Reforming the Welfare State, the case of part-time work in Sweden and France

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ABSTRACT

DIANA PARTRIDGE: Reforming the Welfare State, the case of part-time work in Sweden and France
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Countries have different approaches to part-time work in terms of organization of working hours, associated benefits, wages and the status of workers. Over the last few decades, different European member states have also had varying degrees of success at passing off part-time work as an acceptable form of employment to their citizens. In this paper I compare the reform of part-time work and non-standard work arrangements in Sweden and France. I explain that political decision-makers success or failure to implement part-time and temporary work reform is due to national differences in four areas: welfare state regimes; politics, specifically social partners and political power distribution; the organization of the female labor force; and political discourses.
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Introduction

Part-time work and temporary work arrangements as a percentage of total employment have steadily increased in Europe over the last ten years, giving rise to one of the most important changes in national employment structures (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Often they serve as tools to promote market flexibility, create jobs, reorganize working time, and facilitate women’s entry into the labor market. Universal trends in part-time work among European member states are apparent. It is performed mostly by women, it is frequently associated with marginal employment, and its increase has coincided with industrial restructuring and higher levels of female participation in the labor market (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998: 1). In theory, both employers and employees benefit. For employers, part-time work may allow greater flexibility in responding to market requirements (i.e. by increasing capacity or extending opening hours), while for employees it may allow for a better balance between working life and other activities (such as family responsibilities, training, leisure or civic activities). Additionally, it may assist marginal members of the work force, such as youths and elderly, to transition into or out of full-time employment.

In spite of many cross-national similarities, countries take different approaches to part-time work in matters of organization of working hours, associated benefits, wages and the status of workers. Over the last few decades, different member states have also had varying degrees of success at passing off part-time work as an acceptable form of employment to their citizens. In the case of France, consistently low levels of employment have meant that part-time and temporary work arrangements have been used as instruments of job creation. These arrangements, largely affecting marginal members of the labor market (youths, elderly, and women), were and continue to be seen as an option of last resort in lieu of full-time employment (Carre 2003: 134). By comparison, part-time
work in Sweden has been cast in a much more positive light. It is instead seen as a means to facilitate and promote women’s entry into the work force, while allowing for more flexible working hours and a better balance between working and personal life.

In this paper, I will consider what factors account for differences in part-time and temporary work arrangements in Sweden and France, and specifically, why the reform of part-time work has been more effective in Sweden than in France. One might expect that a country with strong ‘state-enhanced’ capitalism (Schmidt 1996), and weak and fragmented labor unions, such as France, would have a much easier time implementing changes to existing legislation, whereas a corporatist country, such as Sweden with traditionally powerful and well organized unions, would struggle to pass reforms. Yet, the opposite seems to be the case. Moreover, why do workers seem to accept non-standard working arrangements in Sweden but not in France?

I argue that this is due mainly to four factors. First, both countries belong to a different welfare regime: Sweden falls into the social democratic welfare regime, which ensures a basic level of security, serving as a safety net for all citizens, as well as income security in the form of high income replacement rates in the case of temporary or permanent interruption of work (Stephens 1996: 34). By contrast, in Christian democratic France, while benefits and pensions are also based on working contributions accumulated over a lifetime, the same safety net is not present. Citizens can only access the majority of benefits through permanent full-time work which creates an insider outsider welfare system, providing generous benefits to some and minimal assistance to unemployed, temporary and part-time workers. Secondly, societal openness to legislative reform largely depends on national state structures. In France, fragmented social partners are overshadowed by a centralized government with relatively few veto points, which has passed a large body of legislation on part-time work over the years. This legislation has proved cumbersome and difficult to reform because the French public responds to the slightest suggestion of cutbacks with protests and strikes. On the other hand, in corporatist Sweden the high level of organization of social partners has allowed effective part-time agreements to develop while the state has stepped aside. Thirdly, the entry of women into
the labor market has occurred in specific historical circumstances and in response to varied labor demands, contributing to different availability and organization of part-time work. France has been plagued with high structural unemployment since the end of its Golden Age, and has used part-time work primarily as a means of work-sharing. By contrast, in Sweden, married women’s entry into the work-force was mainly in response to a shortage of manpower and an expanding public sector. Fourthly, national discourses surrounding the issue of part-time work have been presented differently. In Sweden, part-time work earned public acceptance because it was endorsed as a means for women to gain independence and establish their identity outside of the home. In France, public discourse has failed to present part-time work in a positive light. Reforms were/are instead perceived as a neoliberal attack on the French model of society, strongly rooted in a tradition of solidarity.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First I begin with brief look at the rates of part-time work in Europe before turning to examine part-time work in my two cases, Sweden and France. Next, I use the four factors mentioned above to explain why the success of part-time work reform has been different in both countries. I address these factors in four sections, each beginning with a brief theoretical framework and then analyzing the labor market in both Sweden and France.
Part-time work

The European Union

Part-time work has increased in all EU member states over the past few decades. In 1992, 14.2% of EU workers worked on a part-time basis but by the end of 2006, this figure had risen to 18.8% (Romans and Hardarson 2007). However, great diversity in part-time employment rates exists between member states, industrial sectors, occupations, age, and gender. In 2006, part-time work accounted for 32.7% of total female employment and 7.7% of total male employment. The highest presence of part-time workers can be observed in the Netherlands (46.2% of total employment) making it an outlier with a 20.5% lead on the second place member state, the United Kingdom (25.7%), followed by Germany (25.4%), Sweden (24.6%), Denmark (24.1%), Belgium (21.8%), and Austria (21.3%). Middle ranging countries include France (17.4%), Luxembourg (17.1%), and Finland (15%). The Southern Mediterranean countries follow with Italy (13.6%), Spain (11.9%), Portugal (11.6%), Greece (5.7%). Finally, the lowest presence of part-time employment is found in those countries admitted in the 2004 and 2007 Eastern enlargements: Romania (9.9%), Lithuania (9.4%), Estonia (7.9%), Czech Republic (4.9%), Poland (9.3%), Hungary (3.9), Slovakia (2.7%), and Bulgaria (1.7%) (Eurostat Labour Market Latest Trends 4th quarter 2006 data).

Part-Time Work in France

Since the 1970’s, the percentage of workers working part-time in France has greatly increased, from 6% in 1970 to 17% of the working population in 1999 (Zeytinoglu and Muteshi 1999: 5). This figure has since stabilized at around 17% (17.4% in 2006), placing the country below the EU average. This increase has not been continuous, surging from 1980 to 1986 with the first general regulation of part-time work, and after 1992 with the introduction of specific measures encouraging
part-time work. In France, most part-time jobs are available in the tertiary sector (health, education, social services, personal services, and commerce) and affect mostly low-skill occupations. Finally, youths, elderly, and women hold the highest percentage of part-time jobs. Since women have access to generous networks of childcare, albeit not as generous as the Scandinavian countries, part-time work is seen as an option of last resort for mothers with several children, those recovering from illness, or those entering or exiting the labor market (Zeytinoglu and Muteshi 1999: 5).

The attitude towards part-time work in France is notably different from certain other European countries where it is welcomed by employers as a means to meet spikes in the work-load associated with fluctuations in customer activity. Instead, French employers rarely perceive part-time work as a strategic advantage for their companies and have shown greater reluctance to create part-time jobs due to a generally more rigid legislative framework surrounding working time. In a case study on the use of part-time work in retail banking, “managers in the banking sector tended to be much more hostile to the use of part-time work in a society where full-time work was seen as the norm” (Crompton 2000: 214). In fact, part-timers were segregated into areas where their absence would not be disruptive and company organization focused around full-time workers. Managers and supervisors claimed that part-time work mostly benefited employees rather than employers or companies because it allowed employees to keep more flexible working hours (Crompton 2000: 214). Still today, workers can legally request to work part-time based on provisions spelled out in the ‘Code du Travail.’ A possible explanation can be found in the history of French labor market legislation.

Part-time work in France originally developed outside of a regulatory framework and was managed through individual contracts or specific collective agreements (Laulom 2004: 87). After 1936, strict regulation on working time, such as the 40 hour working week, was introduced which essentially prohibited the use of part time work. Furthermore, national insurance contributions of employers were based on the size of their working force instead of proportional to pay (Crompton 2000: 216; Droulers 1972). Specific aspects of part-time work were only touched upon by certain legislation, such as the Law of 1970, which authorized the occasional use of part-time work in the
public sector (Laulom 2004: 87). Only in 1973 did a strained labor market and employer demands lead to a reform of the legal framework to facilitate the use of part-time workers. “The Law of 27 December 1973 gave part-time employees equal footing compared to full-time workers concerning rights based on the length of service and therefore constituted the first example of applying the principle of equality between the two categories” (Laulom 2004: 87). In the 1980’s more comprehensive legislation was created due to the dual pressures of rising unemployment and demands for greater flexibility from employers who faced greater international competition (Crompton 2000: 217). The Law of 28 January 1981 tried to promote the use of part-time work by abolishing certain regulations making it unattractive to employers. However, criticisms against it led to the Government Order of 26 March 1982, which legally established equality, of wages and social security benefits, between part-time and full-time employees, (Crompton 2000: 217) In the following years, part-time work underwent a series of reforms focusing on three main ideas. First, part-time work could be used to share out employment and reduce unemployment because more part-time work would allow for greater job creation. Second, part-time work could increase labor market flexibility. Third, it could allow employees greater flexibility between their working and personal life.

Starting in 1992 and for the following 6 years, the French government focused heavily on work sharing via the promotion of part-time work, even offering financial aid to companies hiring part-time workers. The loi Aubry I (1998) and Aubry II (2000) imposed a reduction of working time, signaling a shift in the approach to part-time work and the regulation of working hours. Originally, the regulation of working hours was achieved through collective bargaining. In 1997, a tripartite conference on pay and working time, involving employers’ associations, trade unions and the French state, was supposed to negotiate a 35 hour work week; however, the negotiation process broke down and ended with legislative intervention. Aubry passed through Parliament in May 1998, and was validated by the Constitutional Council in June, setting the length of the statutory working week at 35 hours as of 1 January 2000 in companies employing more than 20 people, and in small firms from 1 January 2002. It is important to note that this shortening of the statutory work week does not
necessarily imply a shortening of working time, but only a threshold above which hourly pay must be increased. Thus other incentives for reducing working time were also needed such as exemptions from social security contributions for complying companies (Laulom 2004: 88).

The two lois Aubry legislations were a source of major change in the French labor market including the alteration of part-time work regulation. Financial subsidies previously awarded for part-time work were abolished as part-time work was pushed to the back burner of the national agenda, as it was no longer the priority in employment policy. Therefore the previous balance between flexibility and security in part-time work shifted towards a greater focus on flexibility. According to the government in the Preamble to the Law of 19 January 2000, part-time work would now make it “easier to reconcile professional life and private life” (Laulom 2004: 88). The French government’s attitude towards part-time work was greatly shaped by the limits of the 35 hour statutory work week and thus is not an attitude largely shared at a European level, raising the question of whether French labor law is compatible with the EES Guidelines (Laulom 2004: 89).

Part-time work in Sweden

Part-time work in Sweden plays a different role than in France and most European countries. Sweden has one of the highest rates of part-time employment in Europe, almost 90% of which is women (Eurostat 2006). While a high rate of female participation characterizes a number of other industrial countries, it occurs for seemingly different reasons in Sweden which will be addressed later in this paper (Anxo and Storrie 2003: 60). This tendency was first recorded in the employment statistics in 1963 which figured that 456,000 women worked part-time. However, just a few years later in 1970 the rate rose to 594,000, a significant increase of about 30% in a short period of time. At the same time, the increase in women’s full-time participation was minimal, only 3% or 898,000 to 925,000 (Eklund 2004).

In France and Europe as a whole, the growth of part-time work tended to be associated with job insecurity. Its increase was a response to high unemployment rates where women were typically subject to employers ‘short-run employment adjustment’ (Anxo and Storrie 2003: 60). Thus part-time
work was normally concentrated in sectors with significant employee turn-over and short-term contracts. In Sweden, however, the surge in part-time work in the 1970’s was not connected with job insecurity or used as an alternative to unemployment; it was instead used to promote the employment of married women. Involuntary part-time work was relatively low and the opportunity to increase working hours to full-time if desired was usually attainable (Anxo and Storrie 2003: 60).

As mentioned previously, Swedish law provides virtually no regulation of part-time work, other than that all citizens have the right to it. Working contracts specifying the number of hours worked must be agreed upon by the social partners and require mutual consent for all modifications. The State plays little role and is absent from wage rate negotiations. In contrast to their French counterparts, most economists, trade unions, employers and political parties in Sweden are strongly opposed to the practice of job-sharing. “Job-sharing is a non-issue in Sweden,” (Bjorklund 2000: 154) and the Government has never seriously considered adopting policies to encourage the entry of workers into part-time employment.

One of the reasons part-time work is an accepted alternative to full-time work is that Swedes in part-time employment tend to work more hours than their French counterparts. While a part-time worker in France averages around 15 to 20 hours a week, a part-time worker in Sweden works closer to 30 hours per week. Another important aspect of part-time work is the extensive number of options for full-time employees to take leaves of absence. On a leave of parental absence or study leave, an employee is legally entitled to significant reductions in his or her working time beyond what was contractually agreed. A parent, for instance, can reduce his or her previous hours worked by 75% until the youngest child is eight years old (Eklund 2004: 271). This is not officially part-time employment as the employee is still technically employed full-time and can legally return to regular hours at anytime. However, the distinction between part-time work and leave of absence is often blurred (Eklund: 271).

Two main pieces of legislation exist concerning part-time work in Swedish labor law. The first, the Employment Protection Act of 1974 concerns employees’ right to access a greater number of
working hours. The second piece of legislation, the Work Hours Act of 1982, deals with hours surpassing the contractually agreed working time. Both laws have been subject to reform since their original implementation. The Employment Protection Act was brought back under scrutiny when the Government Commission of 1993 addressed the issue of whether an employer needing more manpower should be required to offer part-time workers the option of increasing working time before extending the offer to the general public. The report concluded that this was not necessary because national collective agreements in theory already reached a negotiation suitable to both parties and in practice employers already gave priority to part-time employees through internal networks, job postings and the like. However, when issue surfaced again in 1996, this time under a Socialist government, the legislation was finally reformed, in effect as of January 1st, 1997, requiring employers to give priority to part-time workers wishing to increase individual working time before extending the offer to the general public (Eklund 2004: 273). The second piece of legislation, established under the Working Hours Act of 1982, deals with hours worked beyond individual contractual agreements. The Act sets maximum overtime at 200 hours per year and prohibits most instances of night work unless there is a ‘special need’ for the work. However, a large number of exceptions are available still allow for flexibility and diversity of working hours (Anxo and Storrie 2003: 50). Moreover, no maximum daily working time is defined. Working time legislation is extremely flexible and permits social partners to negotiate and fix industry wide agreements on working hours. Therefore, in practice this act is not binding and can be replaced with collective agreements at the industry or plant level (Anxo and Storrie 2003: 50).

Sweden and France clearly have diverse approaches to part-time work. How can these differences be explained? As addressed in the introduction, I attribute national differences in part-time work to four main factors. The ability to successfully implement reform in the labor market (including part-time and temporary work) are due to differences in: (1) welfare regimes, (2) politics, including state structure and political power distribution, (3) the organization of the female labor force, and finally (4) political discourses.
Welfare Institutions: Different approaches to ‘work and welfare’

To understand why part-time work reform has been more successful in Sweden than in France we must first take a closer look at welfare state regimes. Different societal concepts of welfare states make part-time work easier or harder to reform because they differ in how they link welfare to work (Fagan and O’Reilly 1998: 6). The Christian democratic and social democratic welfare regimes strive to achieve very different objectives in labor market policy and the distribution of welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990).

The Christian democratic regime takes a 'Welfare through work' approach wherein welfare entitlements are based on workplace contributions that a male breadwinner and his employer have made to the social insurance scheme throughout his working life (Goodin 2001). The social democratic regime strives for 'Welfare and work' by providing a basic level of universal welfare benefits linked to citizenship. In return, citizens must make productive contributions whenever they can through government-adopted active labor market policies (Goodin 2001). These welfare regimes warrant greater analysis as they are the two regimes relevant to this paper.

Social democratic welfare states are the most egalitarian welfare states in which the idea of solidarity is the strongest (Smith 2004: 20). Countries from this welfare typology are characterized by high income taxes, generous universally provided welfare state entitlements, low unemployment, and high levels of labor force participation, especially for women (Stephens 1996: 32). Huber and Stephens (2001: 87) argue that these regimes make for “universalistic, comprehensive, citizenship-based, income security, gender equality, labor mobility welfare states.” Social democratic parties were often the dominant force behind social reform, shaping welfare states that promote high levels of equality, rather than dualism between the state and the market and dualism between work and the
middle class (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27). In work, the principle of equality is also central, concerning both wages and gender. Solidaristic wage policy means equal pay for equal work as well as a compression of wage scales (Schmidt 2000: 256). Therefore, the rights of manual workers equal the rights of civil servants and white collar workers (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27). Social democratic states rely less on the family’s capacity to aid. Instead they promote the individual independence from the market and ‘preemptively socialize the cost of familyhood’ (Esping-Andersen 1990: 28).

By contrast, the Christian democratic regime makes for a “fragmented, employment-based, comprehensive, transfer-heavy, male-breadwinner, passive welfare state” (Huber and Stephens 2001: 87), which organizes itself around occupational categories, providing benefits based on working contributions. The success of this model at universally covering its citizens is therefore heavily reliant on its ability to provide full employment (Palier 2006a: 4). These welfare states are designed to provide workers with security as well as preserve community, hierarchy and status differentials (Esping-Anderson 1990). Social services are usually provided by intermediary or ‘third sector’ bodies and are determined by market performance and, again, occupational status. They place a heavy emphasis on transfers with substantial income replacement rates in transfer programs (Huber and Stephens 2001: 111).

The Christian democratic model originated in continental Europe under the influence of the Catholic Church and dynastic elites (Myles 2002). Catholic doctrine denies the primacy of the market and reinforces the dominance of the male breadwinner and the family unit as the main supplier of social welfare. Traditionally, these influences are reflected in social spending income transfers that assist the male breadwinner (Myles 2002). Under this model, women’s participation in the labor market is usually relatively low (France and Belgium being an exception) and women typically gain access to social benefits through their husbands. Today social services aimed at facilitating women’s employment, such as childcare, remain limited (France and Belgium again being exceptions) (OECD 2005 data).
These two genres of welfare state also deal with retrenchment or the cutting of benefits differently. Esping-Andersen (1996) describes the rigidity of Christian democratic regimes which he calls ‘frozen continental landscapes.’ Christian democratic states are locked into their own problems by their inability to implement successful reforms. Palier argues that the majority of these systems have remained essentially the same because the reforms implemented have only reinforced their existing traits (Palier 2006a: 2). Certain institutional traits of the Christian democratic welfare states make them particularly resistant to retrenchment. For example, differences in benefit type and the way they are financed can have a major impact on the legitimacy of reform. In Christian democratic welfare states, most of the cash benefits are contributory, earnings-related benefits, while the majority of social expenditure is financed through employment related contributions. Tax- and contribution financed schemes have different abilities to attract public support (Palier 2006a; 7-8). Whereas taxation goes to the state, social contributions are perceived as a ‘deferred wage’ which will later be returned to the citizen in times of need. Therefore, citizens are less willing to accept reductions in the benefits they believe they have earned. On the other hand, citizens frequently prefer to pay more in contributions than have their benefits cut. Palier argues that “in Continental Europe, governments have long preferred to increase social contributions than to cut social benefits. This is counter-intuitive from an Anglo-Saxon (and even a Scandinavian) point of view, where the most politically risky thing to do is to raise taxes, and where the population prefers some cuts in social programs to any tax increases” (Palier 2006a; 7-8). In Sweden some benefits are tied to contributions but most are tax financed, while the French welfare state is mostly financed by payroll taxes. This at least partially explains the reason cutbacks are easier in Social democratic Sweden than in Christian democratic France. Let us now consider how Sweden and France fit into this framework.

Switzerland, the Social democratic example

The cornerstone of Swedish labor market policy has been egalitarian wage-formation and active labor market policies (Benner and Vad 2000: 403). Although Sweden has traditionally benefited from low levels of unemployment, crisis in the early 1990’s induced record levels of
unemployment which, to an extent, still afflict the country today. Other distinctive features include extensive government funded social programs and leave schemes, which provide generous social protection and childcare services, as well as universal benefits ensuring income and pension security. By means of such securities “the Scandinavian people have accepted the need for the regular reconfiguration of their social and economic policies, whether this has taken the form of more part-time work, government spending cuts, wage restraint, partial privatization of the health-care system, or the introduction of supplementary private pensions” (Smith, 2004: 20).

In industrial relations, social democratic countries typically operate around the principle of collective agreement, “granting extensive rights to organize and negotiate on a wide range of issues” (Lindquist 2003: 52). The nature of industrial relation in Sweden makes for a high-level of flexibility in the arrangement and length of working hours (Anxo and Storrie, 2003: 50) because of its high rate of unionization and powerful labor organization with relative autonomy from national authorities. In the December Compromise of 1906, workers were granted the right of association and basic rights against dismissal for trade union activity. The landmark Saltsjobaden Agreement of 1938 established the basis of the Swedish labor by setting patterns in industrial relations, reducing the state’s role in employment negotiations to an indirect and facilitating one (Benner and Vad, 2000: 416). Furthermore, the Agreement extended union rights for workers and gave trade unions a degree of influence over lay-offs and dismissals (Lindquist 2003: 52). Still in force today, it represents a “willingness to co-operate, mutual respect, the endeavor to arrive at peaceful solutions based on compromise and a sense of responsibility for developments in the labor market” (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 5 October 2007). Jumping ahead to the 1980’s, collective bargaining became much more decentralized, which allowed negotiations and decision-making to occur at the firm and plant level (Anxo and Storrie 2003, 50), thus further increasing flexibility in working hours.
France, a Christian democratic exception

France falls into the Christian democratic regime, though a bit awkwardly. Barbier and Theret (2003:155) describe France as a “Bismarckian system with Beveridgean objectives.” France exhibits several major identifying Bismarckian features. First, it is founded on social insurance principles and funded through social contributions supplied by employers and employees. Benefits do not aim to reduce class inequality among workers or to protect non-workers excluded from the market (Barbier and Theret 2003). Secondly, France has traditionally followed the male-bread winner model in which a worker’s coverage is extended to his wife and children, however today these policies have relatively low impact on women’s labor force participation. Thirdly, French unions are highly fragmented, an unusual condition for a Christian democratic regime (Barbier and Theret 2003).

Since the end of its golden age around 1975, the French labor market has suffered from high levels of unemployment, low participation of unskilled and elderly workers, and a relatively low average of hours worked (OECD 2006). Despite some improvements during the 1990’s, with unemployment declining from 12% in 1997 to 8.5% in 2005 and employment increasing by 11% between 1995 and 2005, today unemployment remains a major source of political, social, and economic concern (OECD 2006). A major source of unemployment is agreed to be a result of France’s over-protected job market. The shift from a 39 to 35-hour workweek by the loi Aubry 2000 and 2001 was a means of spreading out working hours to create more jobs. Elaborate rules and regulations, such as a 2,735-page labor code for the 2006 working year, detail protections on health and safety (The Economist, 28 October 2006). Extensive protections for hiring and firing have entrenched a two-tier labor market, which provides stable, comfortable jobs for some, and insecure, temporary jobs or unemployment for the rest (The Economist, 28 October 2006).

France’s protest-oriented society, which will be discussed later in more detail, has made even minor welfare retrenchment difficult, thus reinforcing Esping-Andersen’s argument that Christian democratic welfare regimes are frozen landscapes. “Labor market deregulation is arguably the most sensitive issue in the French political economy, as the massive protests that greeted governmental
efforts to introduce derogatory youth employment contracts in 1994 (the *contrat d’insertion professionnelle*, CIP) and then again in 2005 (the *contrat première embauche*, CPE) showed” (Clegg and Palier 2007: 18). This is not to say the French labor market has gone unchanged, in fact Palier argues in recent years it has undergone fundamental transformation. Between the mid-1980’s and the mid-1990’s the use of fixed-term contracts has more than tripled while part-time work has increased by almost 50% This can be largely explained by a realignment of French labor market policy, justified by social instead of economic objectives (Clegg and Palier 2007: 18).
Politics

Yet, welfare state regimes alone do not explain why part-time work reform has been met with resistance in France and been more or less accepted in Sweden. The strength of social partners and political power distribution also play an important role in the ability to successfully implement reforms.

Social Partners

The organizational power of labor has been a major force in the development of social democratic welfare states (Korpi 1983). Cameron (1984) argues that labor's power is an essential element of corporatism, a term referring to centralized bargaining conducted by labor, business, and the state (Rosenfeld and Kalleberg 1990; Rosenfeld and Birkeland 1995). This might involve adjusting the costs and benefits of part-time work (Gornick and Jacobs, 1994). “We would expect corporatism and leftist governments to provide the political-institutional frameworks that encourage part-time” (Rosenfeld and Birkeland 1995: 11).

Welfare and country specific traditions concerning the sharing of public space partially dictate the degree of influence social partners have on policy outcomes (Ebbinghaus 2006: 7). Depending on the mode of social governance available in case of disagreements, social partners veto powers can vary. They can either voice their dissent or exit the negotiations (Hirschman 1970). Social partners also play an important role in the legitimization of reform. “Unilateral action by the state without the social partners consent often meets resistance” (Ebbinghaus 2006: 2).

In Sweden, strong corporatism and well organized unions have advocated solidarity and equality. Early on, social partners were key players in policy formation, particularly in economic and labor market policy alongside the state. Strong administrative bodies, unions and employers
negotiated and set priorities for labor market policy (Rothstein 1996). “What emerged was a consensual and hierarchical system, with close links integrating policy fields and many forums for establishing consensus among the important actors” (Benner and Vad 2000: 407). Today, part-time work is almost exclusively controlled by social partners as Swedish law provides virtually no regulation of part-time work. Working contracts specifying the number of hours to be worked must be agreed upon by both parties and require mutual consent for all modifications.

In comparison, France’s labor movement is fragmented, historically one of the weakest and most divided in the advanced industrial world. Union participation peaked around 22% in the 1970s with the five principal trade unions exercising only minimal influence over company decisions. Instead of participating in formal negotiations, a key tactic of French unions has been to threaten a repeat of the December 1995 strikes that the nation was brought to a standstill (Smith 2004: 63).

French employment policy is also highly fragmented, even compared to other Christian democratic welfare states. Social partners manage unemployment insurance through collective agreement, employment service is managed by an independent public agency, a national public fund controls labor market policy, and there is bipartite vocational training center (Ebbinghaus 2006: 11). Working time issue arrangements are regulated mainly through legislation initiated and directed by the state. During the 1980’s, seven laws on the issue passed through Parliament (Boulin, Lallement, Silvera 2003: 170). “Most measures of active policy are decided by the French state without consultation with the social partners” (Mosley, Keller, and Speckesser 1998: 12) while, social partners exercise considerable autonomy in the domain of unemployment insurance funds and negotiating with the state over financial issues. “French employment policy thus oscillates between state imposed solutions and negotiated deals” (Palier 2002: 381). This sheds light on why social reforms, specifically those on working time arrangements have been a challenge for France.

Political Power Distribution

The role of political parties, particularly left parties, also indirectly effects welfare state patterns. The distribution of political power partially dictates why welfare states treat working time
arrangements, specifically part-time and temporary work, differently and explains why part-time work reform has been more easily accepted in social democratic welfare states than Christian democratic ones. “Fragmented oppositions leave more room for welfare state expansion but are less effective advocates of retrenchment” (Castle 1978; Huber and Stephens 2001: 20). Strong leftist parties push competing centrist parties to adopt more generous welfare programs, especially when they are competing for working class support (Huber and Stephens 2001: 20). Leftist parties are more likely than conservative ones to promote state expenditure, expanding the public-sector and as such creating policies aimed at reducing inequalities between individuals (Cameron 1984). Huber and Stephens argue that the differences among welfare states are best predicted by the political party in power ‘over the long run’ (Huber, Ragin, Stephens 1993; Huber and Stephens 2000; Huber Stephens 2001: 20). Strong unions combined with a social democratic party will likely promote a “generous welfare state with universalistic, citizenship-based, solidaristic, redistributive, and service-oriented character” (Castles 1982; Myles 1984; Korpi 1989; Palme 1990; Huber, Ragin, and Stephens 1993; Korpi and Palme 1998; Huber and Stephens 2000a; Huber and Stephens 2001: 41). Where Christian democratic parties have a strong influence with a major lower and middle class backing, a welfare state with insurance based entitlements develops (Huber and Stephens 2001: 41). Thus, benefits are transferred based on employment contributions instead of distributed based on citizenship.

In France, political control was not dominated by the Christian Democrats or by the Social Democrats. The expulsion of the Communist Party from 1947 until 1981 severely limited the leverage of Socialist and leftist influence on government policy during the remainder of the Fourth Republic and during the first twenty-three years of the Fifth Republic. The Christian Democrats influence was also limited with the emergence of the Gaullist movement, and was virtually non-existent by the beginning of the Fifth Republic (Levy 2000). Despite right party control, French social spending grew rapidly under Gaullist rule.

In Sweden, the strength of the Social Democratic Party and the dominance of labor movement greatly shaped the institutional capacity of the welfare state. Sweden’s multi-party system
has been dominated by the Social Democratic Party for 65 out of the last 75 years (Benner and Vad 2000: 407). The strength of farming interests led political representatives to vie for reforms that benefited everyone in the constituency and not only wage earners, eventually leading to universal coverage (Huber and Stephens 2001: 117). Ideas of universal coverage entered political debate at least as early as 1928 when Gustav Moller, the Social Democratic social minister at the time, promoted the idea that social policy should provide financial support to all as a basic right of citizenship (Huber and Stephens 2001: 119).
Women’s Labor Force Participation

Up until now, I have addressed how welfare institutions and political contexts have affected the capacity of part-time work reform in Sweden and France, however, women’s labor force participation also strongly affects part-time work. Part-time work is mainly women’s work, a logical phenomenon since many women have unpaid family responsibilities that extend beyond their paid work. Particularly when other sources of income are available through spouse and the welfare state, women may use part-time work as a way to balance family responsibilities with working life. “Women’s part-time work relates to the interconnection among the family, the state, and the market, which vary across societies depending upon their historical, cultural, and political traditions” (Orloff 1993; Rosenfeld and Birkeland 1995: 3). Where social democratic welfare states, extensive leftist party control, and well organized female labor exist, there tends to be high legitimacy of part-time work.

Part-time work is more prevalent in countries with large service sectors. Social democratic welfare-state regimes, compared with Christian democratic welfare states, might enact more policies to accommodate women’s participation in the labor force and have a higher level of ‘decommodification’, as well as require and encourage a larger public sector (Esping-Andersen 1990). The growth of the welfare state, especially in the Nordic countries, has corresponded to growth of public-sector employment, where there are more part-time jobs (Rein 1985). Huber and Stephens (2001) argue that an increase in female participation often leads to a higher demand for public care giving as women have more responsibilities outside the home and less time to dedicate to their own families. When an expanding welfare state is combined with support from political actors, the result is more generous family policies such as parental leave and public day care. In turn more women enter
the market to fill the demand for labor in these services. Women fill jobs in the public sector, since services are provided by the state, allowing them a higher level of organization in unions and a greater ability to politically mobilize (Huber and Stephens 2001: 47).

Different countries provide different costs, advantages, and accommodations of women’s work, such as social welfare benefits, vacations, leaves, health insurance, pensions, and unemployment insurance, which affect the degree of ‘decommodification,’ making it more or less beneficial to work part-time (Rosenfeld and Birkeland 1995). Joint or individual tax systems influence women’s incentive to take a part-time job. The switch from full-time to part-time work also affects women differently in different genres of welfare state. In Christian democratic welfare states, switching to a part-time job often entails an occupational down-grading, affecting earnings far beyond the intensive child-rearing years. This affects not only salary but also pensions. If a woman temporarily leaves her job for child-bearing she may lose accumulated occupational pension rights (Glover and Arber 1995; Ginn and Arber 1998: 157). In social democratic countries the impact of switching to part-time work is less negative because women are allowed much greater flexibility in returning to work with reduced hours allowing them to maintain continuous employment (Ginn and Arber 1998: 157).

Many of the institutional, political and ideological differences affecting female labor force participation are the result of specific historical contexts. Barbara Hobson and Marika Lindholm argue (1997) that the process of identity formation is essential to understanding the ‘ability of collectives to articulate claims and exercise power in welfare states.’ Using Sweden as a case study, she demonstrates that women’s rights movements in the 1930’s transformed social norms surrounding the relationship between women, citizenship and employment. She asserts that looking at the Swedish welfare state through this lens provides insight into the development of women friendly policies that have emerged in later decades, making it easier for women to opt for part-time work. And in fact, even in Sweden with its paradigm power resources and left party strength, the unique historical
influence of the Swedish feminist movement lends to a deeper understanding of welfare state
formation (Hobson 1997).

In Sweden, part-time work was used to encourage married women’s participation in the labor
market. Unlike many other European countries, such as France, it was not used as means of work
sharing but as a transition between non-participation and full-time work for women with children.
This use of part-time work was strongly backed by political institutions starting in the 1930’s. Wage
work for women developed in the 1930’s after a period of economic crisis and high unemployment
from the late nineteenth century until the end of the 1920’s. In the late 1960’s, a dramatic increase in
public employment, primarily in public services such as health care, childcare, care for the elderly,
and education prompted a rapid increase of female labor force participation, with about 500,000
housewives entering the labor market during this period (Axelson 1992; Benner and Vad 2000: 406).
Benner and Vad explain that this was largely due to the ‘radicalization’ of the Social Democratic
Party in the late 1960’s who promised to promote gender equality by improving conditions for
women in the labor market. Economic prosperity during in the 1970’s and 1980’s reinforced a
generous welfare state based on the principles of solidarity, employment for all, and flexible working
hours.

Family-friendly provisions such as parental leave have reduced inequalities between Swedish
men and women (Daune-Richard 1998: 224). The Swedish tax system which changed from a joint to
individual system in 1970 in the ‘greatest equality reform ever’ intended to promote equality between
men and women as well as increase the supply of female labor (Benner and Vad 2000: 402).
Meanwhile, France still has a joint taxation system (Daune-Richard 1998: 216). Policies introduced to
promote flexibility of working hours in Sweden have led to dramatic increases in the amount of paid
leave and permitted absences. Maternity and parental leave grant couples an allocation of up to 65
weeks of shared leave. For the first 52 weeks, wage replacement is high, at 80 to 100 percent, and for
the remaining 13 weeks it drops to approximately SEK 1,800 ($187) per month. Benefits can also be
paid while the parent works part-time and are adjusted accordingly (Gornick and Meyers 2003: 122).
Historically, France was slower to industrialize than other European countries. Family forms of production, served as the main source of women’s work for a long time (Daune-Richard 1998: 222). When women finally entered the work force in the 1970’s, they followed the traditional male pattern of working full-time, made easier by the relatively generous state-provided child care and family allowances. Part-time work was rare and unattractive to employers because they had to pay contributions based on the number of workers and not the number of hours worked. Additionally, part-time work was opposed by the trade unions because it was perceived as a threat to traditional working arrangements. However, the economic crisis in the late 1970’s created a shortage of full-time jobs, forcing more and more women to take up part-time work. Moreover, new legislation introduced in the 1980’s made part-time work financially more attractive to employers as a means of increasing labor market flexibility both ‘functionally and numerically’ (Daune-Richard 1998: 222).

With regards to women friendly policies, France is also an outlier from the traditional Christian democratic model. Universal family allocations and policies, such as childcare benefits and services permit mother’s to take up full-time employment more easily. Public leave benefits grant employed mothers up to 16 weeks at full pay for the first two children, and 26 weeks of leave for the third and subsequent children at 100 percent of wages, up to a certain cap (Gornick and Meyers 2003: 125). With such policies, France is the closest of the Christian democratic welfare regimes to establishing a ‘dual-earner’ system for couples. Regarding family policies, France has had a wide-ranging system, “including tax credits, quasi-universal provision of early education, the vast array of benefits managed by the Family funds (CAF, Caisses d’allocations familiales), the departments’ general social assistance and families assistance, and the municipalities’ childcare services and crèches” (Barbier 1990; Barbeir and Theret 2003: 136). France has traditionally promoted natalist policies by providing incentives for women with multiple children (normally benefits can be accessed with the third and subsequent children). In 1985 for example, Allocation parentale d’éducation (APE) gave a replacement income to parents who temporarily left work to care for a third child. This was only awarded on the condition that the parent had worked two years in employment during the 30
months before the birth of the third child (Barbeir and Theret 2003: 136). In 1994 this benefit was extended to parents with two children, as well as women working part-time. However, its’ policies, especially concerning parental leave, are still not as generous as in Sweden and working time organizational measures tend to be gender discriminatory, giving men wage compensation while putting women in jobs with lower pay and reduced working hours.
Political discourse

Finally, differences in political discourse help explain why part-time work has developed dissimilarly in France and Sweden. Politicians have used discourse, meaning what policy actors say to each other, in attempt to present and gain support for their political programs. They appeal to national values and identities, collective memories, and social norms to influence public opinion in favor of or against a certain policy, sometimes overcoming institutional, political, or cultural obstacles. Countries with power concentrated in the executive tend to engage in ‘communicative discourses’, wherein the government proposes legislation with little negotiation with social partners and then justifies it to the public and other political actors. By contrast, countries with dispersed power, be it institutionally or by way of strong social partners and/or organization of labor, tend to use ‘coordinated discourse’, in which a large number of policy actors negotiate and agree upon policies before the government proposes them (Schmidt 2002: 211-2). Since these governments consult major policy actors in a more open process of deliberation in which objections are heard and have the chance to be incorporated before announcing a decision, new legislation frequently enjoys a greater level of legitimacy and discursive authority (Mayntz, Streeck, Scharpf 2003: 335).

“In France, temporary work is still scorned as precarious work ”(New York times 11 may 2006). Reform of working time arrangements is made difficult because part-time and temporary work have been tainted by association with job insecurity. Politicians and social partners have used discourse as a powerful ideological and political tool, although not always one that they can control in the long term, to direct protests and influence public opinion (Smith 2004: 63). France does not have a strong coordinated discourse and politicians instead attempt to legitimize reforms through communicative discourse, but frequently only after they have already been passed into law and often
with little to no prior consultation of trade unions or social partners. Schmidt (2000: 293) asserts that France’s communicative nature originated from the single-actor system set in motion by de Gaulle, “where power was concentrated in an executive which formulated ‘heroic’ policies largely without interest group or societal input.” If the government is successful at convincing the public reform is necessary, the law remains intact but, and more often than not, if they are unsuccessful the country erupts in protests and the law is usually revoked. The French public is renowned for its opposition to the introduction of any element of individual risk into its social model. Even more, there exists a perpetuated mistrust of open markets reinforcing the French reflex to regard change as an attack on social ‘acquis,’ or non-negotiables. “The problem is that France lacks politicians talking directly about real and ultimate solutions, and explaining how to get them through honestly and accepting the associated risks” (Vinocur 21 March, 2006).

The government’s habit of minimal to non-existent consultation with social partners, has made reform nearly impossible for most of the recent prime ministers. Edouard Balladur (1993-95), was renowned for his ‘Balladur method’, which involved a direct negotiation between the state and the citizens (Levy 2000). He would put forth an initiative without any warning and await public reaction. If citizens objected he would withdraw it immediately. In the beginning of 1994 he attempted to create a sub-minimum wage for youths known as the SMIC to encourage greater hiring flexibility for employers. However, after mass protests, he withdrew his proposal. As soon as French voters got wind of political weakness, they began protesting at his every reform. His successor, Alain Juppé (1995-1997), forced his ‘secretly conceived’ Juppé Plan through Parliament in 1995, also after little consultation with social partners. Three-week transport strikes ensued, paralyzing the country and forcing President Chirac to revoke the reform on public sector pensions (Levy 2000). In 2003, Raffarin reformed civil servant retirement benefits prompting two weeks of protests (Smith 2004). Although his proposals eventually passed, his public approval ratings plummeted so abysmally that in 2005 he was dismissed (The Economist, 2 June 2005).
In 2006, after hardly any consultations with social partners, former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin cut short parliamentary debate and forced the CPE into law by means of Article 49.3 of the Constitution, which allows the Prime Minister to force a bill into law without a parliamentary vote. In numerous interviews he attempted to justify his decision as a necessary response to France’s unemployment crisis and as a means of encouraging employers to hire youths. “Youth unemployment is approaching 23% and remains one of the highest in Europe. We conceived the CPE for young people in difficulty, those who fill CDD (contrats a durées déterminés), internships, and periods of interim…” (LCI/TF1, 9 February 2006). From a business perspective, Henri Lachmann, the chairman of Schneider electrical goods claimed, “It’s [The CPE is] a way for French business to counterbalance the rigidity of the French labor market” (Tagliabue 11 May 2006). Despite the government’s efforts, the public was not convinced and retaliated in immense nation-wide protests. Finally in April 2006 the government caved into the pressure and revoked the reform.

The situation appeared to be improving with the election of Sarkozy in May 2007, as he attempted to consult social partners and take a coordinative approach to reform. Before even assuming his functions he requested a meeting with five of France’s major unions to discuss upcoming reforms. The secretary general of FO, Jean-Claude Mailly responded, “It’s a first. We will not reproach him and listen to what he has to say to us” (Libération 14 May 2007). However, successful negotiations seems to have been short lived as five of the eight French unions called a strike October 18 and again on November 14 to defend, this time, pension benefits (Le Monde 21 September 2007).

By contrast, an idea of consensus renders Swedes much less resistant to reform. "‘I think the fundamental aspect of the Scandinavian model is trust’ among the unions, the government and the people,” said Joakim Palme, an ‘expert’ on Nordic welfare systems and the son of the murdered prime minister, Olof Palme. “While many in France fear globalization, the Scandinavian experience has been to be positive to this change” (New York Times 10 May 2006). Why might this be the case? One important difference is that Sweden uses both coordinative and communicative discourse. Well
organized social partners and public sector workers, and powerful trade unions have allowed non-
state actors to contribute their input and lobby government officials before legislation is passed, in
turn giving approved laws a greater legitimacy. Sweden’s discourse is not fully coordinated though;
the state has had increasingly greater control over the welfare state, ever since the breakdown of
centralized bargaining in the early 1980’s. Since that time, the legitimizing discourse has been more
and more communicative (Schmidt 2000: 260-2).

Equality with regards to wages and gender has been the leitmotif of political discourse in
Sweden. Even reforms in the 1990’s, led to a trimming of the welfare state, but not a major re-
evaluation of egalitarian policies. Business has become increasingly active in promoting neo-liberal
reform but has not been successful in shifting public opinion on the welfare state. Throughout the
1990’s political discourse focused on the need for ‘social solidarity and the acceptance of moderate
cutbacks in the generosity of transfers’ (Schmidt 2000: 261). In 2005, former Social Democratic
Prime Minister Göran Persson, described the need to continue egalitarian social policies now at a time
when citizens confront uncertainty in the face of a more neoliberal world. "We live in a new age
where no one has protection, so we must have good insurance and a safety net even for those with
good salaries," (Nyheter and Dagbladet, 1 September 2005).

Concerning part-time work, public debate has centered on the treatment and rights of part-
time workers. The terms of labor contracts are largely set by unions, which dislike temporary and
part-time work (The Economist, 7 September 2006). Unions argue that part-time work should be an
option but that full-time work is a basic right that should be available to all citizens. In 2005, the trade
union Kommunal, which represents local council workers, campaigned for new legislation requiring
employers to give part-time workers full-time employment if they wished. Lars-Åke Almqvist, vice-
chairman of Kommunal, argued, "[T]here is a need for a new law, and then we can create solutions
using collective agreements in various sectors. The largest problem is the creation of new jobs; but it
is no answer to have jobs that don't give people enough to live on." Employers' organizations
countered this position with fierce lobbying of the government in attempt to maintain current
legislation. The Swedish Federation of Trade (SFT), which represents retailers, claimed the proposal was “an awful idea” and, if adopted, would lead to redundancies (Savage, 3 May 2005). In June 2006, debate erupted once again; this time over a proposed piece of legislation that would force employers to offer full-time jobs to any part-time worker who worked for them for three years or more. More recently, the budget presented at the end of September 2007 by the center-right coalition government plans to cutback a number of benefits, including unemployment benefits which can be accessed by part-time workers to cover the days they do not work. Currently, part-time workers can be compensated for up to 300 days, but as of January 1st 2008 they will only be able to receive compensation for 75 days per year. This measure has been widely criticized. The daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* recently reported that few people are content with these reforms. Stig-Björn Ljunggren, a political economist assures though that “the Right has accepted that the Swedes wish to preserve a model with a heavy taxation allowing access to social services, even if they preach more private solutions” (Le Monde 10 October 2007). According to the government, ”The point of this is to reduce overuse and reduce the risk of people becoming permanently locked into part-time work” (The Local 20 September 2007).

The key points to draw from these examples are firstly that extensive debate on the issue of part-time work and working time contracts exists in both countries, and secondly, that in both societies, people are displeased with cuts in their social benefits. Yet, reform is more or less grudgingly accepted in Sweden due to a culture of consensus, while in France it is passionately protested.
Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to explain why reforms concerning part-time and temporary work have been more successfully carried out, in that politicians have had an easier time implementing and justifying them, in Sweden than in France. I have argued that four principle factors shape a government’s ability to reform part-time work. First of all, Sweden’s social democratic welfare regime and France’s Christian democratic one link work and welfare differently. Part-time work and nonstandard work agreements are less acceptable in France because the majority of benefits can only be accessed through permanent full-time employment, while Sweden provides universal basic security and income security. In addition extensive government funded social programs and leave schemes provide generous social protection and childcare services, which ensure income and pension security. In retrenchment, although it is a general consensus that target benefits tend to be easier to cut than universal benefits because the constituency affected is smaller, this does not hold true in this case. Esping Andersen describes Christian democratic welfare regimes as ‘frozen landscapes’ reinforcing their own traits and rigidities. Palier distinguishes different abilities to implement reform between tax and contribution financed benefit schemes. In Sweden some benefits are tied to contributions but most are tax financed, while the French welfare state is mostly financed by payroll taxes. This partially accounts for France and Sweden’s differing success in implementing reforms that reduce benefits.

Secondly, politics, specifically social partners and political power distribution, contribute to the successful implementation of reforms. Sweden has well organized labor unions with high participation rates and relatively (to France) powerful social partners that influence decision making. France, instead, has fragmented labor unions and social partners, and the regulation of part-time work
is managed by the state. The history of political power distribution has also indirectly affected the generosity of welfare states. A long almost uninterrupted history of Social Democratic rule in Sweden partially explains the development of generous welfare benefits, while in France the more right-winged Gaullists constructed a more conservative welfare state, although still relatively generous compared to other continental European countries.

Thirdly, the level of women’s labor force participation influences the emphasis given to women friendly policies in national legislation on working time. Since most part-time workers are women, the strength and organization of the women’s labor force significantly affects the demand for, availability of, and legitimacy of part-time work. In France, women first tended towards full-time employment but in response to high unemployment in the late 1970’s were often forced into part-time work as a means of work-sharing. By contrast, starting as early as the 1930’s and into the 1960’s and 70’s, the Swedish government encouraged married women to enter the work-force as part-time workers, in response to the shortage of manpower and an expanding public sector.

Finally, French political decision-makers rarely negotiate with trade unions and social partners before implementing reforms and instead frequently try to explain and justify reforms to the public after they have occurred. This coupled with a culture of public protest is often a recipe for disaster and ends with politicians retracting reform legislation. On the other hand, Sweden has a much more coordinated discourse that allows social partners and labor unions a greater role in forming and proposing legislation which for obvious reason has a higher rate of public acceptance.

Resulting from these four factors, I have showed that distinct attitudes towards part-time work that have emerged between the two countries: in France part-time work is often viewed as an unfavorable form of employment, tainted with a notion of job insecurity and allocated to the most vulnerable members of society; while in Sweden it is perceived as a useful tool encouraging the entry of women into the labor market and promoting equality between women and men. This is not to imply that the employment situation in Sweden is ideal or without its own problems; nor is this a suggestion that France copy and paste the ‘Swedish Model’, in fact the four factors I have presented
in this paper advocate that national contexts differ greatly enough that this would be nearly impossible.

This study also raises a number of questions. First, what does France’s struggle mean for future reforms? Many of the existing academic writings and press articles on the French welfare state and the French economy explain that the labor market is overly rigid, that social security is financially unsupportable, and that reform of some sort is inevitable. President Sarkozy seems to be making steps towards improving the dialogue between the government, unions and social partners, but how valiant are these efforts and could he be overlooking other aspects/factors of the problem?

We can also ask what this might mean for European integration. The EU has asked member states to adopt employment directives on matters such as working hours, the right to full-time and part-time work, and the benefits allocated to workers. But, as it has no official power to enforce such measures, it can only encourage member states to cooperate through benchmarking and peer review, while member states’ national governments are alone responsible for adopting and implementing directives. What do diverse national contexts of part-time and temporary work mean for the harmonization of employment policy at the supranational level? Further research is needed to fully respond to this question, but it will likely mean that the adoption of EU directives will firstly face many challenges and secondly occur unevenly among member states.
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