Inequality, The Welfare State -- And What The People Think

Olaf Jürgens
DIW Berlin
Königin-Luise Straße 5
14195 Berlin
Tel.: ++49 30 89789 345
Fax: ++49 30 89789 109

The analysis deals with a cross-national analysis of economic inequality, the impact of the welfare state and the attitudes of the people towards redistribution in different European welfare state regimes. The basic question is, to what extend the actual amount of inequality and redistribution corresponds to preferences of the citizens. The theoretical background consists of a modified version of Esping-Andersen's welfare state typology: it differentiates between a conservative model consisting of the South European latin rim states and a conservative-etatist variant, a liberal model including an additional individualistic, semi-etatist subtype, and the Scandinavian model. The analysis evaluates the distributive consequences of social justice conceptions which can be identified within these different welfare states with special reference to different dimensions (such as labour market participation or education) and to different risk groups. The data-base consists of the ECHP, the ISSP 1996, official OECD data and register data. The actual social justice conceptions are statistically evaluated in the different spheres of distributive justice using the ISSP data (International Social Science Project). Then, the welfare state's performance over time in the different spheres of distributive justice is statistically analyzed on the basis of both the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) and official OECD data. Besides the national level, also a regional level is considered using social assistance spell data (where available) to evaluate social minimum standards (as one dimension of distributive justice) on the basis of social assistance spell data for selected European cities. The selected countries under study are Finland, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy. Methods range from simple descriptive models to more advanced logit models for cross-sectional and longitudinal data. The waves covering the years 1997 to 2001 are used.