

## **Activation Policies: A Cross Country Perspective**

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Activation has recently become a widely accepted focus of welfare policies in America and Europe. Subsequently Israel has followed this trend and adopted similar programs, their goal being transferring recipients of welfare payments and unemployment benefits from *welfare to work*. The activation programs were envisaged in principle to provide their participants with an array of services to improve their capacities to enter and become absorbed in the labour market . In practice they also served, in part, as ideological reasons for legitimating the retrenchment of social security benefit programs.

Although the activation programs were supposed to focus on the incentive nature of their goals, they were in practice marked by their compulsory aspect, including coercive and punitive measures, and negative sanctions concerning receipt of benefits. The effect of the programs in achieving their goal vary thus considerably among countries, depending on the initial aims set for them.

The experience of the activation programs in moving people outside the labour market into work shows that their effectiveness was limited. In general, it showed that they constitute an insufficient tool for the integration of weaker population groups into the labour market. This has been especially evident in the Israeli program that was consequently terminated, at least for the time being.

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