

INTRODUCTION

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This year, *In Focus* addresses the issue of public works. The scale of Hungarian public works is unique in Europe both in terms of the number of participants and expenditure. By 2015, the government has envisaged the employment of some 200 thousands participants from a 270 billion forints budgetary support. The public works programme has been the most important employment policy of the period since 2010, and therefore analysing its short- and long-term effects is an important task. This part consists of two chapters: the first summarises international experiences, the second presents the facts and available research findings pertaining to the Hungarian public works. In *Chapter 1 Judit Kálmán* gives an overview about the international experiences of public works. She presents the motives, goals and theoretical background of public works, and reviews the design and results of evaluations of some concrete public works programmes in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness.

The chapter is supplemented by three *Boxes* which present in detail the programmes of countries or group of countries that run notable public works programmes. These texts also summarise the results of evaluations of these programmes.

In *Box K.1.1 Ágota Scharle* presents the most important characteristics of Slovak public works programmes, in *Box K.1.2 Judit Kálmán* does the same for the Argentinian ones, and in *Box K.1.3 Tamás Bakó* for the Scandinavian ones. The authors also summarise the most important evaluation results of respective programmes provided they are available.

Chapter 2 of *In Focus* deals with the Hungarian public works programme. In *Section 2.1. Katalin Bördős* sums up the *regulations* and amendments of certain forms of public works that have been in place in different periods since the regime change. The section deals separately with the system before 2011, and the one after 2011 that has involved uniform public works. It covers the regulations and institutional changes of certain forms of public works as well as their respective implementations.

In *Section 2.2 Irén Busch and Katalin Bördős* takes account of the most important data sources on public works with regard to participation and cost figures. The section provides an overview of the types of territorial (national, local) or individual level data available in each period, evaluates each data source in terms of their reliability, and briefly addresses the possibilities of data analysis. In *Section 2.3 Zsombor Cseres-Gergely and György Molnár* review the *basic facts* with regards to public employment. The authors assess

public works participation as an episode of the customer journey in public employment services leading, possibly, to employment on the open job market. They analyse participation rates in the public employment service for each programme, including public works, and track the typical journey of the unemployed belonging to different groups and having different observable characteristics.

In *Section 2.4 Luca Koltai* analyses the *values of public works employers*. It gives an account of the staff of organisations operating public works programmes by rendering their opinions, expectations, identified goals and perceived effects of the public works programmes. In *Section 2.5*, based on a particularly large national administration panel data base, *János Köllő* provides an analysis on the rate of public workers in the end of 2011, and assesses to what extent these individuals worked prior to 2011 in “real”, that is, non-public works related positions. The *Section* examines the *extent real and public works contributed to the employment* of public workers, then analyses the frequency and length of real employment relationships.

In *Section 2.6* the study of *Zsombor Cseres-Gergely* describes who participates in public works programmes, and analyses the extent these programmes are implemented in line with their declared aims, whether they really reach out to the long-term unemployed and improve the employability of participants by temporary work opportunities.

In *Section 2.7 Márton Czirfusz* addresses the territorial inequalities of public works, and seeks to answer the question of whether the transformed and extended system of public works after 2008 has reproduced spatial inequalities.

In *Section 2.8 Irén Busch* reviews the most important data of winter public works that is aimed at decreasing the seasonality of public works. In *Section 2.9 Zsombor Cseres-Gergely and György Molnár* examine the individual and environmental factors related to exit from public works. The authors take into account which factors are related to exit to the open, non-public works-related job market, and which are the ones impeding that process. Furthermore, they also analyse the factors that lead to returning to public works, registered or unregistered unemployment, in contrast to employment in the open labour market.

Finally, the paper by *János Köllő* in *Section 2.10* examines the potential re-integration of public workers from the perspective of who they work together with: whether in genuine work organisations, with peers employed in the primary labour market, or in separate public works units. While the former may facilitate the opportunities for job seekers and employers to find each other, separation does not give an opportunity for employers to form an opinion regarding the skills and productivity of public workers in a genuine work environment, which can hinder the reintegration of public workers, and their transition from welfare to work.

The compiled analyses in *In Focus* examine public works from various angles. More detailed and evidence-based analyses are currently not available about public works in Hungary. The international overview enables us to assess the Hungarian programme also in the light of international experiences. We hope that this collection of studies will support a more evidence-based platform for decision making in public policy and enable professionals in the field to use the research findings presented. Likewise, we hope that the non-professional audience interested in the topic may also acquaint themselves with the nature, results and problems of public works.