

# **New report finds Europe-wide shift towards weaker job security and employment support**

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New research from the University of Sheffield has found that across the EU there has been a significant shift towards weaker job security and employment support since the global financial crisis.

Analysis of data from 19 European states by researchers at the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI) shows that governments across the EU have increased labour market flexibility by weakening and removing employee protections, but have not increased support to help people back into the labour market.

Professor Jason Heyes, co-author of the report, said: "In post-crisis Europe there has been a significant policy shift towards a more liberal model of weaker job security and increased labour market flexibility. This is a continent-wide trend and the UK is at the forefront.

"Britain's highly flexible labour market used to be an outlier in Europe but now other countries' systems are looking more like ours."

He added: "Across European Union states it has become easier to lay-off workers, adult training and education provision is declining, and social security systems are being restructured with greater conditionality and 'workfare' approaches to benefit entitlements."

The report identifies a European-wide trend, but finds that the most dramatic shifts have been in southern Eurozone countries that have received financial bailouts.

Dr Thomas Hastings, co-author of the report, added: "The 'European Social Model' of strong employee protection and state support to help people back into work appears to be unravelling. No country bucks the trends of moving away from this model.

"Austerity economic policies are being prioritised over social policies, and this is seen most clearly in the southern states of Spain, Portugal and Greece where the Troika has demanded strict reforms."

The report's findings raise serious questions about the viability of the EU's 'flexicurity' agenda which underpins the European Commission's social policy and [labour market](#) programmes.

Flexicurity is based on the idea that modern labour markets should be flexible but should also offer strong support and security for workers.

Professor Heyes said: "Unless the European Commission and national governments start to remake the case for flexicurity then the prospects for its implementation across Europe look gloomy. However, this would require governments and the Troika to reverse their commitment to austerity and there are no signs that this is at all likely."

Today's publication is co-authored by Jason Heyes and Thomas Hastings and is the third publication in a new series of SPERI Global Political Economy Briefs.

Through this series SPERI will present the expertise of its academic researchers and enable SPERI to influence and contribute to public debates on major contemporary global [political economy](#) issues.

**More information:** [speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/wp-content... -for-flexicurity.pdf](http://speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/SPERI-Global-Political-Economy-Briefs-2013-14-for-flexicurity.pdf)

Provided by University of Sheffield

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