

Over the past 15 years the EU has focused on how successfully to combine flexible labor markets with enhanced social protection (the so-called *flexicurity agenda*). Various directives have regulated non standard work (part-time 1997; fixed-term 1999; temporary and agency 2008), all establishing the formal principle of non discrimination across workers. Little empirical research has been conducted however on the consequences of labor market deregulation for individual workers. This project aims to fill this gap in the academic literature. The key factor for worker security in deregulated labor markets is the social protection system, and its interaction with labor market dynamics. Most problematic in this regard are those systems where social entitlements depend on previous employment record, such as Germany, Italy and Austria, countries combining similar employment protection levels with Bismarckian (i.e. social-insurance based) welfare models. After establishing what reforms are successful in providing worker security while at the same time deregulating the labor market, the project aims to identify the political economy conditions fostering or hindering successful reforms, looking at both the economic (firms, unions) and the political (parties, policy networks, advocacy coalitions) actors and their strategies.

The project is highly innovative. It investigates the interaction of labor markets and social protection systems, seldom jointly considered in the empirical literature, and analyzes the outcomes of such interaction at the individual level via microdata, while current analyses of flexicurity arrangements and reforms invariably remain at the aggregate level. Such outcomes provide a micro-based consequentialist criterion for assessing flexicurity reforms that is novel to the political science literature analyzing reforms, as is systematic identification of political economy factors fostering or hindering flexicurity reforms.

The project is bound to have a great policy impact at the EU level. First, knowledge on the causal mechanisms linking labor market and social protection systems to social outcomes, and criteria for evaluating reforms in such institutions are of the utmost importance for national policymakers. Second, the identification of political economy conditions for flexicurity reforms is a decisive improvement on current knowledge available within European institutions on the policy tools for better EU social governance.