Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide elements for helping to compare social policies in the EU and Latin America. Considering that there exist important differences between both groups of countries and within each region, we have focused on the study of the characteristics and the analysis of the existing data, in order to propose preliminary conclusions for the debate, as well as elements for continuing the research on social policies in the studied countries. Firstly, we have noted that EU countries with consolidated welfare state policies do not present serious imbalances in public finances, despite their greater level of social spending. Besides, in the case of EU countries with less developed welfare state policies we have not found direct relations between social expenditure and public finance imbalances. Therefore, we propose that the welfare state is neither the determinant aspect of fiscal imbalances in the EU, nor the origin of the current crisis and its social consequences. Secondly, comparing selected countries of the EU and Latin America we have not found common elements concerning the role of social policies, although we have detected important similarities in macroeconomic priorities, as well as in the effects of the adjustment policies implemented years ago in Latin America and nowadays in the EU. That seriously invites to think about the consequences of these policies in terms of social welfare.

Keywords

Social Policies; Welfare State; Austerity Policies; European Union; Latin America.