

## **Abstracts WSI-Mitteilungen 2/2008**

Jürgen Howaldt/Ralf Kopp/Michael Schwarz

### **Designing innovation – the new role of the social sciences**

On the basis of the serious implications of the current and constricted debate on innovation policy, the authors describe the increasing importance of social innovation which is becoming apparent. This development is used to outline a sociologically founded, post-industrial innovation paradigm. The basic assumption is that the transition from an industrial to a knowledge- and service -based society corresponds with a paradigm shift of the innovation system. This paradigm shift also implies an increasing importance of social innovation, compared to technological innovation. Whereas innovation used to focus primarily on natural and engineering sciences to generate new products and processes, social innovation will in future become increasingly pivotal. Consequentially, there will be the opportunity to redefine the function of social sciences. In the past, innovation research in the context of social sciences has contributed extensively towards explicating the social dimensions, the complexity and paradoxes of innovation processes. Henceforth, much will depend on realigning the range of competencies by contributing actively to the development and integration of innovation.

Markus Promberger/Ulrich Wenzel/Sabine Pfeiffer/Anne Hacket/Andreas Hirsland

### **Employability, Capacity for Labour, and Unemployment - Abstract**

In general, employability is described as being the personal potential to find, maintain or change a job position. But what is it that determines employability? This paper critically discusses the concept of employability in labour market policy and labour market research. First the authors show that employability not only consists of individual traits and skills but also encompasses corresponding organisational and legal regulations of companies and labour market institutions. Second, the dimension of practice is considered. Individual prerequisites as well as organisational and institutional regulations have to be applied in the context of work and everyday life, and this requires specific action competences. This aspect, utilising the potentials and capabilities of human capital is also an aspect of employability. In sum the authors propose a new conceptual idea of pragmatic-interactive employability. To substantiate this idea the concept of capacity for labour is reviewed more thoroughly because it may serve as an alternative to concepts of competence that focus solely on formal qualifications and soft skills.

Bispinck, Reinhard/WSI collective agreement archive

### **2007 annual report on collective bargaining: division in collective bargaining and intensified trade union competition**

The conflict at Deutsche Bahn AG took the centre stage of the collective bargaining policy in 2007. After a hard industrial dispute the German Engine Drivers' Union achieved an independent collective agreement for its members. Also in other sectors (construction, retail, printing, telecommunication) conflicts determined the bargaining process. In general the results of the 2007 pay round continued to be characterised by division. Whereas in the export-oriented sectors the pay rise was above the increase of living costs, in the domestic market-related branches the salary increase remained in some areas far below. In 2007 trade unions affiliated to the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) concluded new pay

agreements affecting some 9.1 million employees. In 2007 the average increase in collectively agreed pay was 2.2 % (calculated on an annual basis) over 2006. This means that pay agreements merely compensated for the increase in the cost of living.

Johannes Giesecke/Roland Verwiebe

### **Development of wage levels in Germany between 1998 and 2005 – growing inequality**

Based on the thesis of growing overall inequality within German society, this paper discusses the changing inequality of wages for the period between 1998 and 2005. Data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) is used for the empirical analysis. The results show that the inequality of real wages increased between 1998 and 2005. This increase was due to the negative growth of lower-level wages and a corresponding increase of median- and higher-level wages. Furthermore, on the basis of a decomposition analysis, a more detailed examination of the wage differences reveals that wage dynamics are mostly due to increased wage differentials between labour market groups (particularly between low and high occupational class positions) in the case of men. For women, growing wage inequality is driven by those changes as well as by the changing composition of the labour force (e.g. expansion of the service industry).

Gerd Grözinger/Wenzel Matiaske/Verena Tobsch

### **Working hours preferences, unemployment and working hours policy**

On the basis of the Socio-Economic Panel, this article explores the working hours preferences of employees in Germany – taking into consideration the changes in income that go along with this. We show that in the debate on labour market policy, it is often overlooked that time preferences have great relevance for life, health, and work satisfaction. If there is a discrepancy between preferred and actual time worked, the dimension of satisfaction sinks significantly. Only a good quarter of those employed are still satisfied with their working hours. Less than a fifth - largely males in part-time employment in the new federal states (formerly East Germany) would like to extend their weekly working hours. In contrast, more than half of those questioned want to reduce their working hours - both men and women alike. Putting all preferences together the result is a theoretical volume of labour distribution of over 2.4 million full-time jobs.

Ariane Hegewisch

### **Great Britain – the “soft” right to family-friendly working time flexibility**

In the wake of the EU Part-time Directive, Great Britain – and a number of other European countries – introduced legislation to make it easier for individual employees to change their contractual working time to part-time work or other flexible arrangements. The British approach is unique because on the one hand it is limited to a right to *request*, not to have, flexibility; on the other it goes beyond a focus on part-time work. This article begins by setting out the British “soft but wide” approach. This is followed by a discussion of empirical data on the impact of the flexible working law, suggesting that the British approach has been relatively successful in creating greater access to alternative working patterns. The article then considers whether a law aimed at increasing work-family balance for parents can be an effective instrument for equality, or instead runs the danger of reinforcing existing gender inequalities.

Hans-Joachim Schabedoth

### **Examining the party manifestos of the people's parties - a trade union position**

The people's parties SPD, CDU and CSU have passed new party manifestos. From a trade union standpoint it is not insignificant how the parties position themselves regarding the core fields of work of the unions. An examination of the manifestos reveals that only the SPD regards the trade unions as social actors. The party has processed union themes according to its own individual pattern of problem interpretation. The effect of works and staff councils on codetermination, participation and social justice is not merely registered, but has strategic significance for its own activities. This is different from the Union parties where core matters of trade unions remain marginalised or excluded. Where the SPD presents its position precisely – in areas such as “good work”- the CDU and CSU has no position, or at best ambiguity. This gives the Union one advantage over the SPD: the manifesto ensures a wide range of options – even contradictory ones. The SPD on the other hand takes the full risk that the trade union readers of the manifesto will take them at their word.