social situation of municipalities. In addition, I made great use of the previous research on the farmsteads region and the monographs of the towns as well.

Summary: In the last chapter I tried to resolve the contradiction inherent in the title of the thesis, namely this dilemma: in which circumstances could the conditionality of the benefits, or the attempts for re-activation contribute to the full social members of the recipients. Meanwhile, I examined the dangers of my own rights-based approach because just like activation, the support of passive existence can also have exclusionary mechanisms.

Conceptual framework of the thesis

I hypothesized when defining the full citizenship, the central concept of the thesis that linking social rights with obligations violates not only human dignity but also justice and the right to dispose of one's own life. My approach is new - and this makes it into question – in the sense that Marshall's concept of citizenship (civil, political and social rights) was extended on cultural, symbolic and psychological aspects as well. The reader, however, may still remain in deficit sense, since in this section I tried to define the full membership in society not only on the basis of the relevant literature, but also bearing in mind their its - specifically, the paper's - value preferences. Hence, I did not aim at exploring all existing aspects of the concept, so there is no mention of any political participation or digital citizenship. I am aware of the difficulties of the initiative, as a full citizenship in itself is a very difficult and complex concept, which can be interpreted by its own traditions and conventions. As it is clear from the title of the chapter, I only attempt to determine the full range of social membership, the far-reaching significance of which is provided by not the exploration of the legal and philosophical contents but by creating the reference framework of the thesis.

In determining the basic concept I hypothesized that rights cannot be made conditional on the obligations, so there are basic rights that all citizens of the state enjoy regardless of merit and performance. For me, the most important lesson of this approach is that individual rights cannot be separated from each other, they build on each other in circles, so if one of the elements of citizenship is violated, then the whole citizenship is violated. Exclusion in this sense is none other than denial or lack of certain civil rights.

However, fundamental human rights and entitlements cannot be limited to the citizens. If we are considering the ideal criteria of the full social membership it is preferable to deduced them from the human essence on the principle of the universality of human rights. If we do so, then not the privileges derived from the existence of citizenship should be considered to be the basis for the full citizenship but human dignity.

Chan, after reviewing the different definitions of human dignity, concludes that respectful life is in the centre of human dignity, in which the self-esteem and social respect is of paramount importance. Self-esteem is related to human values such as the right and the ability to dispose of one's own life, and social respect can be related to the care and maintenance of social relationships. According to Chan, the bases of human dignity is the equal value of all human beings - on the basis of this all people can claim (regardless of sex, race, creed, etc.) equal rights and equal treatment. Chan refers to the autonomy as the fourth basic element of human dignity, which in turn is unimaginable without social, economic and political resources and opportunities. (Chan, 2004)

We have to mention the approaches that interpret poverty as a lack of possibility, according to which the relative social security ensures freedom for the individual, which is necessary for full social participation. It of course does not mean that the presence of economic capital alone could guarantee the full membership for anyone. If the employment is interpreted as a political right, the introduction of the basic income of citizenship would not be able to provide a sense of self-esteem and social usefulness for the unemployed, and it would even institutionalize that the society does not need the work of the individual. (Gorz 1999, Phelps 2000)

Thus the full social membership requires - in addition to the civil, political and social rights - that the members of the society are interested in the society in which they live. (Dahrendorf 1994) The members of vulnerable groups, such as the long-term unemployed, often feel themselves to be redundant and impotent. The long-term negative psychological consequences of exclusion - whether at individual or group level - make it difficult to participate fully in society. The anthropological and sociological literature often interprets the behaviour and attitudes that conflict the standards of the majority as the "poverty culture". The "deviance oriented" approach of the long-term unemployed poor, as well as the use of "under class" discourse, are - and not by accident - quite controversial among social scientists. (Townsend, 1991, Stewart 2001) One reason of the ambiguities concerning the theories is that they can provide proof at the same time for being outsider and disinterest and the system justification mechanism, along with the resignation to learned helplessness. The normative framework of our study totally opposes blaming the "victims", the stigmatization of those affected. I have considered important to enumerate the causes and consequences of the lack of interest in the society because the social services and the programs for the reintegration or activation of the long-term unemployed can only be successful if these psychosocial factors are not forgotten.

The full citizenship includes, or may involve a citizenship concept in a cultural sense, which is based on the specific recognition and respect of the rights of specified groups as well. The question may arise: in the case of long-term unemployed recipients what kind of group identity, or group rights can we talk about? How is it possible to extend the concept of cultural citizenship on a group which do not have a common identity? The question may be asked in this way: "(...) *why don't the long-term unemployed and long-term the poor join forces and marching to their capital city to demand their share of the total citizenship?*" (Dahrendorf 1994, 252) However, the contradiction is only apparent because struggle against the symbolic and cultural injustices include the issue of basic rights, the equitable distribution of social goods and the access to economic assets. (Hobson 2003)

In his examination of the mass media image on poverty Ferenc Hammer argues that the sense of cultural citizenship cannot be limited to the traditional identity policy assumptions but the concept should be complemented with representational elements as well. (Hammer 2006)

According to Nancy Fraser, the recognition should be treated in relation to social status. In this sense, the refusal of recognition means that a person is prevented from the full membership in society. (Fraser, 2003) Another prominent theorist of the idea, Axel Honneth has even suggested that the lack of recognition may induce social pathologies. (Némedi 1998)

A further argument in favour of the usability of the concept of cultural citizenship is that sociology increasingly identifies various deprived groups on the basis of cultural and milieu characteristics¹. (Hammer 2006) From another aspect, Zsuzsa Ferge draws attention to the fact that exclusionary measures are continuously prepared and legitimized by the appropriate rhetoric. (Ferge 2000) The contemporary discourse often binds the negative social situation, the long-term unemployment, particularly living on benefits to personal-moral disability. The discourse stigmatizing disadvantaged groups does not only provide a basis for curtailing the rights, but afterwards to justify the restrictions. Last, but certainly not

least, we should not forget that in the stratified capitalist societies one of the obstacles of the realisation of the principle of “all men are equal value”, which is regarded as the basis of human dignity, is the lack of basic respect to the poor. (Chan, 2004)

The analysis of the discourse on the rights and obligations of those who are fit for work in principle public can be interpreted as a sensitive barometer of the social climate change because in recent years there is a broad consensus about the general idea that the transformation of the “wasteful” welfare system, the improvement of the country’s economic performance could be started by giving a lesson to the working age people, and by forcing the people who live on benefits to work. I chose a frame of reference for the qualitative analysis of parliamentary records which interprets political discourse as a specific construction of reality (Szabo 1994, 1996), the policy materials as intermediaries of normative paradigms. In her article on the Dutch health policies, Selma Sevenhuijsen defines normative paradigms as follows: a set or group of knowledge which systematically describe social problems in order to pave the way for social regulation and legislation. Therefore she suggests that the different policies should be viewed as a kind of forms of government. (Sevenhuijsen 2002)

A brief summary of the research results

After the overview of the changes in the forms and conditions of cash benefits tied to an insurance contract, it can be concluded that occurred concluded that as a consequence of gradually narrowing the eligibility criteria and the lack of indexation, the unemployment benefit has lost much of its value and significance by the end of the nineties. While in 1992 the allowance for the unemployed made up an average of almost three-quarters of the lost wages, from 1996 it was barely a half. (Nagy 2000) Major (2000) and radical (2011) reduction of the maximum period of payment of the unemployment benefits can either be interpreted as a gradual loss of importance of the insurance principle, or as the acceptance of the unilaterally understood “activation” paradigm. The performance of duties, however, can hardly be imagined without providing the necessary conditions.

In the aid system of the working-age non-employed it appears in an even more spectacular way that accessing benefits has become more difficult and the principle of need has been enforced more and more intensively and arbitrarily. The stages of the changes in the attitude can be seen in the changes in the name of the benefits and in their implicit value content. The first introduced *income support* suggests entitlement without compensation visibly, while the *regular social assistance* suggests a need, that is, an asymmetrical relationship between the “donor” and the person in need.

The *provision allowance* introduced in 2009 “says” that the guarantees of upholding subsistence ceased in the case of the recipients, and the aids for the most disadvantaged unemployed people are subjects to conditions. One has to work for benefit, the proposed work has to be accepted, and this requires continuous standby.² The *wage replacement benefit* which lived only a few months and the *employment substituting benefit* that replaced it suggests not only the conditionality of the aid but rather that “society” can no longer accept a passive way of life. The working-age unemployed now not only have to be available, but also they must show an appropriate behaviour to certify compliance with the normative expectations of the community. There is no better proof for the importance of this than the fact that the “Pathway to Work Program” was also launched as an answer to the discontent of rural citizens.

So the legislative changes faithfully reflect the social context of a given age, in this case the negative public opinion in relation to the unemployed. The most important lessons of the submitted and accepted bills discussed over the past two decades are that from the recognition of that unemployment by society as a fact, and from its “European style” regulation we got to the denial of unemployment, to the creation of laws which increasingly ignore the principle of security and the solidarity and which emphasize the individual responsibility of the unemployed. Unemployment and the poverty associated with it will be almost entirely the responsibility of the individual, the “society” provides financial benefits automatically only for those who are unable to work. The idea of “duplicate citizenship”³ was made into a law already in the “Road to Work” program, but the legal amendments adopted in 2011 consisted of rules on possible elements of lifestyle and behaviour as well for the recipients.

Participation in the activation program mandated earlier for all working-age unemployed no longer applies to welfare recipients who are deemed “fit for work”, which in this case does not mean the abolition of the constraints in the first place, but rather indicates that social and occupational rehabilitation of the

recipients who are long-term unemployed has almost completely been removed from the agenda, these people have to cope with their problems alone without any formal support and social services. The public employment of the long-term unemployed has openly become a disciplining tool whose primary purpose is the re-socialisation “of the social strata who are *“unaccustomed or unwilling to work”*, or rather to make them give up asking for benefits.

Meanwhile the scope of unemployment benefits that function according to the insurance principle has been significantly narrowed but while the basic social and human rights of those unemployed who “were working for decades” are considered an important and protectable value by the parliamentary majority, even the right to human dignity and a minimum subsistence of those who “avoided work for decades” are not recognized. The situation of the long-term unemployed is further aggravated by the fact that much less than the EU average is spent to assist job search, labour market services and active interventions, while in respect of the employment figures Hungary is among those Member States which are in the worst situation.⁴

Beyond the frames defined by current legislation the local practices may also be affected by social norms and customs as well as social and economic situation of the communities created by the differences in the local society. The local governmental social policy of the investigated sub-region is determined by a relative abundance of seasonal and casual jobs and the stubborn public opinion, according to which *“who is diligent, hard-working and wants to, they are able to go and can find odd jobs here and there.”* For this reason, especially in the relatively more prosperous communities, the working-age unemployed are almost automatically classified into the category of the undeserving poor. The cleavages within the poor society, however, cannot be described according to the participation in paid work, but rather according to who counts as a reliable workforce in terms of the locals. The poor who fled from the city more often do not, so they miss even the resources of the community solidarity and the temporary employment opportunities as well.

These cleavages can be observed between settlements in the region, too, so the settlements which are in favourable economic and social situation are trying to take advantage of all existing opportunities of tenders for the employment of the unemployed. However, the strongest attitudes against the benefits can be found here along with the belief, according to which the development of the settlement and the provision of the required down payment is more important than social expenditure. From this perspective, the settlements which are left behind are responsible themselves for their situation because they spent too much money on benefits. These differences can also be seen in the practice of public employment in the settlements. Supplementing the salaries of public workers with local government funds, paying the travel costs or ensuring flexible working time feature the “socially responsible” villages where there are a lot of beneficiaries and there are even less job opportunities than the regional average. The categories created to differentiate the people living in poverty will basically affect the resources of different groups of individuals/families and their social integration capabilities.

Moreover, the new, highly centralized system of public employment does not leave much room for initiative and creativity of the local governments, so the strategies of the examined municipalities are primarily determined to meet the requirements of the law and to ensure the smooth functioning of the institutions. The successful municipalities feel that all this is a step backwards and the questioning of the efforts and the results they have achieved so far. The disadvantages of the municipalities in a difficult situation even further intensify since these settlements have not only fewer job opportunities but it also proves to be a problem to provide conditions for the 30-day employment.

Finally, it is also important to note that every settlement agreed with tying the benefits to work, the shift towards workfare but not with reducing the benefit and not with the discrimination against the public employment status. Consequently, a trend can be observed everywhere: the authorities are trying to compensate in some way the stringent regulation for the benefits of the people of active age. One sign of this is the permissive-indulgent attitude and practice, which uses the existing penalty system elements only as a last resort. The local governments are obviously not interested in the propagation of the number of those without benefits but at the same time the solidarity with those living on benefits has noticeably increased as well as the reference to the human dignity of those affected.

Conclusions

My own research and my personal experience have confirmed international research results on the effectiveness of inclusion policies combined with obligatory work. This research found that in general the younger, more educated, and those with fewer social problems may benefit more from the system while the prescribed programs that include compulsory elements may even worsen even further the situation of the most vulnerable groups. (Handler 2003, McCrate-Smith, 1998, 2000 Lødemel-Trickey, McDonald. Marston, 2005) The insertion policies - according to Robert Castel's assessment on his more than one and a half decades long practical experience in France - have failed in a significant part of the primary objective, that is lead the clients to integration. "*For most of them integration is no longer a stage in their lives, but a state. (...) A temporary and a permanent condition: The condition of a person relegated to the status of "always substitute" and permanently integrating*" (Castel, 1998, 392-393.)

Not to mention the fact that these "reintegration" programs are often directed to change the behaviour of vulnerable people who need help, suggesting that personalities were essentially responsible for the situation they are in. (Castel, 1998)

However, the domestic regulation - and nearly two decades of its practice - of the benefits of the working-age not employed gives an example of not the two-faced nature of the activation paradigm but rather the expansion of unilaterally interpreted activation, as the mandatory "integration" programs of 2006 were replaced by the principle of forcing the beneficiaries to work from 2009 onwards. The performance of duties, however, can hardly be imagined without providing the necessary conditions. Only phasing out the eligibility criteria, or making the conditions more difficult for accessing benefits have not led anybody into "the world" of socially recognized work.

In the absence of all this, the transformation of social care into an incentive system for work does not mean more than forcing recipients to work, the suspension of the unconditional right to existence, and especially in the case of the most vulnerable groups in society, in the worst situation.

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However, it is also important to emphasize that not only the activation but entitlements based social policy can also be "two-faced" and - even if in some other way - it may also contribute for the long-term unemployed to become second-class citizens. According to Vobruba both positive and negative interpretation of activation may be related to the concept of flexibility, which became a political slogan, and which is used as a synonym for modernization or for the description of obedience to economic constraints. Vobruba binds the interpretation of the two types of flexibility to more far-reaching social changes, such as the process of globalization, to which also belongs two kinds social model at the same time. Accordingly, the adaptive or forcing flexibility is the American welfare model, while innovative or opportunities creating flexibility is associated with the European model.⁵ According to this one feature of the American model is that the financial transfers increasingly give way to active labour market policies, often complemented by force for the work offered.

Vobruba considers the European discourse on exclusion important in this context as well, arguing that the measures aimed at eliminating or preventing social exclusion "*respectively fluctuate between creating chances and integrative force.*" (Vobruba 2001, 11) But - as Vobruba warns - the output of the innovative or opportunities creating flexibility belonging to the European social model based on the entitlements is as doubtful as the enforcement flexibility. The main dilemma and source of risk of opportunities creating flexibility is summarized as follows: "*It is not known where the border is between giving a chance to a flexible labour market and social adaptation, and giving a chance to a passive existence (...)*" (Vobruba 2001, 11-12). Which - we may add - can contribute to exclusion in the same way, even if it is not in a quasi-intentional exclusion, but a spontaneous process. The foregoing can be briefly summed up that the application of force is not compatible with the creation of opportunities but if we do not offer realistic alternatives, we legitimize the exclusion of the long-term unemployed from the society.

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However, creating opportunity is not conceivable without ensuring the unconditional income necessary for the dignity of life and through this for full social membership. I do not primarily think of the unconditional basic income of citizenship, but a minimum income, which - as Dahrendorf puts it - "*is*

not subject to the pressures of political fads” (Dahrendorf, 1994, 277) This in turn requires that instead of selectivity the principle of universality should rather be enforced because enforcing the income test and the work test is bound to discriminate between the worthy and unworthy poor. According to Castel the collective binding and legally institutionalized guarantees are necessary so that those asking for help - leaving aside the personal characteristics – should be considered an entitled person and not one in need. (Castel 2005) Firstly, the sanctions should be ended. Not only because they cannot change the behaviour but also because it is very easy to abuse them. Moreover, it should also be recognized that no matter how good an activation program is, there will always be people who are not able to find a job in the primary labour market.

Also, the approaches that consider social policy to be a productive sector are for the abolition of the sanctions because they believe social spending, including the types of benefits for basic living based on entitlement, is investment in the human abilities⁶. In such a way the welfare transfer income that guarantees the security of livelihood appears as the prerequisites for the success of the activating or the enabling social services. “However, countries with the most generous and most effective minimum income schemes have clearly demonstrated that they play a vital role in ensuring that people do not become so despondent and excluded that it would make them unable to participate in active inclusion measures and effective job search.” (Frazer- Marlier 2010, 87)

For the improvement of the employment opportunities of the social groups who are permanently excluded from the labour market, some symbolic, but not less important than the previous measures, steps should be taken, such as the recognition of the full social membership and the basic rights of human dignity, because “the recipient, who loses credibility in front of others, will also give up faith in themselves” (Ferge 2000b: 345). One of the most important elements of this could be giving the community-wide respect. If human dignity occupies a central place in social policy, the most important task of the state in this regard would be to create caring and accepting social media for the deprived groups. (Chan, 2004)

But it is not only - and not primarily - a state responsibility. If we understand social policy as a variable ratio between the state and citizens (Ferge 1991), or even the scene of struggles for the practical interpretation of citizenship entitlements (Szalai 2007), then the advocacy for the human rights of those affected and the solidarity with them could have positive feedbacks. Furthermore, it is our common interest, because if we do nothing, it could have serious social risks. “A society that seems to accept the permanent existence of a group which is not connected to them with any interest puts themselves at risk.” (Dahrendorf, 1994, 259)

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Endnotes

1. For example, single mother, disabled, living in small settlements, Roma, refugees, etc.
2. See further Szalai 2009
3. See further Szalai 2009
4. Magyar Munka Terv, p. 17
5. Of course, these are ideal-typical constructions, in recent years more and more people argue that the two models are approaching each other. In this sense they talk about the Americanisation of the European social model. (Csoba in 2010, Handler 2003, Alber, 2010 Dingeldey 2007)
6. For example, the capability approach whose two powerhouses are the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum.