

GUIDANCE FOR ASSESSMENT: SP30012

You have been commissioned by the European Commission to write a report comparing and evaluating policy developments in 2 current member states or accession countries. The format of the report is given below. The report must be no more than 3000 words long.

You may choose any 2 countries from those we have looked at in the course, and any one of the policy areas that we cover (policies for the unemployed, elderly, families or migrants). You **MUST NOT** use the UK as one of your countries. You should include some comment/contextualisation of the countries, by reference to regime theory, and you should focus on more recent policy reforms.

It is recommended that you EITHER:

evaluate these reforms in the context of EU social policy (how do these policies relate to EU strategies in your policy area);

OR

evaluate these policies in terms of the degree and style of reform in the context of debates about how welfare states more generally are being reformed.

In general, you are *recommended to compare countries from different regimes*, whichever categorisation of regimes you base this on. You must, however, make your choice explicit (ie make reference to which categorisation you are using – e.g. Esping-Andersen; Lewis; Bonoli etc).

The format of your report should be as follows: Parts one to five should each start on a separate page. Parts one to three are not included in the word count.

1. **Title page** (including your name).
2. **Contents page**. This should indicate numbered sections, and page numbers at which each section starts. Each section should have a title. If you think it is helpful, please divide your sections into sub-sections, which should be numbered consecutively within each section (e.g. 3.1, 3.2 etc.).
3. **List of tables and figures**. These should be numbered in order, by section. For example, the first table in section 2 should be table 2.1, the second 2.2; the first figure in section 2 should be figure 2.1; the first table or figure in section 3 should be table/figure 3.1.....and so on. You are recommended to use perhaps one or two tables or figures if it contributes to your report. Make sure that all tables and figures have clear titles that explain what they show, clearly indicate the source, and are legible.
4. **Terms of reference**. This should be 3-4 bullet points, indicating which countries, policy area, and the main focus of your report (EU or politics of policy reform).
5. **Findings and recommendations** (also called 'Executive summary'). This should be on a separate page, and should also comprise 3-4 bullet points, summarising the main findings of your report.
6. **Introduction (section one)**. This should provide one sentence on the terms of reference, explain the focus of your evaluation (why these two countries, this policy area), and your main reference points (ie EU or policy reform focus). You should also include any general comments that apply to the policy area in both countries (e.g. pressures for welfare reform, such as ageing population, falling fertility, relevant EU policy concerns etc)
7. **Section two**. Your report on country one.

8. **Section three.** Your report on country two. Both your country sections should be structured in the same way to aid the comparison.
 9. **Section four.** Comparison and conclusion. What are the main points of similarity and difference between policy/policies in country one/two? What is significant about these similarities and differences in the context of the EU, or of what we know about policy reform?
 10. **References.** As usual for essays etc. Do not forget to put in full Internet addresses for documents you have downloaded, including date of access. If you have used data for tables or figures, make sure these sources are also included in your list of references.
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Some general hints and tips:

- *Report writing is very straightforward if you are in control of the material you are presenting.*
- *The point of writing reports is to have them taken seriously, to be influential in the organization you are writing for.*
- To be in control of your material, and be familiar with the detail and context of what you are writing about, you need to **read consistently over the semester**, especially as you will be very busy writing dissertations over the next few months, and especially at the end of April.
- This course contains a lot of new information which you will need to process, organize and manipulate in order to write a decent report. **You cannot do this in a couple of weeks.**
- Reading a chapter or article or two every week soon builds up, gives you time to evaluate and select material you want to go into the report, and gives you time to become familiar with your material, making writing **much** easier.
- To be taken seriously, you need to *think about the audience you are writing for*. In this case, it is for well-informed, generalist policy-makers: they know about social policy, but not in the detail that you do. When writing your report, you can assume your audience has some basic knowledge of social policy issues, but that more detailed or complicated issues need explanation.
- You cannot be taken seriously if your report is imprecise, hard-to-follow, does not explain its purpose and the contribution of each point to meeting these purposes, and/or does not come to any particular conclusion. If your audience cannot identify what you are saying, your report - and your effort in researching it, will be in vain.
- You will not do well if you try writing this coursework over a couple of days. Ask friends to read it your drafts, to make sure that the final report is as clear and straightforward to understand as possible.
- Therefore: Be sure to put a lot of effort (which means time) into
 - a) *writing precisely and concisely* – make sure each point you make says exactly what you want it to say. Once you have said your point, move on to the next.
 - b) *writing explicitly and unambiguously* – make sure each point you want to make is unmistakable.

- c) **writing to a conclusion** – a report should come up with a clear evaluative statement. You are NOT expected to solve all social policy problems, or come up with new policy solutions/recommendations, but you ARE expected to come up with a conclusion from your comparison which you could defend if someone asked you to make a presentation on it, let's say to the Commission's Social Affairs Commissioner.
- d) **editing your report**, and ensuring it has a logical, easy-to-follow structure which helps your reader identify the key points.

If you have ANY concerns about which countries to choose, or about the content of the report, you MUST come and see me.

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