

Party's Construction of Deservingness in Minimum Income Scheme Reforms: Framing through deservingness Criteria in Germany and Austria

Bettina Leibetseder

Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften Landshut

Recent reforms of minimum income programs have emphasized increased targeting and conditionality. (Bahle 2021; Collado et al. 2019). Framing welfare recipients as less or more deserving helps policymakers present their causal interpretation, their conception of the target population, and their solution to these problems to the public. (Esmark/Schoop 2017; Guetzkow 2010) So far, research on deservingness has identified the framing of deservingness in the population, highlighting deservingness criteria that depend on class, level of sanctions, and party preferences and institutional structure, among others. (Buss 2018; Heuer/Zimmermann 2020; Laenen/Rossetti/van Oorschot 2019; Linden 2021). This raises the question of how political actors use distinctive criteria to justify policy positions and gain legitimacy. Therefore, I want to analyze the interaction of ideological standpoints and the construction of deservingness in cases of guarantee or exclusion reforms of minimum income schemes, using an updated version of Oorschot's Carin grid (control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need), which integrates social investment and welfare chauvinism in two reform cases in Austria (2010 and 2019) and Germany (2004 and 2022) that either expanded or reduced social rights. Combining conceptual and data-driven strategies, key parliamentary debates are examined using quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff 2013) and compared to the ascribed ideological positions in the minimum income schemes of political parties, identifying the selective use of distinctive criteria of deservingness to support their agenda. A first, not yet quantitative analysis of the material shows the delicate position of the social democrats in the reforms, as they emphasize reciprocity and try to support minimum income recipients somehow through social

investments, but maintain the distinction to the social insurance system. The Christian Democrats, on the other hand, support the meritocratic system and strongly criticize the lack of social insurance contributions. The Christian Democrats separate deservingness based on merit and out of this construct an identity of makers and takers, while the far-right parties emphasize national identity in this regard. Recognizing the target population as fully deserving across all criteria is limited to Green or radical left parties that do not maintain a distinction based on reciprocity and indicate high need across all recipients.

Bahle, Thomas (2021): Mindestsicherung im europäischen Vergleich. In: Blank, Florian/Schäfer, Claus/Spannagel, Dorothee (Hrsg.) Grundsicherung Weiterdenken. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, S. 245-63.

Buss, Christopher (2018): Public opinion towards targeted labour market policies: A vignette study on the perceived deservingness of the unemployed. In: Journal of European Social Policy, 29, H. 2, 228-40.

Collado, Diego/Cantillon, Bea/Van den Bosch, Karel/Goedemé, Tim/Vandelannoote, Dieter (2019): The End of Cheap Talk About Poverty Reduction: The Cost of Closing the Poverty Gap While Maintaining Work Incentives. In: Cantillon, Bea/Goedemé, Tim/Hills, John (Hrsg.) Decent Incomes for All. New York: Oxford University Press.

Esmark, Anders/Schoop, Sarah R. (2017): Deserving social benefits? Political framing and media framing of 'deservingness' in two welfare reforms in Denmark. In: Journal of European Social Policy, 27, H. 5, 417-32.

Guetzkow, Joshua (2010): Beyond Deservingness: Congressional Discourse on Poverty, 1964—1996. In: The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 629, H. 1, 173-97.

Heuer, Jan-Ocko/Zimmermann, Katharina (2020): Unravelling deservingness: Which criteria do people use to judge the relative deservingness of welfare target groups? A vignette-based focus group study. In: Journal of European Social Policy, 30, H. 4, 389-403.

Krippendorff, Klaus (2013): Content analysis : an introduction to its methodology (3. ed. ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Laenen, Tijs/Rossetti, Federica/van Oorschot, Wim (2019): Why deservingness theory needs qualitative research: Comparing focus group discussions on social welfare in three welfare regimes. In: International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 60, H. 3, 190-216.

Linden, Philipp (2021): Wie viel Geld ist angemessen? eine Vignettenstudie zur Akzeptanz von Sanktionen im SGB II. In: WSI-Mitteilungen, 74, H. 6, 454-62.