



Moving ‘Active Policies’ to ‘a Right to a Job Transition’

by Francesco Seghezzi

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The recent election debate seems to have disregarded the issues of flexicurity and active labour policies. Among political parties, there has been little to no discussion about labour market issues, prioritising the most vulnerable groups and the incentives for employers to reduce costs. No mention has been made of the functioning of labour market, its changes and how to govern them. It was stressed how old models have failed, somehow suggesting that flexibility and labour policies providing passive protection against market and tools for job activation are not high on the agenda.

But one question remains: how can we replace the current system of active labour policies in order to respond to the needs of an increasingly rigid market? In this sense, it is interesting to note how the citizenship income seems to have been prioritised in the labour discourse. For this reason, it should come as no surprise that emphasis has been given to those who are on the sidelines of the labour market and people who, for a number of reasons, are unable to work (most of whom are granted the citizenship income referred to before).


These groups have been at the centre of a guilt-ridden discourse, which is the result of a lack of understanding of the economic and social issues affecting specific groups, which at times are overgeneralised. This state of affairs has translated into conceiving active policies only as a tool targeting people in need of income-related aid, disregarding the other segments of the labour market.

Instead, the challenge should be to grant all workers a “right to transition”, understood as a right to aspire to a better job and to receive support in this stage. The market has proved inefficient in matching labour supply and demand, partly because of its many distortions, leading to the paradox of having high-skilled workers who do not find work and low-skilled workers who find themselves in jobs for which they are not trained, negatively affecting productivity.

Without a proper right to transition, people lacking professional networks, training and retraining will be affected the most. Furthermore, digitization and the ecological transition – which will become even more widespread with the resources put in place through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan – will only make the polarization between those who can and those who cannot find their way in the labour market more pronounced.

Therefore, it is important to ensure this right. The government can hardly put in place the necessary tools in the face of the great fragmentation of production and value chains. This is why the social partners, local bodies, and schools should cooperate to build innovation ecosystems, which will also make the market efficient, by meeting the needs of workers. When understood in these terms – and not only as part of a rhetoric which then affects people’s

individual capabilities and possibilities – active labour market policies can still be a useful tool nowadays.

Francesco Seghezzi
President of Fondazione ADAPT
School of Higher Education on Occupational Transitions and Labour Relations
 [@francescoseghez](https://twitter.com/francescoseghez)