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Responsibilisation, social work and inclusive social security in Finland

Abstract

In this article responsibilisation is studied in social work by analysing two Finnish state-level policy documents (called final report and research report) which concern a current activation initiative called inclusive social security (ISS). It is asked how social workers and clients are constructed as responsible subjects in these documents. Responsibilisation refers to the advanced liberal mode of governmentality, which aims to strengthen citizens' abilities to self-governance through various techniques that include the intertwined elements of surveillance and empowerment. It is demonstrated that the policy documents construct the social workers' and the clients' responsibilities partly in different ways. The final report leads activation to be based on shared responsibility and social work to be more community-based, whereas the research report strengthens more individual-based responsibility of clients and social workers. For the clients the interpretation of ISS based on shared responsibility would probably be less stigmatising and paternalistic than the one based on individual responsibilities, i.e. approaching long-term unemployed citizens as being personally 'at risk' and thus a justified target group of individualised techniques for activation. For social workers and clients future activation appears to be a wide mix of different techniques, moral expectations and possible ways of being a responsible subject.

Introduction

‘On whose responsibility?’ has been one of the core questions during the last three decades in discussions concerning the future of the welfare state. *Responsibilisation* is a concept that has increasingly been used and developed in these discussions. The origin of the concept can be found in the governmentality literature that draws especially on Rose and Miller’s writings (e.g. Rose, 1990, 2000; Miller & Rose, 2008) and, through them, in Foucault’s writings (e.g. 1988, 1991). Foucault approaches governmentality as ‘techniques and procedures for directing human behavior’ (Rose, O’Malley, & Valverde, 2006, p.1). Responsibilisation in turn refers to the advanced liberal mode of governmentality, which aims to produce active citizenship by strengthening citizens’ abilities to self-governance through various techniques that include intertwined elements of surveillance and empowerment.

The concept of responsibilisation has been applied in various settings such as when creating an ‘active welfare state’ where entitlements to benefits are conditioned upon the adoption of certain kinds of behavior (Barnett, 2003) and when analysing the relationship between the political construction of the ‘active citizen’ and the experiences of food bank users and volunteers (Garthwait, 2017). Responsibilisation has also been approached as an interactive accomplishment of professionals and clients at the margins of the welfare service (Juhila, Raitakari, & Hall, 2017).

In this article we study responsibilisation in social work by analysing the Finnish state-level policy documents concerning a current activation initiative called *inclusive social security* (from now on ISS), which is targeted especially at long-term unemployed citizens. For the time being ISS in Finland is without a valid, specific law. However, the first pilot projects were launched in 2014, and the next ones are planned to begin in 2018. ISS is not just specific to Finland. It has been introduced in many western welfare states as a promising technology in the battle against long-term unemployment and social exclusion and as one solution for sustainability in societies that are facing challenges in regard to austerity and increasing expenses due to an aging population and low workforce rates. ISS is also presented as an alternative to the traditional activation policies that are said to be inadequate for employing citizens who are at risk of social exclusion and for preventing externality from working life (Hiilamo et al., 2017). ISS is a political initiative that strengthens the

conditionality and reciprocity of services and brings together public employment services and social services (including social work).

The ISS policy documents examined in this article mark out the future prospects of social work by (re)defining both clients' and social workers' responsibilities in the context of activation. Notably, the documents are based on the idea of active citizenship, which means that those citizens who are seen to be 'passive' and at risk of social exclusion become the targets of particular guidance and surveillance steered by the Government and carried out by social workers. We analyse the responsabilisation in ISS documents from the point of view of social work and ask *how social workers and clients are constructed as responsible subjects in them*.

The article is structured as follows. We begin by creating a theoretical framework based on the concept of responsabilisation and in particular on responsibility projects that shed light on the role of social work in responsabilisation. Then we describe the relations between activation policies and responsabilisation, after which we present the data and their analysis. Following this we present the findings of our analysis and then conclude by summarising and reflecting critically on the different ways of constructing social workers and clients as responsible subjects in the documents.

Responsibility projects and social work

According to O'Malley (2009) the concept of responsabilisation as developed in the governmentality literature refers to:

The process whereby subjects are rendered individually responsible for a task which previously would have been the duty of another – usually a state agency – or would not have been recognized as a responsibility at all. The process is strongly associated with neoliberal political discourses, where it takes on the implication that the subject being responsabilized has avoided this duty or the responsibility has been taken away from them in the welfare state era and managed by an expert or government agency. (p. 276)

A mode of governmentality that is based on responsabilisation resonates with the premises of active citizenship (e.g. Ilcan, 2009; Juhila, Raitakari, & Hall, 2017; Newman & Tonkens, 2011) that emphasise taking responsibility for oneself and others instead of being dependent on welfare state and its safety nets. All citizens are objects of responsabilisation. We are expected to govern our own lives according to the expectations of the 'normal' and 'good' life. There are, for example, governmental instructions on what constitutes a healthy diet as well as various experts such as counsellors who help to make wise choices for attaining a better life in complex situations. The aim of this kind of responsabilisation may be to empower citizens to become strong actors in the fragmented and plural western societies. Lemke (2001, p. 201) argues that social risks (such as illness, unemployment and poverty) have been transformed into problems of personalised self-care. Citizens' responsabilisation is thus linked to the retreat, 'irresponsibilisation', of the public governance and to the shifting of responsibilities to individuals and communities (Cradock, 2007, p. 162; Liebenberg, Ungar, & Ikeda, 2015; Peeters, 2017).

Responsibilisation is also accomplished in a more focused way by the control, guidance and support conducted by different welfare professionals including social workers. This kind of responsabilisation is targeted at citizens who are categorised as unable to make responsible life choices or unwilling to meet the requirements of active citizenship. They are often defined as being at risk of social exclusion. There is a growing tendency to develop various institutional and professional enabling programmes that seek to strengthen the responsibilities of 'citizens at risk' in their own lives. These programmes can be named as *responsibility projects* (Ilcan, 2009, pp. 220–221; Juhila, Raitakari, & Hansen Löfstrand, 2017, pp. 19–22). In these projects welfare professionals work in close contact with clients and try to promote the expected changes in clients' lives, thinking and behaviour patterns by using various techniques such as education, encouragement, interviews, assessments, agreements and plans. The focused responsabilisation is targeted at people who are often categorised for example as long-term unemployed citizens, (former) prisoners and people with mental health, substance abuse or housing problems (Kemshall, 2002; Muncie, 2006, pp. 780–781; Pollack, 2010; Teghtsoonian, 2009, p. 29). When the responsibility projects emphasise individual conduct they move the focus away from structural exclusion and social explanations of individual adversities (see Ferguson, 2007, pp. 395–397; Scoular & O'Neill, 2007, pp. 770–771). They also easily divide citizens into polarised categories, such as 'independent' and 'dependent' or 'compliant' and 'incompliant' (e.g. Lantz & Marston, 2012; Liebenberg et al., 2015).

Applying specific techniques of responsabilisation for those categorised as ‘risky citizens’ has a long history in western societies. However, in advanced liberal responsibility projects welfare professionals are increasingly seen as being personally responsible for recognising risks and transforming ‘risky citizens’ into more self-governed and active citizens (Pollack, 2010). The clients, for their part, have a responsibility to strengthen their independence and capabilities to make better risk assessments and life choices as well as to become more active and integrated members of society. In this sense welfare professionals and clients are mutually dependent, as clients have to help workers to help themselves (Matarese, 2009; Juhila, Raitakari, & Hansen Löfstrand, 2017, p. 26). Mutual dependency between social workers and clients is maintained by the Government’s steering practices such as performance auditing, which emphasises social workers’ responsibility to effectively promote clients’ activation and participation in the society. However, social workers can achieve these expected results only if clients are able and willing to act towards the aims of being responsible, active and participating subjects. The participants have an option to resist the expectations of the responsibility projects, such as the ISS, but this puts them at risk of being labelled as ‘bad clients’ and ‘bad social workers’.

Extending sphere of activation and responsabilisation

Many European countries increased the use of active labour market policies in the 1990s, yet significant variations are found across different countries. As Heidenreich and Graziano state (2014, p 1): ‘[...] the notion of activation has been used extensively in order to characterise new types of employment policies’. Common to these policies is that they oblige the unemployed citizen to participate in various programs and measurements – responsibility projects – that are meant to promote activity, participation, ‘workability’ and ‘work readiness’ in return for unemployment benefits and social security. Finland has also a long history of active labour market policies (Keskitalo 2008; Sama et al. 2017, pp. 3–4; Karjalainen & Saikku, 2011)

Activation policies comprise conflicting objectives, expectations and techniques. Hence it is no wonder that a wide range of justifications have been expressed for and against these policies. These range from the authoritative enforcement and ‘no work, no pay’ and ‘carrot

and stick' viewpoints to the viewpoints of how well-organised activation programmes reduce social exclusion and increase the probability of returning to the labour market. Accordingly, there are 'softer' and 'harder' interpretations of activation (Keskitalo & Karjalainen, 2013, pp. 11–12; Sama et al., 2017, p. 4). The 'harder' interpretation emphasises the use of coercive measures to increase workforce involvement, whereas the 'softer' one emphasises making investments to decrease social exclusion and promote social inclusion. Despite these differences, activation policies are in general assumed to give rise to savings in public expenditures and bring about positive outcomes in regard to citizens' living conditions, health, self-esteem, well-being as well as to their integration into society (Breidahl & Clement, 2010; Inclusive social security, 2015, pp. 40–42).

In the 1980s and 1990s activation was targeted at those citizens with no serious problems besides unemployment. Since then the ideas of activation have extended to the sphere of social and welfare policies and practices (Karjalainen & Saikku, 2011; Heidenreich & Graziano, 2014, p. 1; Hultqvist & Nørup, 2017). For that reason employment, social and welfare policies have increasingly been intertwined and focused on activating various social groups such as the long-term unemployed, women, younger and older people, migrants, young mothers, the unskilled and the disabled (Heidenreich & Graziano, 2014; Lantz & Marston 2012). Due to these developments the obligations and terms of getting services and benefits have tightened: the relationship between rights and responsibilities for unemployed citizens and other social groups has been redefined (Breidahl & Clement, 2010). The demand of active, responsible citizenship has been extended to concern also the most excluded citizens that need social support and benefits but who often have the least resources to reach the requirements of the activation policies (Keskitalo & Karjalainen, 2013).

Activation policies as a whole can be seen to imply and realise responsabilisation targeted to 'risky citizens' in various responsibility projects. The policies direct the citizens to be active and responsible by both investing in them as well as by forcing them to adapt the 'right' course of action towards labour market involvement and inclusion in society. Activation policies emphasise strict regulations and individualised follow-up procedures, reciprocity, rewards, sanctions and agreements as techniques to affect unemployed citizens' conduct. Welfare professionals and especially social workers are commonly the ones responsible for putting these activation policies into practice in face-to face encounters with clients.

Analysing the state-level policy documents

ISS is briefly mentioned in the Finnish Government Programme 2015 and in Government Action Plan 2017–2019 as one of the Government’s key projects (Finland, a land of solutions, 2015; Finland, a land of solutions, 2017; see also Europe 2020 Strategy, 2016, pp. 20, 32). More thorough descriptions of these recent ideas of ISS can be found in two state-level policy documents. At the time there are no other detailed documents available. So these two documents serve as our empirical material for analysing the connections between social work, responsabilisation and the political initiative of ISS. The two documents are as follows: 1) *Inclusive social security: Final report of the task force* (published by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in 2015) and 2) *Four models for inclusive social security in Finland* (printed in a series of publications concerning the Government’s analysis, assessment and research activities [Hiilamo et al., 2017]).

The origin of the *Inclusive social security: Final report of the task force* (from this on final report) goes back to 2013 when the National Institute for Health and Welfare set up an expert group commissioned by Minister Paula Risikko to think about ways to include more incentives in the current Finnish social security system and to make it more activating. As a result Antti Parpo, a member of the group, presented preliminary ideas of ISS, which led to setting up a ministry-led task force to develop the ideas further. The task force launched pilot projects in six regions and wrote a final report. The final report includes 55 pages and is available only in the Finnish language. It starts with a description of the present state of the national unemployment services and social security benefits and continues by depicting the pilot projects and conclusions drawn from them. The last part of the report is based on previous research findings that address the (economical) effectiveness of activation. The final report describes ISS as a new initiative of activation policy in Finland.

Following the work of the task group that produced the final report in March 2015, the Prime Minister’s office awarded University of Helsinki, Department of Social Sciences the task of evaluating and proposing specific models for ISS in Finland. A research group published in Finnish a research report called *Four models for inclusive social security in Finland* (from now on called the research report) (Hiilamo et al., 2017), which includes as an attachment a literature review in English called *Inclusive social security – ideas and models in Finland, The Netherlands, Denmark and Germany* (Sama et al., 2017). The research report includes 33

pages, and the attachment of 36 pages. The research report presents the current employment services and benefits in Finland, applications of ISS in other European countries and previous research on the effectiveness of activation policies. It comprises a chapter ‘Inclusive social security model in Finland – Participant income’ that is (at this moment) the most detailed description of the ideas of ISS in the Finnish context and is thus a key piece of text for this article (Hiilamo et al., 2017, pp. 17–23).

When analysing the realities and relations constructed in the documents we lean on the concept of responsabilisation as developed in the governmentality literature. We pay specific attention on how social workers and clients are constructed as responsible subjects in the policy documents. The challenge within advanced liberal governance is ‘to find means by which individuals may be made responsible through their individual choices for themselves and those to whom they owe allegiance’ (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 214; see also Hansen Löffstrand & Juhila, 2012). Accordingly, the analysis has been focused on such pieces of texts in the documents that include notions of the distribution of responsibilities and the use of specific techniques to regulate social workers’ and clients’ conduct in the context of ISS.

We conducted the analysis by reading the policy documents carefully and picking out all the sentences and sections dealing with the responsibilities of different stakeholders, especially social workers and clients in the context of ISS. The documents include a lot of discussion for instance about current service systems, unemployment benefits and international activation models that are not relevant material for the analysis. Hence, the text material to be studied in detail turned out to be quite definite. In the next two sections we present and analyse all pieces from the documents that are relevant in regard to our theoretical framework and the research question.

Towards inclusive social security and active citizenship by means of sharing responsibilities

This section is based on a final report *Inclusive social security: Final report of the task force* (2015). It makes visible critical questions that are to be solved when implementing ISS and how ISS comprises a mix of governing techniques. The first question is whether or not the objective of labour market integration is expected to be the first priority and aim for those unemployed citizens suffering from severe social or health problems. The question illustrates the tricky interconnectedness of employment, social and welfare policies. However, as seen

from the piece of text below, in spite of the anticipated and recognised difficulties in labour market integration the objective itself is not to be abandoned, but whenever it is possible the target groups of ISS should be supported and directed step by step by using low-threshold strategies to reach the ultimate goal of activation. Although the text does not address any actual actor, it still clearly constructs a ‘good’ and ‘responsible’ worker that leads the client forwards:

The aim of inclusive social security is to make the first step of participation as easy as possible. The target group consists of people outside the labour force, whose primary goal is not necessarily to find a job due to serious social and/or health reasons. However, the participant is always, when possible, supported in his/her progress towards a working life and the job market.

(Inclusive social security, 2015, p. 46)

The second question is located between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ activation policies, between ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ approaches. This question is present in the final report in reflecting the pilots’ ability to balance the voluntariness and conditionality of ISS. These aspects of ISS are not defined as being mutually excluded. On the contrary, they are both seen to fit the ISS as crucial elements that are in line with the advanced liberal way of governing. Voluntariness is realised for instance in the possibility for long-term unemployed citizens to choose where and how they want to participate. Participation is also encouraged with small incentive ‘carrots’, such as bus tickets and free lunches that can be seen as techniques to guide an individual’s decision making in a desired direction. Nevertheless, sanctioning ‘sticks’ (e.g. reducing the amount of employment benefit) are simultaneously part of ISS; when a person refuses to carry out activities agreed in the individual activation plan. Thus, sanctions can be pivotal techniques for carrying out activation plans. The long-term unemployed client is constructed as one needing recourses and opportunities in order to be able to make such responsible choices that serve their inclusion:

The experiences of the workers and participants in the pilots highlighted the fact that voluntariness is not unequivocally the opposite of obligatoriness. Despite being obligatory, rehabilitative work activity can be carried out as a voluntary activity by enabling people to choose where and when they participate, and by not employing

sanctions. These principles were followed in the pilots. However, sanctions are always possible if a person opts out of activities agreed on in the activation plan. (...) Participation is voluntary and declining or terminating participation will not affect a person's social security. Possible incentives for participation include offering meals, bus tickets or transportation. (...) The work force sees that unemployed persons must be offered opportunities to contemplate and make choices for their own well-being and to promote their inclusion.

(Inclusive social security, 2015, pp. 30, 46, 50)

The third crucial question dealt with thoroughly in the final report is on whose responsibility it is to organise inclusive activities and participation possibilities for the long-term unemployed citizens. It is stated clearly that municipalities have the main responsibility to organise and coordinate ISS activities in close collaboration with non-governmental organisations (Inclusive social work, 2015, p. 46). The important lesson to learn from the pilots is that not only should the social welfare sector be responsible for organising the options and places for participation, but other municipal sectors and different non-governmental actors also should be. This kind of a mixed activation model including multiple actors is defined as cost effective and adequate. It is based on the idea of shared responsibilities; not only social workers and clients are made responsible but ultimately the whole community:

Inclusive social security is a misleading term since it possibly implies that organising activities that promote inclusion is the sole responsibility of social services. In this sense as well, the pilots demonstrated the limitations of rehabilitative work activity. They included many activities more suited to be run by adult education centres or culture and sports services. This would enable the containment and smart allocation of expenses. (...) Activities could include guided group activity, open group activity, courses, meeting places, recreational spaces etc. Offering such activities requires the municipalities to allocate human resources or to obtain those resources in the third sector because the participants need support, guidance and counselling.

(Inclusive social security, 2015, pp. 30, 46)

To conclude, our interpretation is that the final report represents more a 'soft' than a 'hard' interpretation of activation by emphasising the following aspects of ISS: prevention of social

exclusion, importance of social support, voluntariness, sufficient level of public investments and the importance of low-threshold opportunities for participation for everyone. Nevertheless, the final report also constructs long-term unemployed citizens as a focus of step-by-step responsabilisation and as a responsible subject. A true and stable labour market position and active citizenship is presented as an ideal aim, although it is admitted that reaching this aim often takes time and includes various phases. But not just long-term unemployed citizens but also municipalities and various non-governmental actors are allocated to have responsibilities, for example to arrange meaningful places for participation with reasonable costs. Hence, long-term unemployed citizens are not seen as solely, personally responsible for 'breaking' into working life and communities. The core message of the final report is that active citizens can be created by means of sharing responsibilities: ISS is about transforming society to be active, supportive and inclusive.

Despite the idea of shared responsibility welfare professionals do not play a large part in the final report, and on the whole responsibilities are not distributed specifically to particular professions. The term social worker is mentioned only three times and social work is not mentioned at all. All three mentions are in the description of the current context of public employment and social services, not in the visioning of ISS. Hence, social workers are not direct targets of responsabilisation in this policy document. That is mostly due to the fact that the final report does not make any concrete proposal for an realization of ISS in Finland. However, the final report recommends many practices whose enforcement seems to necessitate that social workers and other professionals who support long-term unemployed citizens should take the first steps in promoting participation; through advising clients when making choices concerning where and how to fulfil the participation obligations of ISS, making agreements and activation plans with the clients or by assessing the justification of sanctions in such cases where these obligations are declined.

Participation income as an example of a targeted responsibility project

In the other policy document, *Four models for inclusive social security in Finland*, a key term in planning the ISS model is participation income (PI) that was originally used in the Finnish discussions by Ohto Kanninen (2014). Anthony Atkinson (1996) had previously used the same concept to introduce such a basic income model that obligates the citizen to engage in socially beneficial activities in order to be entitled to the benefit (see also Sama et al., 2017).

This kind of conditionality is also the basic idea of PI introduced in the research report. At the macro-level PI strives to extend what is understood as ‘work’ in Western societies (Hiilamo, 2014). Hence, the research report suggests a wide variety of activities that can be accepted as entitled to PI, such as voluntary work, rehabilitative work and studying in various institutions. In limited cases also informal child or elderly care may be considered as acceptable activities. From the point of view of responsabilisation it is essential, as De Wispelaere and Stirton (2007, p. 526) stress, to ask: ‘[...] how (and by whom) the precise scope of participation is to be determined’ and ‘[...] how compliance is to be enforced’.

According to the research report PI would be targeted at long-term unemployed citizens that are in a difficult labour market situation and at young unemployed citizens that are at risk of social exclusion (Hiilamo et al., 2017, p. 10). PI can thus be characterized as a targeted responsibility project. The target group is estimated to be about 90 000 citizens in Finland (Hiilamo et al., 2017, pp. 18–19). What is notable is that social work is addressed as a key profession for putting PI into practice – to support, assess and monitor the aforementioned target groups’ participation endeavours in society and communities. Social workers are thus positioned as responsible subjects for translating PI to concrete activation instruments. The research report offers objectives and techniques for making this translation, which we examine in the following.

First, PI is described as a ‘new service and social benefit package’ and as an ‘instrument’ to be implemented in social work for activation and empowerment (Hiilamo et al., 2017, pp. 18, 20). PI is understood as a social service distinct from the employment services, though it serves also the aims of employment policies. This ‘package’ is said to include particular responsibilities, tasks and activities for social workers to conduct, such as giving instructions, making agreements and assessing the clients’ progress, all of which can be recognised as familiar techniques used in responsibility projects. Social workers are expected to help, encourage and motivate clients to achieve their goals concerning suitable participation – and simultaneously to oversee and control their activation endeavours. All this should be based on trust and shared agreements between social workers and clients and allow solutions that fit clients’ personal paths towards active citizenship. So, the combination of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ measures in directing the citizens defined as socially excluded or as being at risk of social exclusion is in the core of targeted responsabilisation:

The services associated with participation income would be administered by social services and would be separate from employment services. Social workers in municipalities and later in regions (from the beginning of 2019) would employ participation income as an instrument of activation and empowerment. The service package associated with participation income would comprise guidance, instructions, agreements about participatory activities and the monitoring of participation (see more in the Sanctions section). The social worker's job would be to help, support and encourage the clients to choose an activity that best suits them and support the clients in achieving their goals. Social workers would monitor participation. The monitoring should not be too controlling, rather it should be based on trust that the participants will honour the agreements made.

(Hiilamo et al., 2017, pp. 20–21)

Second, within the service package a service plan is the most important technique for implementing PI. Making plans includes an idea of progress towards expected and desired aims, in this case towards more participating and active citizenship. The research report directs social workers and clients to make the service plan in collaboration. The plans should individualise and define the activities in which the long-term unemployed citizens agree to take part in return for PI benefit. Both social workers and clients should assess the realisation of the plans on a regular basis. In practice, plan making and assessment would include regular negotiations between the long-term unemployed citizens and social workers. These practices make long-term unemployed citizens accountable and responsible for their life choices and the possible problems that may arise from these. In turn, social workers from their part are responsible for asking questions and making inquiries and assessments related to progress in reaching (workforce) participation objectives. Social workers and clients are thus constructed as being mutually dependent on each other in fulfilling the expectations and duties of ISS:

A service plan would be created for each client's participatory activity. In the beginning, the plan would outline the client's goals, activity and contextual factors. The social worker and the client would do the first evaluation while drafting the service plan. The second evaluation would be carried out when reviewing the results (for example after 6 months). In the second evaluation, the client would be asked to what extent they feel they have reached their goals, what kind of participatory income-related activities they have participated in and which factors have supported

or obstructed their participation. Through the evaluation of individual cases, it is possible to monitor changes in the client's situation and identify factors that have prompted possible positive or negative changes. Each time when creating a service plan, other available employment-promoting services would be discussed (for example work try-outs and pay subsidy). (Hiilamo et al., 2017, p. 21)

Third, the power to make consequential assessments of a demanded amount of participation would be delegated to social workers in PI. This means that they would be given discretion and responsibility to define and evaluate what is approved in each individual case as a sufficient and beneficial amount of participation and activity. Social workers would decide when the criteria for being an 'active enough citizen' for receiving PI are obtained, and thus they are constructed as decision-makers and 'gatekeepers':

The intensity of participation required for participation income (how many hours a day, how many days a week) would be determined by the social worker.
(Hiilamo et al., 2017, p. 20)

Forth, in addition to having the power to assess the intensiveness of each client's participation, social workers would be in a position to decide on a sanction embedded in PI; namely on transferring such clients who refuse to participate in any kind of activities from the active to 'passive level' of PI (meaning also a lower level of benefit). Although these transitions should be based on negotiations and agreements between social workers and clients, social workers have the ultimate power in using the financial sanctioning measure: they are the ones drawing the line between the active and passive level and putting plausible sanctions into force. For the long-term unemployed citizens the choice of non-participation is made unpleasant and consequential and there are limits to clients' choice and will. It is recognised in the research report that sanctions are easily targeted at the most disadvantaged citizens – and this results in an ethical problem. In line with the fundamental ethical premises of social work, it is stated that citizens getting sanctions require also support. Hence, the report addresses a common dilemma in social work: the responsibility to protect and care as well as monitor and set boundaries to unwanted behaviour:

If a client belonging to the target group will decline to participate in any type of activity or cooperation after discussions, they may receive a passive-level

participation income, which would be an amount equal to basic social assistance. The client and the social worker agree that the client will opt out of participatory activities and that the participatory income will remain on a passive level. (...) The client will receive a passive-level participation income until they express they intend to participate and make an agreement of their participation with a social worker. (...) Some of those who decline participation activities are in the most vulnerable positions, and they may suffer from coping problems, substance abuse and mental health issues. They require special support. (Hiilamo et al., 2017, pp. 22)

In sum, our interpretation is that PI has many characteristics of a responsibility project and advanced liberal governance. It is targeted at citizens ‘at risk’, in this case at long-term unemployed people. Its implementation requires close contacts between social workers and clients. It is an individualistic solution to long-term unemployment and social exclusion that focuses on citizens’ obligations and commitments, on strengthening their know-how, activity-level and ‘entrepreneurship’. PI also comprises, as responsibility projects do, mechanisms for rewarding and sanctioning and for empowering and punishing in guiding citizens towards ‘good’ and ‘normal life’. Accordingly, it implies clear moral standards for preferred behaviour in advanced liberal societies. A passive level of PI makes this moral aspect very clear. As Rose (2000, p. 335) writes: ‘those who refuse to become responsible, to govern themselves ethically, have also refused the offer to become members of our moral community. Hence, for them, harsh measures are entirely appropriate.’

Furthermore, PI is based on mutual dependency between clients and social workers: it is only through their co-operation that PI is accomplished as outlined in the report. PI makes long-term unemployed citizens responsible for their own conduct and choices in regard to various participation options. But it also makes social workers responsible for directing clients towards the right kind of conduct and reasonable choices by using service plans, assessments and the possibility of financial sanctioning. It can be claimed that a successful social worker is able to keep as many clients as possible at the active level of PI and on a progressive path that ideally ends in labour market inclusion. This kind of success demands clients who accept and are able to follow the regulations of PI. The research report does not give a direct answer to the tricky question of what happens to those citizens who resist or are unable to follow the guidelines and rationales of PI.

Conclusions

In this article we have studied responsabilisation and social work in the context of activation policies by focusing on two state-level policy documents that outline the Finnish initiative of inclusive social security (ISS). We found that the policy documents construct the social worker and the client as responsible subjects partly in different ways.

In the document *Inclusive social security: Final report of the task force* (2015) ISS is more about strengthening voluntary participation that in the long term and step-by-step should lead a person into working life. The governance of the long-term unemployed citizens is based on offering low-threshold opportunities for participation as well as small incentives that can be seen as techniques for guiding responsible decision making and actions according to desired ends. Nevertheless, sanctioning is simultaneously present, although not very openly explicated. The responsibilities are managed in various ways in the report. The long-term unemployed client is constructed as one needing recourses and opportunities in order to be able to make responsible decisions that facilitate integration. The client's responsibility is to make accepted choices, cooperate and utilise support according to given terms. Above all, the final report stresses what we call a shared responsibility as a means to create active citizenship – not only long-term unemployed citizens but also municipalities as well as various (non-)governmental actors are defined as responsible in implementing ISS. As Karjalainen and Saikku (2011, p. 233) stress, the idea of shared responsibility and inter-agency co-operation has gradually developed, nowadays being one of the prerequisites of the Finnish activation policies.

The other document *Four models for inclusive social security in Finland* (2017) introduces one specific model of ISS, the participation income (PI) that reminds in many ways of the responsibility projects described in the governmentality literature. According to the research report social workers are to employ PI as an instrument in activating and empowering long-term unemployed clients. The instrument includes several techniques, such as service plans, the assessment of a suitable participation level for each client and the right to decide on sanctions in those cases where clients refuse or are not able to take part in participation activities. However, it is also stated that social workers should accomplish these responsibilities in close collaboration with clients, for instance by making decisions in a

client-centred and negotiable way. Accordingly, in order to produce the good ‘responsibilisation results’ expected by the Government social workers need to empower responsible subjects who are willing to struggle and make an effort to fulfil the criteria related to active citizenship.

It is difficult to forecast which one of the above mentioned orientations of ISS and ways to manage responsibilities will attain a stronger position in the current activation policies in Finland. Hence, it is also uncertain what future changes will take place in social work. The final report leads social work to be more community-based, whereas by focusing on PI the research report strengthens individual-based social work. From the point of view of the clients the interpretation of ISS based on shared responsibilities would probably be less stigmatising and paternalistic than the one based on individual responsibilities, i.e. approaching long-term unemployed citizens as being personally ‘at risk’ and thus a justified target group of individualised techniques for activation.

In addition, in the very recent activation pilot projects (Activation model for unemployment security 2018; The basic income experiment 2018; Osallistavan sosiaaliturvan kokeilu 2018) launched after publishing the studied policy documents, various community and individual based orientations as well as ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ activation techniques are discussed and developed. For social workers and clients this makes future activation a wide mix of different techniques, moral expectations, rules and possible ways of being a responsible subject.

To conclude, social workers’ roles and responsibilities in ISS can be manifold and are highly dependent on the future directions of governmental policies of activation that are at the moment very much in a state of flux. For social work it makes a difference as to what is seen as preferable techniques and rationales for activation: what actually activates and empowers citizens? What is seen as sufficiently active responsible subject? What does being a responsible subject require from the individual and the community? Only the future will ascertain how social workers’ and clients’ responsibilities constructed in the state-level documents will be translated, applied and resisted at the grass-roots level; what ISS will turn out to be as the everyday experience of social workers and client.

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