

NEOLIBERAL POLICY TOOL: ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES IN TURKEY AND SPAIN♦

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Research Article

Abstract

Since activation policies prove their inefficiency in solving existent socio-economic problems, especially after the pandemic crisis of COVID-19, alternative policies other than Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) have appeared on the agenda of the EU. This research traces the reasons of the ineffectiveness of activation by highlighting the perception of the beneficiaries of the ALMPs. This article builds on the fieldwork implemented in a member state (Spain) and candidate country (Turkey) of the EU through 78 semi-structured individual interviews with the participants of vocational trainings for unemployed people. Results show that the beneficiaries in both countries are aware of the fact that the activation process does not provide a solution for their socio-economic problems and they desire a decent job, rather than training.

Keywords: Activation, Neoliberalism, the European Union, Spain, Turkey

Neoliberal Politika Aracı: Türkiye’de ve İspanya’da Aktif İşgücü Piyasası Politikaları

Öz

Özellikle COVID-19 pandemi krizinin ardından mevcut sosyo-ekonomik problemlerin çözümü için aktivasyon politikalarının etkisizliğinin anlaşılmasıyla Aktif İşgücü Piyasası Politikaları yerine alternatif sosyal politika modelleri Avrupa Birliği’nin gündeminde yer almaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışma, aktivasyon politikalarının etkisizliğini Aktif İşgücü Piyasası Politikalarından yaralanan kişilerin

♦ This research is a part of the PhD thesis and in this article the part related to impact level of the EU is kept brief since its main focus is the analysis of the recipients’ perception on ALMPs.

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Makalenin Gönderilme Tarihi: 20/06/2022 Kabul Edilme Tarihi: 22/12/2022

görüşlerine yer vererek incelemektedir. Araştırmanın sonuçları, AB'nin üye ülkesi, İspanya ve aday ülkesi Türkiye'de mesleki eğitim kurslarına katılan, işsiz 78 kişiyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme metoduyla yapılan bireysel görüşmelere dayanmaktadır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, her iki ülkede de bu politikalarından yararlanan kişiler, aktivasyon sürecinin sosyo-ekonomik problemlerine çözüm getirmediği gerçeğinin açık şekilde farkındadır. Bu kişilerin talebi, daha fazla kurs değil insan onuruna yaraşır iştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aktivasyon, Neoliberalizm, Avrupa Birliği, İspanya, Türkiye.

Introduction

Activation has become a key target that has triggered a number of labour market policy “reforms” in European countries. After more than 20 years of implementation, the activation process has been found to ease the negative effects of unemployment through different psychological mechanisms¹ and improve the mental health and wellbeing of participants². At the same time, several studies have shown that activation policy reforms have not been able to prevent increasing insecurity, inequality, precariousness, a lack of social trust and a deficiency of occupational identity in several national labour markets in the European Union³. Individuals have been confronted with huge loss in social rights related to employment, social protection, education, and health. These facts became even more visible in the 2008 economic crisis⁴ and 2019 outbreak of COVID-19⁵.

¹ Puig-Barrachina and Malmusi et al., “How does a targeted active labour market program impact on the well-being of the unemployed? A concept mapping study on Barcelona Employment in the Neighbourhoods”. *BMC Public Health* 20, 345. (2020).

² Wang S et al., “Can Active Labour Programmes Emulate the Mental Health Benefits of Regular Paid Employment? Longitudinal Evidence from the United Kingdom”, *Work, Employment and Society*, 2020:1-21.

³ Crespo, Eduardo and Serrano, Amparo. “Political Production of Individualized Subjects in The Paradoxical Discourse of the EU Institutions” In Making it Personal: Individualizing Activation Services in the EU, edited by Van Rik B and Valkenburg B, 106-126. UK: University of Bristol, 2007.

Koistinen P et al., ed. *Emerging Systems of Work and Welfare. Conclusions*. P.I.E. Peter Lang S.A, 2009

Bonoli, G. “*The Origins of Active Social Policy. Labor Market and Childcare Policies in a Comparative Perspective*”. Oxford University Press. 2013.

⁴ ILO. “*World of Work Report 2008: Income Inequalities in the Age of Financial Globalisation*”. International Labour Office, International Institute for Labour Studies. Geneva: ILO, 2008.

⁵ ILO. “*World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future*”. International Labour Office. Geneva: ILO, 2021.

Activation has transformative effects on a wider context rather than being a labour policy model designed for reconstructing the labour market to cure unemployment. In fact, several researches indicate that the activation process redefines what is normal at work, what is fair and legitimate in the eyes of beholders, and what is the role of the state on distribution mechanisms⁶. Therefore, activation can be considered as ideological and institutional transformation in the field of social policy, which can be interpreted as one of the “neoliberal policy tools to legitimize political rules in order to transform the social norms and values of the people”⁷.

Upon the said transformation, the activation process would turn the person into a "neoliberal individual" who is self-sufficient, active, independent, responsible, a struggler, and a risk taker. Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs), which theoretically are implemented in order to reintroduce unemployed individuals into labour markets by increasing their skills, would play a crucial role to conduct the norms of the individuals according to neoliberal values including individualization, self-responsibility, self-sufficiency, flexibility, and competition.

Therefore, in order to shed light on the process of indoctrination by ALMPs with neoliberal values, it becomes essential to explain how the activation has been institutionalized by international actors within neoliberal transformation, how the individuals are subjected and become subjects of activation policies pursued with a neoliberal mentality, how these policies are perceived in the eyes of the beholders, and how the beneficiaries observe its impact on their lives.

This article explores whether the EU, as an international actor, is effective in (1) neoliberal transformation towards ALMPs in its member state and candidate country and (2) how the beneficiaries perceive the ALMPs, and whether or not they internalize indoctrination with neoliberal norms and values. Two similar countries with respect to the welfare regimes, Spain as a member state; Turkey as a candidate country, have been selected from

⁶ Revilla and Serrano. “Normative Foundations of Activation Regimes”. *Paper Prepared for the ESPANET Conference, Vienna University of Economic and Business Administration, Austria*. (20-22 September 2007).

⁷ Bauman, Zygmunt. *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.
Bourdieu, Pierre. *Acts of Resistance. Against the New Myths of Our Time*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998.
Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, [1977-1978] 2008.

different impact levels of the EU. 78 individual interviews were conducted in two regions of each of these countries with respect to the perception of ALMPs (vocational trainings). The contribution of this study is primarily on the assessment of the EU's role - as an international actor - on the activation policies and, secondarily, on the perception of beneficiaries of active labour market policies.

I. Activation as a Neoliberal Policy Tool in the EU

The European Employment Strategy (EES) is the most important EU governing instrument in the activation policy domain. This system of coordination and harmonization - constructed and monitored under EES - among member states has shaped around an activation paradigm which directly touches people's lives.

This paradigm does not only bring significant changes to national policies, the labour market and social security institutions, but also systematically affects individuals' perceptions (as illustrated in Figure 1). In order to clarify this indoctrination, it is required to establish causal relation between flexible production, flexible labour markets, flexible social protection mechanisms and activation policies.

A. Flexible labour market

After the spread of flexible production and changes in the modes of production and consumption, the labour market is considered a motor of the aforementioned transformation towards individualization, according to several authors⁸. In the post-Fordist production model, the employment market requires individualistic, flexible, self-responsible individuals. They are expected to bare all responsibilities and risks of the market but, at the same time, "the human commodity has little control as to where, why and how it will be used or not used, which becomes a condition exacerbated under neoliberal globalization"⁹.

⁸ Beck, Ulrich. *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1992.

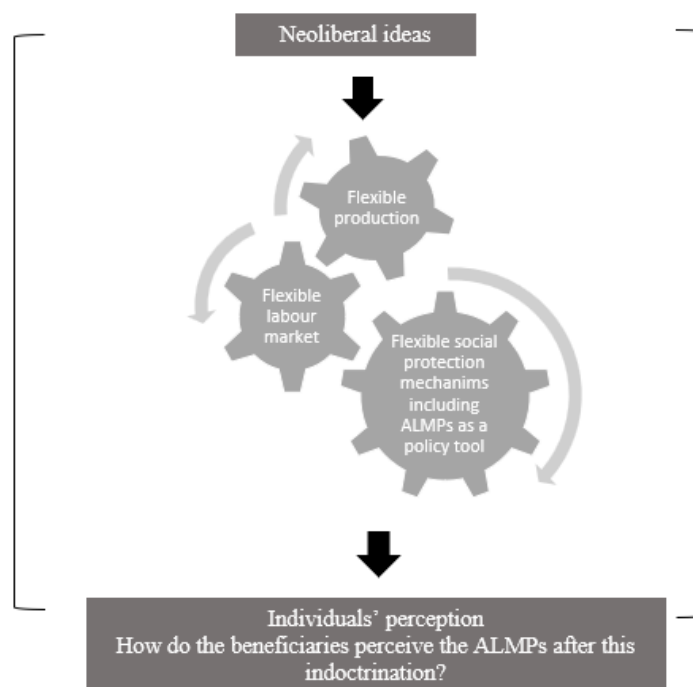
Bourdieu, Pierre. *Acts of Resistance. Against the New Myths of Our Time*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998.

⁹ Schmidt and Hersh. "Neoliberal Globalization: Workfare without Welfare". *Globalizations*, 3(1), 2006: 83.

Throughout this flexibilization process, the separation between capital and labour disappears since all individuals are regarded as the managers of their capital. Every individual becomes an entrepreneur of their own capital who are responsible for the condition and quality of this capital. This type of policy implementation results in individuals' interiorization of neoliberal norms and values and believing, thinking and acting accordingly in the labour market.

This change in the labour market does not only direct individuals' actions but also creates a certain basis to judge themselves in both their professional and personal lives. Therefore, if something fails in the overall structure, such as becoming unemployed, they become the only subjects to be blamed. The individuals are convinced to believe that they are the ones who are not flexible enough, not skilled enough, not adapted enough, or not responsible enough. The mental condition of an individual becomes worse than that of a slave because of this type of self-judgment and self-blame.

Figure 1: Transformative path of individuals' perception



Bauman¹⁰ argues that human beings are converted into individuals who have “no one to blame for one’s own misery, seeking causes of one’s own defeats nowhere except in one’s own indolence and sloth, and looking for no remedies other than trying harder and harder still”. Consequently, this results in a “sense of insecurity and unworthiness”¹¹ and “personal inadequacies, guilt feelings, anxieties, conflicts and neuroses”¹².

B. Flexible social security mechanisms

In neoliberal systems, fostering de-legitimization of social protection mechanisms is observed with a new market confirming rather than market correcting institutional order by international actors. The ideas of social trust, equality, and solidarity that provide bases for the construction of social protection are replaced with a work-first ideology, which produces flexible social security- flexicurity¹³.

New social protection mechanisms tend to reduce the insecurities through proposing several types of security models by again using the concept of flexible and by changing the notion of security with adaptability. For instance, the flexicurity in the EU discourse is considered “as an integrated strategy to enhance flexibility and security at the same time, in the labour market”¹⁴. Moreover, “flexicurity focuses on employment security rather than job security”¹⁵. Staying in employment is treated as a solution for any social insecurity.

In ideological discourse, unemployment, explained by supply-side factors such as lack of skills and the capacity to adapt to changes, is conceptualized as a lack of "employability", not a lack of employment. Parallel to this, "security" is also understood as the capacity to improve employability. The social policy has been degraded to an instrument for increasing employability of individuals by means-testing, behaviour-testing

¹⁰ Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 106.

¹¹ Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance*, 99.

¹² Beck, *Risk Society*, 100.

¹³ Blyth, Mark. *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: University Press, 2002.

¹⁴ European Commission. “Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security.”, accessed September 20, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0359:FIN:EN:PDF>, 10.

¹⁵ European Commission, 7.

and workfare policies, directing the unemployed and others to do state-determined activities to obtain means-tested benefits¹⁶. Following this logic, the basic principle of the activation policy associated with the EES is that the unemployed individuals obtaining adequate income protection depends on their participation in medium or long-term training programs.

C. ALMPs as Policy Tool

ALMPs have emerged in such an environment as a tool for “transforming the instability and uncertainty of the economy into a personal problem”¹⁷. In any failure of the system – or any risk created by any mechanism of the economic system such as being unemployed or losing one’s job – social exclusion has laid a burden on the individuals. The people are assigned ethically with the responsibilities for any social problem¹⁸.

This moral obligation has resulted in transformation of the individuals’ mindset. Political regulation of the market becomes moral regulation of behaviour¹⁹. The activation policies inculcate the change in mindset and behaviours of individuals through following indoctrines: wake up! focus! struggle! be different! connect more! extend more your network! but do not trust to anyone! keep distance with others! organize better! do promotion of yourself! plan! sell yourself! digitalize yourself!

During this stage of new mindset formation of individuals, activation policies reflect redefinition of the social contract²⁰. What did this new social contract include? The significant changes have been observed in the formation of relations between state, market and family by prioritizing the well-functioning of the market. The role of the state regarding welfare is demonstrated as if it has shifted from that of the regulator and investor to of coordinator and motivator²¹. The state, instead of asking itself what is fair and right, has started to ask what is possible and efficient. The actors of social

¹⁶ Standing, Guy. *The Precariat under Rentier Capitalism*. Institute for New Economic Thinking. Institute for New Economic Thinking. October, 2017

¹⁷ Serrano, Amparo. “Are European Activation Policies Converging?” In *Labour and Employment Regulation in Europe*, Lind, Knudsen, and Jorgensen. Peter Lang S.A., 2004.

¹⁸ Crespo, Eduardo and Serrano, Amparo. “Political Production of Individualized Subjects in *The Paradoxical Discourse of the EU Institutions*”.

¹⁹ Revilla and Serrano. “Normative Foundations”.

²⁰ Crespo, Eduardo et al., “Del Gobierno del Trabajo al Gobierno de las Voluntades: El Caso de la Activación.” *Psicoperspectivas. Cl. Individuo y Sociedad*. Vol. VIII, N.2 (2009).

²¹ Koistinen P et al., ed. *Emerging Systems of Work and Welfare*.

policies are shown to be changed from states to local actors (NGOs, municipalities, religious associations) or international actors (international NGOs, regional institutions, supranational organizations: the EU).

Therefore, in order to concretely reflect the role of the EU as an international actor on the aforementioned transformation and perception of the people on the transformed policy model: “activation” is analysed by scrutinizing the institutionalization of activation policies in Spain (member state) and Turkey (candidate country) and reporting the outputs of fieldwork in the following sections after presenting the data and methods of this analysis.

II. Data and Methods

This research applies qualitative method and comparative, inductive and phenomenological approach. Similar to majority of qualitative studies, ontological stance of this research is that realities are multiple, socially constructed and subjective. The constructivist ontological position treats the research as a social product created by human and social actors²². Therefore, adapting this ontological position, and accepting the fact of realities’ being socially constructed, the researchers applied several methods to increase the objectivity of this investigation.

As a research model, the most similar systems design is applied, and this research is comparatively realized in Turkey and Spain. Turkish and Spanish welfare systems can be classified as similar to the Mediterranean welfare state model²³ and their activation approaches have similarities with the typology of paternalism optimists (defined as the mechanism that enforces activation upon people who are unwilling to make use of participation opportunities to be in the interest of those targeted by these measures and, eventually, in that of society in general) among others specified by Van Berkel and Hornemann

²² Bryman A. *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008

²³ The typology of Esping Anderson classifies the welfare capitalism in three groups: liberal regime where welfare provision of state is minimal and means-tested, conservative regime where welfare provision is status-based and earning related, social democratic regime where the welfare provision is universal and focused on income protection and social equality (Esping-Anderson, 1990). This typology has been criticized asserting that limited number of countries were analyzed while constructing this typology. Ferrera (1996) added fourth regime, Southern/Mediterranean world of welfare where welfare provision is highly fragmented with limited coverage in healthcare system and dominant role of family is the main characteristics of this regime.

Moller²⁴. However, Spain is member and Turkey is candidate country of the European Union. This sampling technique facilitates to measure the impact level of the EU.

As a method of data collection for perception analysis, individual interviews with a semi-structured interview guide (Annex 1) are used. The vocational trainings for unemployed people are selected for this part because they are one of the concrete ALMP programs, among other inconsistent ones such as incentives to increase employability. The participants of vocational trainings are generally side-lined from the employment system while facing with activation procedures and being exposed to mindset formation on daily basis. Therefore, this transformation was desired to be observed on the recipients of the vocational training programmes who are constantly subject to the said neoliberal transformation. The interviews are conducted in Spanish and Turkish and the translation of the transcripts into English are realised for this article by the authors.

While defining the population, the geographical variety is considered essential. In order to guarantee the variety of samples, the interviews are conducted in different two cities of Turkey and two regions in Spain.

The capital cities of the countries, Ankara(A) and Madrid(M), are selected in order to reflect the perception of the individuals in these cosmopolitan cities. Basque Country (BC) and Gaziantep (G) are included in order to reflect different realities of the countries into the research. Basque Country and Gaziantep are located on the border of the countries where industrial activities are highly active and, recently, they are hosting a great number of immigrants and refugees. Moreover, Spain is a highly decentralized country, where the implementation of the ALMPs is under the authority of Autonomous Communities (AC). The BC provides the best social policy services compared to other ACs, according to the DEC (Rights, Resources, Scope) Index²⁵. All of these affect the social and labour market policies, and therefore, the perception of the individuals.

The purposive sampling technique is utilized in the determining the population. The only criterion to be included in the research is being a

²⁴ Van Berkel and Hornemann Moller, ed “*Active Social Policies in the EU. Inclusion through Participation?*”, UK: Policy Press, 2002.

²⁵ García, Gustavo et al., “Índice DEC 2018. Índice de Desarrollo de los Servicios Sociales. Asociación Estatal de Directores y Gerentes en Servicios Sociales”, accessed December, 23, 2018, <https://www.directoressociales.com/images/INDICEDEC/DEC2018real/REVISTA%20web.pdf>.

participant of the vocational training programs for unemployed people at present or in the past. The participants from different social groups (gender, age, and education) are interviewed due to three reasons: (1) be able to reflect the perception of people from different gender, age groups, education level in both countries, (2) involve the participants of the vocational training programmes into the research according to the distribution of overall participants in the countries according to the statistics, (3) while observing the second point, at the same time, eliminate the discrepancy of the interviewed people in two different countries. Therefore, as illustrated in Table 1, the total number of the participants from two cities/regions of the countries are parallel to each other except the education level because the participants of vocational training are younger than the Spanish counterparts²⁶.

As known, the representation capacity of the population with purposive sampling is low. Therefore, the generalizations of findings are avoided for specific groups (gender, education level, age groups) in case it is not apparently observed. Furthermore, how the specific groups (such as specific age groups or education levels) differ from each other in their perception is not the main focus in this article.

The target is to detect ideas that reflect a neoliberal mindset, including individualization, self-responsibility, self-sufficiency, self-help, self-ownership, activeness and competition. The beneficiaries' perceptions are analysed to find whether or not they express certain ideas; blaming themselves or others, evaluating themselves as human capital rather than labour, delegitimizing passiveness with the values of competition, expressing several complaints about individualization of the systematic problems, underlining their feelings of hopelessness, unworthiness and guilt while they are treated as active individuals, and underlining the active-passive dilemma in their daily lives.

The conclusions are reached based on this assessment through analysis of 78 interviews (Table 1) conducted between 2018 and 2019.

²⁶ İŞKUR. *Yıllık Bülten Tabloları 2017*. X. Bölüm. Tablo 46: 2017 yılında İl Düzeyinde Yaş Gruplarına Göre Kursiyerler. Tablo 47: 2017 yılında İl Düzeyinde Öğrenim Durumlarına Göre Kursiyerler. 2018.

Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social. *Estadísticas. Políticas del Mercado de Trabajo. Formación Profesional y Medidas de Apoyo al Empleo. Formación Profesional para el Empleo*. Gobierno de España. Madrid. 2018

Before going into detail regarding the perception analysis in Turkey and Spain, the institutionalization of activation policies in both countries are analysed comparatively with the aim of indicating the impact of the international actor, the EU, on this transformation.

Table 1: Interviewees. Characteristics/ Number (Nr)

Characteristics	Spain		Turkey	
	Madrid Nr.	Bask Country Nr.	Ankara Nr.	Gaziantep Nr.
Gender				
Female	8	12	12	9
Male	12	12	7	6
Education				
Primary	3	6	9	9
High-school	10	8	9	2
Higher than high-school	7	10	1	4
Age				
Lower than 25	2	3	10	2
26-35	6	6	4	2
Higher than 36	12	15	5	11
Employment status				
Employed	2	4	1	8
Unemployed	18	19	14	6
Passive	0	1	4	1
Total	20	24	19	15

III. Comparative Analysis on Activation in Spain and Turkey

The labour markets and social protection systems of Spain and Turkey are transforming with the tools offered by the EES and other EU guidelines (brief comparison in Image 2). Both countries introduced the first package of flexible measures in their labour market (Spain in 1984²⁷ and Turkey in 2003²⁸) just before the accession to the EU considering that Spain became a full member in 1986, and Turkey initiated negotiations for full membership in 2005. Secondly, the labour market institutions have been restructured in line with the EU recommendations in order to re-design, implement and monitor

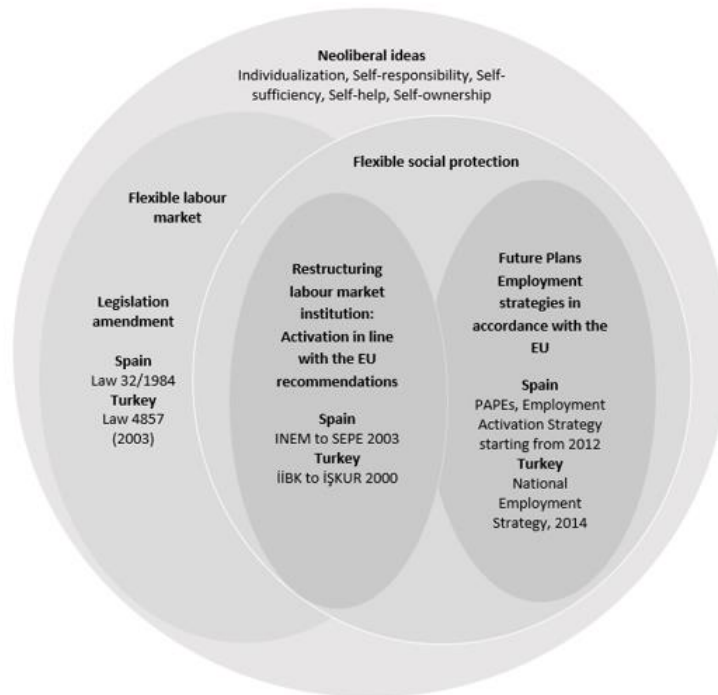
²⁷ BOE. “Ley 32/1984, de 2 de agosto, Sobre Modificación de Determinados Artículos de la Ley 8/1980, de 10 de marzo, del Estatuto de los Trabajadores”, accessed August 22, 2018, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1984-17436>.

²⁸ Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey. İş Kanunu. 10 Haziran 2003. Kanun no:4857 Sayı: 25134. Tertip:5. Cilt:42 <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.4857.pdf>.

the activation process on the same timelines. Thirdly, national employment strategies are planned and designed in order to improve employability with the ALMP tool in accordance with EU guidelines in both Spain and Turkey.

The flexible models in the Spanish labour market were introduced through the contracts with Law 32/1984²⁹. The method of utilizing fixed term contracts for the integration of the unemployed youth into the labour market was justified by underlining that “it is the way used in Western countries where there is also a worrying situation of youth unemployment”³⁰. With this modification, the Spanish system has met with the precarious work or precariousness in the labour market. From that time on, the Spanish labour market has suffered from either promotion of flexible labour contracts (part-time and/or fixed time) or promotion of permanent contracts with easy dismissals.

Figure 2: Comparative analysis of the way towards activation in Spain and Turkey



²⁹ BOE, “Ley 32/1984”.

³⁰ BOE, “Ley 32/1984”.

The accession of Spain to the European Economic Community in 1986, and the entry into the European single market, brought to the political agenda the flexible social protection mechanisms through providing employment security and skill reproduction security with the instrument of ALMPs. All these impositions are welcome in Spain because, according to Spanish people, the EU facilitates economic and ideological progress and political and institutional modernization³¹.

Similar to Spain, the flexibility is inserted in the overall socio-economic system, beginning from 1980s, in Turkey with the concepts of flexible salary, flexibility in demand, and flexibility in working principles. This transformation has been observed in Development Plans and all corresponding legislative acts and strategy papers prepared while pursuing the EU standards. In addition to these modifications, the most significant change in the labour market was brought out just before starting negotiations for full membership with the EU. Law No. 4857, in 2003, regulates institutional flexibility issued with labour contracts and flexible working hours. The Directive 1990/70/EC³² concerning the framework agreement on fixed term work and The Directive 1999/81/EC³³ on framework agreement on part-time work were taken as a reference point in the design of the articles of Law 4857 with respect to flexible labour contracts.

Following the insertion of flexibility in the labour market in Turkey, the social protection mechanisms are concentrated on the employment security and employability of the individuals. The main institution (İŞKUR) for activating the individuals through ALMPs was transformed with the EU funded projects by statutory decree nr. 617, in 2000. In a similar vein, Law 56/2003 restructures the existing institution INEM to SEPE with the EU funds, especially the European Social Fund, with the aim of improving activation process in Spain³⁴.

³¹ Moreno, Luis and Serrano, Amparo. “*The Europeanization and Spanish Welfare: The Case of Employment Policy*” In *The Spanish Welfare State in European Context*, edited by Guillén, and León. London: Routledge, 2011.

³² European Council. “1990/70/EC of 28 June 1990 concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP”, accessed June 23, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31999L0070>

³³ Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC, accessed June 24, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A31997L0081>

³⁴ BOE. “Ley 56/2003 de 16 de diciembre, de Empleo. Num.301”, accessed June 26, 2018, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2003-23102>.

As a member state of the EU, Spain has been very much affected from the evaluation of this benchmarking and bench-learning process (European Network of Public Employment Services, Public Employment Services (PES), Annual Employment Policy Plans (PAPE) and Employment Activation Strategy). Even if the monitoring instruments are limited in Turkey, the EU has been advising Turkey to develop employment strategy beginning from the Progress Report of 1998³⁵. Finally, Turkey has prepared a National Employment Strategy (2014-2023) following the principles of the EES that institutionalizes employability through ALMPs.

Therefore, the institutional path followed in both countries has been moved on the cycles of flexible labour market and flexible social protection mechanisms. The EU has played a role of legitimizer of these policies and provider of legislative, conceptual and financial support. It is considered a modernizer and its recommendations are used as a guide. The institutionalization of activation policies draw similar pictures in Turkey and Spain.

V. Main Findings and Results of Perception Analysis:

This second part of the article focuses on the findings of the research on perceptions of the beneficiaries. The results are presented through a comparative analysis of perceptions of vocational trainings of interviewees from Turkey and Spain. The main source of the analysis is the semi-structured interviews realized in two different regions of Turkey (Ankara, Gaziantep) and Spain (Madrid, Basque Country).

A. No contribution to be employed

The vocational training programs are considered a light of hope in both countries. The great majority of the interviewees in Turkey and Spain think that the trainings open a new path in their life. However, the majority of the interviewees do not expect that they can find a job with only participating in these courses. An interviewee in Spain (SM30F-1³⁶) declared that “*generally,*

³⁵ European Commission. “Progress Report on Turkey, 1998”, accessed August 5, 2017, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/38c51f03-fc60-450a-9fbf-8516459c865f>.

³⁶ The letters refer to the following: S(pain), M(adrid), 30 (age), M(ale), 1 (if there is more than one person with these characteristics, the number refers to the first/second...etc. person.

the courses are good and you learn something but in general there is never a way out. I know nobody who has attended the course and found a job thanks to these courses.” In a similar vein, one of the Turkish beneficiaries (TA39F-1³⁷) complained about the ineffectiveness of the certificate, declaring that *“I visited each and every kindergarten in my neighbourhood searching for a job. I showed them my childcare certificate of İŞKUR. You know what they have said to me? We don’t care about your certificate of İŞKUR. Go and ask for job from the state.”*

Similarly, a Turkish woman (TA38F) does not think that it has created a major change in the labour market, but her opinion slightly differs from some interviewees. She claimed that *“these training courses do not change anything because the people who are searching for a job do not come to courses. The housewives are attending.”* The objective of the vocational trainings in Turkey to facilitate the accession to the labour market for unemployed individuals has deviated, according to especially women interviewees in Turkey.

As another sign of ineffectiveness of the courses and their deviation from the objectives of skill development, majority of the interviewees in both countries declared that they enrolled in trainings in several areas on unrelated and irrelevant subjects with their previous experiences. For instance, a woman (TA53F) provided a severe example on this issue: *“my friend was attending an apprenticeship course. Once I went with her. I was thinking if there were some courses such as cook, I would register myself but by mistake I came to another centre, filled the forms and finally I was registered to this makeup training course.”* In a similar vein, a man (SM40M-3) criticized that *“I was not searching for anything concrete. I pre-registered to at least 20 training courses and they called me for a course that I was not pre-registered for. You enter where there is an opening.”*

B. Feelings of unworthiness and guilt

Many of the interviewees from both countries tend to blame themselves if they cannot find a job after the trainings. A man (SM29M-2) declared that *“the training means to me four things: knowledge, competences, the people and security when entering into labour market. They opened the doors for me... the representatives of this NGO arranged an interview for me but I could not pass that interview. But yes, they opened new doors for me.”* These types

³⁷ T(urkey), A(nkara), 39(age), F(emale).

of conversations prove the arguments of Bauman³⁸, Bourdieu³⁹ and Beck⁴⁰ who assert that the people are converted into individuals who have no one to blame but themselves; that individuals suffer from a sense of insecurity, unworthiness, guilt, anxiety, conflict and neuroses.

Their ideas on self-assessment are more in line with the idea that they are capital to be improved upon as much as possible, rather than labour that needs to be protected against the risks of the market. They seem to be convinced that they are unemployed because they do not have enough skills, they are not sufficient enough, they are old...etc. The numbers of the other way around are quite low, especially in Turkey. However, some participants in both countries state that they do not feel guilty because of their unemployment.

C. De-legitimization of passiveness

The interviewees in Turkey and Spain are very critical about unemployed people. Some interviewees expressed their ideas with highly negative statements. For instance, they declared that unemployment exists due to lazy people, having the habit of being in need, not spending enough effort, not being willing to accept any job and being selective on offered works, and not taking any risks. It is very interesting to observe this kind of perception when most of the interviewees are involuntarily unemployed. A woman (TA32F), unemployed during the last 5 years, introducing herself as a house-wife, strongly criticized the passive individuals by indicating that *“the people are prone to abuse the state resources and the state is aware of this fact...Our people have a tendency to misuse social benefits. Everything ends in ourselves. How can the state be enough to all of you? When state gives, you ask for more.”*

Similarly, an engineer interviewee (SM36M) who graduated from a highly reputed university and had been unemployed before he found his recent job, declared that *“I understand that there are people who do not want to work. They simply prefer to access the social aids...Therefore, it seems that these people are parasites in the society. I think that these people are destroying the society so these people should be obliged to work.”*

³⁸ Bauman, *The Individualized Society*.

³⁹ Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance*.

⁴⁰ Beck, *Risk Society*.

As observed, in both countries, many problems in the labour market – such as unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion – are treated as personal problems, rather than political or systematic ones. This perception has created the “others” in society. Moreover, personalizing these problems direct hatred and exclusive feelings towards other individuals rather than public authorities. For instance, a Turkish woman (TG50F) who is a house-wife and has never worked in her life criticized the unemployment status of the Syrian refugees. She declared that *“Turkey has done lots of things for them. They do not appreciate it...There are too many in Gaziantep. They do not like working. To how many of them, our state can give? They have no contributions.”* Similarly, a Spanish man (SB41M), agreed that *“there are a lot of immigrants who gain lots of money from social aids without doing anything, without having done anything.”*

D. Psychological benefits and social networking opportunity

The majority of the interviewees assume that the courses are beneficial for their social and psychological wellbeing and distract them from psychological problems and loneliness. The majority of the interviewees evaluated the trainings as a way to participate in social life instead of facilitating their own access to the labour market. Moreover, they expressed their appreciation for the courses as the courses allowed them to be with other individuals under the same or similar conditions. A man (SM40M-2) claimed that *“these courses are a very good opportunity at a personal level. When you look for a job, you start to feel bad because nobody listens to you, nobody likes you so you stay at home, you do not want to do anything. Therefore, only coming here - maybe it will not contribute to anything in my professional life - and having your own personal space with your colleagues is therapeutical.”*

Similarly, a man (SB30M) asserted that *“when you do not have training or a job...you observe yourself accepting any shitty job or staying at home. In order to have mental stability and not to become mentally ill, the human being should study or work. If not, s/he feels depressed.”* In a neoliberal system, unemployed people are considered abnormal people to be cured. Therefore, as suggested by Crespo and Serrano⁴¹, states taking a therapeutical role through vocational training courses is observed very clearly in the two cases of this research. Being out of the labour market becomes equivalent to feeling

⁴¹ Crespo and Serrano, “Political Production”.

psychologically ill. Spending an effort to be employed becomes an instrument that normalizes people.

In Turkey, 17 out of 21 women involved in the research mentioned the paternalistic society that locked women at home and, therefore, the women in Turkey (especially from Gaziantep) emphasized the therapeutical effect of these programs more. A woman in Gaziantep (TG50F), pointed out the issue by declaring that *“my husband did not let me work...but these courses are very good for women like me. We meet with new people and we learn new good things. I had no social life before. We were only occupied with cleaning. Since I came here, I became more self-confident.”* A woman in Ankara (TA39F-1), explained that *“these courses release me... I can say that these training courses have brought me back to life and had a serum effect in my life.”* As observed, the courses are perceived as an opportunity for social networking.

In Turkey, more than half of the interviewees declared that they participate in these courses in order to fill in their spare time. These people perceive these courses as a way to develop their hobby, or to do something in summer break for students of high school and university, not to develop their professional skills to be employed afterwards. Moreover, in Turkey, the women, who suffer from paternalistic society and could not continue their education and develop a professional career, perceive these courses as a middle way between being housewife and professional woman. A woman (TG45F) who had suffered severely from discrimination against women in her childhood and in her marriage, explained that *“my husband did not let me work because they (men) think that they do not have power over us when we work...Whenever I stay at home, I became sick...When I come here, I learn something. If I do not come, I feel absolutely empty. When I come here, I feel that I am working.... Actually, I am really working because they also pay us 25TL per day. I consider myself a working person.”*

E. Activation perceived as a passive policy model

Some interviewees in Turkey attend the courses only for the cash payment, or they blame others for doing so. Their counterparts in Spain participate in the courses as their unemployment protection is conditional to participation of these courses. Some interviewees in both countries state openly that their main motivation to participate is the monetary benefit they would receive. The majority of the interviewees in Turkey and Spain treat the vocational courses (which is expected to make the participants experienced,

skilful and active) as social assistance (which is a policy model designed for people who cannot work). At the end, vocational training as an example of active social policies and social assistance as a sample of passive social policies are equalized on their functions in the people's perceptions. To exemplify, an interviewee (TG25F) shared her calculation as follows: *"This training is an exit door or tool of subsistence for many of us. We come to this course in the morning and earn 25TL every day and 750TL per month. We go to another course in the afternoon and earn another 750TL. It is equal to the minimum wage."* Another woman in Gaziantep stated, *"Do you want me to tell you the truth? They give us 550TL here. These courses are a part of a good project but we, women, consider these courses as a facility to have an allowance...This money may be nothing for others but for me it means medicine for my treatment, a bottle of olive oil and a package of flour for the food I prepare at home."* Therefore, it is observed that an active labour market policy is converted to passive policies in the eyes of beholders.

Furthermore, in Turkey, it is seen that selection procedures for vocational training courses are doubtful. For instance, a woman (TG25F) declared that they are 4 people in their class from the same family: her mother, aunt, cousin and herself. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the selection procedures as transparent and open, which facilitates fair access to all Turkish society. It seems that there is a specific group of people who participates in these courses. This phenomenon creates suspicion that those selected may be supporters of the government, since the participants receive some amount of cash payment and social aids, which are generally utilized by governments to sustain their power through their patronage relations in Turkey.

F. Active- passive dilemma

The active- passive dilemma exists in almost all conversations with the interviewees from both countries. In theory, the participants of the activation programs are expected to be active, solve their own problems, gain more professional skills and finally enter into the formal labour market. Through this way, the unemployment level is presupposed to be reduced and the people are presumed to take their socio-economic "burden" from the political actors. However, in practice, the situation is different.

As mentioned in the previous sections, they generally think that the training courses are not in line with the needs of the labour market, so they believe that with or without trainings, they are unemployed anyhow. They feel

impotent and helpless instead of being ready to fight against structural failures as expected. The exploitation experienced in the labour market breaks their motivation. Moreover, they assume that having gained more skills does not change their power to struggle against the exploitative structure of the labour market. Therefore, they feel excluded, dependent, incapacitated, powerless and even more open to any exploitation, which is totally contrary to what is intended with active labour market policies. The majority of the interviewees in two countries expressed their feelings of powerlessness. Some examples are as follows.

They feel that they are subjected to participate in this type of system. There is a difference in women's opinions between Turkey and Spain. The Turkish women are more likely to express their passiveness while trying to be activated. A woman (TA38F) who worked as a cook for 10 years; forced by the latest employer to resign because of not having a certificate; participated in the training course: cooker assistant and patient care (which is totally irrelevant with her professional experience). She explained her situation of activeness while feeling absolute passiveness: "*we all are sheep... We go where we are directed to go. We have a shepherd as our head. We are fold. We cannot defend our rights. I lost my indemnity because I know what could happen. Nobody will stand beside me. That's why we are fold. We all shut up because of fear. We are afraid because we have no rights... 'Let it go! The God knows.' Our opinion is like this.*" With these explanations, she exemplifies the passive acceptance of whatever the situation is in Turkey.

On the other hand, a woman (TG25F) declared that "*before coming to this course, I was accepted to work in the call center of a hospital. I had to attend a specific training between 18:00-20:00. I was a married woman. The salary would be less than minimum wage and my husband did not want me to work.*" As observed, the exploitation in the labour market – by offering the workers less than minimum wage and characteristics of paternalistic society that lock the women at home – cannot be solved through making people gain more knowledge and experience through vocational training courses.

Moreover, a woman (SB40F-1) who has 20 years of professional experience – 9 of which were in an informal sector like cleaner, dishwasher, electrician – had participated in 6 vocational trainings on electricity, pastry, cookery...etc. She declared that "*the situation is that you are in a very sexist society. If you are a woman and electrician. Oo where are you going? No no! we need a powerful man here. I can do what a man does.*" As observed, again,

her problem is not being without skill. The problem is a systematic discrimination against women and they underlined these structural problems.

As observed in some cases, some people tend to passively accept the situation because they are always advised to develop a comparative perspective and understand the “limits” and “limited resources” of the economic system. For instance, a man (SM40M-1) declared that *“I will give you a personal vision but it is global at the same time. Maybe it is because my vision is out of victimization. I know that there are many people who are much worse... You have your family, friends that can help you so you value all these things. There are people who do not have this... You should situate yourself and observe the capacities of the institutions.”*

Similarly, a man (SB58M) who is also former prisoner also touched upon constraints of the labour market for the people who are in a certain age and, even if he is attending a vocational course to be able to access the labour market, he is hopeless and desperate. He claimed that *“the companies do not want to know anything about the people of 58 years old. I watch the news which says that the people who graduated from the university, with masters earn 800-900€. With a masters! Therefore, I cannot expect more. Expect that the social aid arrives to me... This is what I can expect, nothing more, Okey? This is my situation.”*

Moreover, a man (SB34M) asserted that *“my life did not change with this course. I am the same number in Lanbide (Employment Agency of BC), social security and DNI (national identity document). I am the same sucker in the street.”* Even if he harshly criticized the overall system, it seems that he could not escape from the mindset in which he is utilizing for himself an expression that reflects unworthiness and inadequacy. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are some interviewees who have internalized the exploitative and oppressive structure of the overall system and defined their interests and expectations accordingly. These people are expected to bear the risks of the system by themselves but even their hopes are exploited.

G. Critiques of vocational training programs

Until this point, the results indicate that the beneficiaries of the ALMPs express their ideas with neoliberal norms and values. They seem to internalize what has been advised to them with the neoliberal policy tool and subjectivation seems to be achieved. However, this is not the whole picture

and the results are twofold. Specifically, in Spain, the majority of the participants underline that they need a job, not training. A man (SM29M-1) who worked for 7-8 years in temporary jobs, also manifested his dissatisfaction by stating that *“even if I attend 20 thousand courses, they do not make me reach any better future.”* The majority of the Spanish interviewees are very critical about the design and organization of the vocational trainings. They think that lots of courses are organized in order to receive financial benefits for the course providers’ institutions.

A man (SB41M) also stressed that *“the course providers fill the forms of the courses with false names and they take the money of INEM. At last, Spain is the country of picaresque. Everybody steals where s/he can...At the end, you are stealing the money of INEM. The INEM gets angry and cancels the courses. Therefore, the people, who are in real need, have nothing.”*

Some interviewees perceive the training as an excuse to make one feel that s/he is the one who has not improved her/his skills enough, and who is “guilty” of not developing her/his capabilities. Moreover, they think that the trainings are utilized as a tool in order for the participants not to be seen as unemployed. They define these relations as a cycle that leave the people unemployed to bear all responsibilities on the individuals. To exemplify, another man (SM40M-3) stressed several issues from a very critical point of view: *“I see very clearly that these trainings are an excuse in order to tell you that you are the guilty one of not educating yourself and that you are not a qualified worker. From that point, everything is on their favor because I am not the bad unemployed person in the statistics but an individual in training, in recycle. Secondly, once they convey this knowledge, that is supposed to contribute for your access to the labour market and if you do not find a job, of course the fault is absolutely yours.”*

Similarly, an interviewee in Turkey (TG33M) declared his hesitation about the courses as follows: *“Who benefits from these courses are course providers. They organize these courses for their own interests. The teachers are not qualified enough.”*

There are some interviewees who are very much aware of the neoliberal project’s dialectic process of subjectivity and subjection as explained by Althusser⁴². They express their awareness on their becoming subjects while

⁴² Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London: New Left Books, 1971.

they are subjected to the policies that do not serve their interest but the counterpart of the overall system.

Therefore, this research shows that the perception on ALMPs can be classified in three levels (Table 2). The beneficiaries mention about social, economic, but mostly psychological aspects of the vocational courses. They express that the vocational courses benefit their psychological wellbeing rather than socio-economic situation.

Perception/Aspect	Psychological	Social	Economic
Light of hope	✓	✓	
No contribution to be employed			✓
Unworthiness and guilt feelings	✓		
De-legitimization of passiveness: blaming others	✓		
Psychological benefits and social networking opportunities	✓	✓	
Activation perceived as a passive policy model			✓
Active- passive dilemma: passive acceptance	✓	✓	

Conclusion

Activation is the process that neoliberal transformation used as a tool in order to create neoliberal individuals who are active, self-responsible, self-sufficient, individualistic, competitive, risk takers and strugglers. This process has followed a similar path both in Spain and Turkey, and the EU has provided cognitive, legislative and financial support to both countries regardless of their being candidate or member country. The regulations, recommendations and orientations of the EU are taken into consideration and stated clearly in the national reorganizations towards activation. At the end of neoliberal transformation process, the individuals are treated as responsible of their socio-economic situations.

The perception analysis in this research indicates that the abovementioned treatment is internalized by the beneficiaries of the activation policies. The participants are aware of the fact that their chances of finding a

good job as a result of these courses are poor, and they perceive themselves and/or other individuals as responsible and liable for this unsecure environment, and they point out feelings of unworthiness and guilt. The systematic and socio-economic problems are perceived as personal and moral problems of the individuals.

The participants express their perception of ALMPs within three aspects: psychological, social and economic. Supporting the results of the researches⁴³ in this field of ALMPs, participants of this research express that these programs create mostly positive psychological effects by increasing the beneficiaries' emotional wellbeing and social network. The interviewees in both countries observe these courses as a social inclusion mechanism as they think that the courses are beneficial for their social and psychological wellbeing and feeling of social inclusion. In a similar vein, the participants consider these courses a social assistance mechanism. This field study indicates clearly that the vocational courses became income security policy instrument rather than employment security policy in the eyes of the beholders. In fact, the courses are expected to create economic benefits for the beneficiaries by increasing employment security. However, according to the perception of the participants, the economic consequences in this sense are not remarkable. The participants are aware that ALMPs don't guarantee decent work.

Last but not least, there are several people who underline that ALMPs do not provide solutions for socio-economic problems and objects the neoliberal indoctrination through the activation process with commonly expressed opinions. The ones who tend to empathize the ineffectiveness of ALMPs on solving the socio-economic problems express their belief on the solidarity, trust the power of people. They criticise the current oppressive environment and explain their opinion that the people are managed by being deceived through several tools such as education and current employment market that spreads the values of competitiveness and selfishness. In this research, it is difficult to link these results with specific group of people with respect to

⁴³ Puig-Barrachina, V. et al. "The Impact of Active Labour Market Policies on Health Outcomes: A Scoping Review". *European Journal of Public Health*, Vol:30, Issue 1. 2020

Coutts, A et al. The Health and Wellbeing Effects of Active Labor Market Programs. *Interventions and Policies to Enhance Wellbeing: Wellbeing: A Complete Reference Guide*, Volume VI. 2014.

Wang, S. et al. "Can Active Labour Market Programmes Emulate the Mental Health Benefits of Regular Paid Employment?"

gender, age, and education level since the representation level is low. However, it could also be concluded that the recipients of vocational training who are between age of 25 and 40 in Turkey, and the ones between age of 30-60 tend to reject the neoliberal values. Moreover, Turkish women, in particular, and partly their Spanish counterparts, underline traditional gender roles by emphasizing powerlessness due to discrimination against women in the labour market and their position in a patriarchal society as an obstacle before their accession to the labour market⁴⁴. Therefore, it can be concluded from the statements of the beneficiaries that the indoctrination by neoliberal policy tool: activation is successful but not complete in itself since almost all participants underline that they need a job, not training.

⁴⁴ The results of this research with respect to age and gender are deemed to be reidentified and proved by a research designed with the population whose representation level is rather high.

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Annex 1:

Görüşme Kodu	Tarih: Yer: Ör: 02062018Ankara
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GÖRÜŞÜLEN KİŞİYLE İLGİLİ KISA BİLGİ

Bu bölüm araştırmacı tarafından doldurulacaktır. Bu bölümde görüşme yapılan kişinin özellikleriyle ilgili temel bilgiler alınacaktır.

Yaş	
Uyruk	
Cinsiyet	<input type="checkbox"/> Kadın <input type="checkbox"/> Erkek
Eğitim Durumu	<input type="checkbox"/> Okur yazar olmayan <input type="checkbox"/> Okur yazar <input type="checkbox"/> İlkokul <input type="checkbox"/> Lise <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 yıllık Üniversite <input type="checkbox"/> Üniversite ve üstü

Çalışma hayatı/işsizlik geçmişi ilgili kısa bilgi

<input type="checkbox"/> Çalışan:	<input type="checkbox"/> İşsiz
<input type="checkbox"/> Tam zamanlı <input type="checkbox"/> Yarı zamanlı	<input type="checkbox"/> İşsiz + daha önce çalışmış
<input type="checkbox"/> Emekli	Çalıştığınız iş ne idi?
<input type="checkbox"/> Diğer durumlar:	Bilgi beceriniz (meslek) nedir?
Şuan yapılan iş?	Kaç yıllık iş deneyiminiz var?
Bilgi beceriniz (meslek) nedir?	Kaç ay/yıldır işsizsiniz?
Hiç işsiz kaldınız mı? Kaç ay veya yıl işsiz kaldınız?	<input type="checkbox"/> İşsiz + ilk işini arıyor
	Bilgi beceriniz (meslek) nedir?
	Kaç ay/yıldır iş arıyorsunuz?

Programlar**Katıldığınız/Yararlandığınız sosyal programlar**

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | İşsizlik sigortası |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | İş arama danışmanlık hizmetleri |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mesleki eğitim ve kurslar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Korumalı istihdam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Diğer: |

Programların sağlayıcısı**Katıldığınız/yararlandığınız programın(ların) adı****Katıldığınız/yararlandığınız programın(ların) süresi****GÖRÜŞMEDE KULLANILAN REHBER**Mesleki eğitime yönelik algıyı ölçmek için:

- 1) Katıldığınız mesleki eğitim kurslarıyla ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 2) Katkısı oldu mu? Ne oldu? Size ne kazandırdı?
- 3) Farz edelim ki hiçbir mesleki eğitime katılmıyorsunuz; hayatınızda/ hayat standartlarınızda herhangi bir değişiklik olur muydu? Nasıl?
- 4) Diyelim ki Türkiye’de hiçbir mesleki eğitim kursu bulunmamaktadır; toplumda herhangi bir şey farklı olur muydu?

Sosyal güvenlik ve sorumluluk

- 5) Sosyal olarak korunduğunuzu düşünüyor musunuz? Sizce sosyal güvenliği kim veya ne sağlar?
- 6) Kriz, işsizlik, hastalık, emeklilik gibi durumlarda sosyal koruma mekanizmalarına güveniyor musunuz?
- 7) Sizce vatandaşların refahını sağlama konusu devletin mi yoksa vatandaşların sorumluluğu mudur?
- 8) Sizce Avrupa Birliği’nin Türkiye’deki sosyal programların tasarımında ve/veya uygulanmasında etkisi var mıdır? Bu etki pozitif mi negatif midir? Nasıl ve Neden?

Meslek ve çalışma hayatı

- 9) Sizce iş nedir? Tanımlayabilir misiniz?
- 10) İyi iş nedir? Tanımlayabilir misiniz?
- 11) Eğitimi aldığınız işte mi çalışıyorsunuz?
Evet ise, bu durumun iş memnuniyetine etkisi olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Hayır ise, eğer meslek eğitimi aldığınız işte çalışsaydınız, işinizden daha mı memnun olurdunuz?