

## Social Cohesion and Development

Vol 5, No 2 (2010)



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doi: [10.12681/scad.8957](https://doi.org/10.12681/scad.8957)

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#### To cite this article:

Μιχαλάκη Σ. (2016). The Public Discourse on Flexicurity: Reading Greek, Portuguese and English newspapers. *Social Cohesion and Development*, 5(2), 151–171. <https://doi.org/10.12681/scad.8957>

# The Public Discourse on Flexicurity: Reading Greek, Portuguese and English newspapers

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## Ο δημόσιος διάλογος για την ευελασφάλεια μέσα από τις ελληνικές, πορτογαλικές και αγγλικές εφημερίδες

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to present the flexicurity discourse as it unfolds in European quality press columns, through which governments communicate to the public the need and appropriateness of their reform program, thereby attempting to legitimize it. Section one discusses the importance of discourse to (reform driven) change. Section two presents a short history of the concept and the policy of flexicurity, discusses the contents of the flexicurity discourse and emphasizes its importance. Section three outlines the flexicurity discourse in three EU member states with no corporatist tradition, namely Greece, Portugal and the UK, as it unfolds in national quality press columns. The last section concludes.

**KEY WORDS:** Discourse, flexicurity, reform, employment policy

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το παρόν άρθρο επιχειρεί να παρουσιάσει το δημόσιο λόγο των κυβερνήσεων για την ευελιξία και ασφάλεια (ευελασφάλεια) στην αγορά εργασίας, όπως αυτός αποτυπώνεται στις σελίδες του ποιοτικού ευρωπαϊκού τύπου. Ο δημόσιος αυτός λόγος των κυβερνήσεων έχει ως σκοπό να δικαιολογήσει και να νομιμοποιήσει την ανάγκη και σκοπιμότητα των μεταρρυθμιστικών τους προγραμμάτων. Στην πρώτη ενότητα συζητείται η σημασία του (δια)λόγου για την αλλαγή μέσω μεταρρυθμίσεων και στη δεύτερη παρουσιάζεται, εν συντομία, η ιστορία της ευελασφάλειας και η ιδιαίτερη σημασία του (δια)λόγου στο πλαίσιο αυτής. Ακολουθεί η παρουσίαση του λόγου σε τρία κράτη μέλη της ΕΕ, Ελλάδα, Πορτογαλία και Ην. Βασίλειο, τα οποία δεν έχουν κορπορατιστική παράδοση. Η τελευταία ενότητα εκθέτει τα συμπεράσματα του άρθρου.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Λόγος, ευελασφάλεια, μεταρρύθμιση, πολιτική απασχόλησης

## 0. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

**D**iscourse has largely been neglected until relatively recently by social and political science and economics when studying policy making. However, discourse as an analytical framework is quite helpful, if not enlightening, when studying the politics of economic adjustment and, therefore, the introduction and implementation of reforms.

The transition to post industrialism has generated a range of new tensions between the welfare state and labour market performance, challenging the reform capacity of countries around

the globe. The efforts at the EU level to promote employment friendly reforms, activation and work-life policies, inspired by the Danish flexicurity model, gave rise to contrasting lines of argument.

The aim of this paper is to present the flexicurity discourse as it unfolds in national quality press columns, through which the governments communicate the need and appropriateness, namely the legitimization of the reform to the public. In the first section, the author discusses the importance of discourse to (reform driven) change. The second section is dedicated to the short history of flexicurity and the particular importance of discourse in the context of flexicurity. The third section is an attempt to outline the flexicurity discourse in three EU member states with no corporatist tradition, namely Greece, Portugal and the UK, as it unfolds in national quality press columns.

## 1. Discourse and Reforms

**D**iscourse has largely been neglected until relatively recently by the policy studies, social and political science and economics when studying policy making. The growing dissatisfaction with the limitations of existent theories and in particular with the rationalist mainstream of policy analysis has turned attention to language and led to the recognition of the central importance of discourse for policy analysis, offering new pathways (of analysis and explanation of inertia and progress through change) to the study of the political process.

Majone's "Evidence, Argument and Persuasion in the Policy Process" (1989) contributed greatly to this direction and shed light on the important role of rhetoric and argumentation in the policy-making process and change. During the '90s and henceforth, the relative literature was further extended (see, among others, Throgmorton, 1991; Fairclough, 1992; Fischer and Forester, 1993; Hajer, 1995; Gottweis, 1998; Dryzek, 2000; Campbell and Pedersen, 2001; Kjaer and Pedersen, 2001; Schmidt, 2000; 2001a and b; 2002a and b, 2006a and b, 2008 and 2010; Béland, 2009). Although there are various approaches with their own specific priorities, focus and objectives (rhetoric, literary criticism, post-structuralism, democratic theory, (new)institutionalism), discourse has already stepped to the fore to make a significant contribution to the way policy making is studied, as an analytical framework and a methodological tool filling the gap left by existent research practice and analysis.

Discourse as an analytical framework is quite helpful, if not enlightening, when studying the politics of economic adjustment and, therefore, the introduction and implementation of reforms, mainly the reform of well-established and historically formed institutions (e.g. welfare state and labour market reforms), (Schmidt, 2001a and b; 2002a and b; 2003; 2005 and 2010). Institutionalism or better, new institutionalism provides different approaches to explaining and analyzing political reality focusing on the importance of institutions. Rational choice, historical and sociological institutionalism attempting to interpret political action through institutions differ, firstly, in terms of the object under study: a) rational actors' behavior, b) institutional structures and practices and c) culture and, secondly, in terms of the explanatory logic: a) interest, b) path-dependency and c) appropriateness. The explanatory dynamic of institutionalism, however, is finite, because of their deterministic and static nature. The major problem it faces is change itself, in particular reform driven institutional change.

The forces of globalization and Europeanization have, indeed, generated deep changes in the fields of economy, institutions and ideas. The responses of countries to the rapid economic and technological developments though, vary greatly. The reason, obviously, cannot only be the state of the economy, the capacity of the established institutional structures or the skills and intellect of the

political personnel. To promote much needed reforms and successfully implement them, governments are bound by the dynamics of political interaction. The relevant policy actors and the public should be convinced to agree on the forthcoming reform initiatives. In every reform, but especially, when the narrow interests of large groups or the welfare of entire electorate are at stake, governments face a difficult task in their effort to persuade the public and keep the electoral majority on their side. And the only powerful weapon available to governments in democratic polities is discourse.

Schmidt adds a fourth new institutionalist approach, namely 'discursive institutionalism'. Discursive institutionalism focuses on the substantive content of ideas and on the interactive process of discourse that gives birth to those ideas and communicates them to the public (Schmidt, 2000b; 2001b; 2002a and b; 2005; 2006a and b and especially 2008 and 2010; Radaelli and Schmidt, 2004). This new approach may, indeed, provide for a better view of political reality, may offer insights into the dynamic of change and may, also, locate evidence in regard to the factors which drive reform and impact on its success or failure.. Discourse, which is defined as whatever policy actors say to each other and to the public in their efforts to generate and legitimize a policy program, encompasses a set of policy ideas and an interactive process of policy construction and communication (Schmidt, 2002b, p. 210; 2008). It provides policy actors<sup>2</sup> with a common language and ideational framework by which they construct together a policy program and agree to proceed to its implementation (coordinative function of discourse). Then, it remains to be seen whether the public will be persuaded that the program developed at the coordinative phase is necessary and appropriate (communicative function of discourse, see Zaller, 1992; Mutz et al., 1996; Schmidt 2002b and 2008). So, through discourse, it is revealed how governments manage to consensus for change in policies and institutions and, for that purpose, how they overcome entrenched interests and well embedded rights, historically established static and obsolete institutional structures and cultural obstacles to change. Discourse sheds light on how some governments altered successfully long established policy legacies against cultural values and historically established policy preferences, even though, they challenged national values and the narrow defined interests of large groups of the population (Schmidt, 1997a and b; 2001a; 2002a; 2005; 2008 and 2010).

Discourse has its own significant role as an ideational and interactive component of reform. Policy actors, through discourse, create an interactive consensus for change depending on the way they communicate to the general public and the social partners the need to reform and the appropriateness of the proposed reforms (i.e. logic and necessity of the reform program). Moreover, not only is discourse considered a means to introduce reforms responding to the challenges of globalization and Europeanization, but it also caters for their legitimation. Furthermore, in democratic polities, governments have to make legitimate decisions or at least present them as such, in view of re-election, which is of major concern to them. More precisely, discourse has a cognitive and a normative function, firstly to define the purpose and the objectives of the reform initiative offering specific solutions and the policy instruments to implement them successfully and, secondly to define the political goals and ideals that are related to the historically formed or emerging national values and therefore appeal to the public (Schmidt, 2005, 2006a and b; 2008).

The transition to post industrialism has generated a range of new tensions between welfare state and labour market performance, challenging the reform capacity of countries around the globe. The EU promotes employment friendly reforms, activation and work-family conciliation within the context of a flexicurity model. The next section presents the short history of flexicurity and discusses the importance of discourse within the specific context of a flexicurity model.

## 2. The Flexibility – Security Discourse

### 2.1 *The short history of flexicurity*

**B**ig economic changes impact on labour markets dramatically. In recent years, globalization has intensified the competitive pressures and increased the pace of structural change in many economies. New technologies bring with them new products and innovative services. Both workers and enterprises need to meet the requirements of the current challenging times showing the required flexibility. Enterprises, on the one hand, by focusing on the design and the production of new innovative products and the supply of mostly high-tech services. Workers, on the other hand, are called on to make the best of the contemporary circumstances by the continuous upgrade of their qualifications and their readiness and adaptability to the rapidly changing economies.

In continental Europe, the welfare state is of major importance, an instrument for accomplishing social cohesion and an expression of solidarity. The welfare state should offer essential protection throughout the employees' working life, assure the necessary income security in order to obtain the necessary qualifications to confront the new challenges, help them remain inside the labour market, and balance career and familial and social responsibilities.

The EU (European Employment Strategy, Guideline 21, Kok Report, 2004) proposes a congruent combination of flexibility and security (of enterprises and employees) in the labour market as an adequate model, a policy option, capable of achieving the objective of the Lisbon Strategy: making the EU "the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy". The relaunched Lisbon Strategy (2005) focused on the economic growth, competitiveness, employment and social cohesion. Its aim was twin, firstly, the promotion of sustainable development and, secondly, the creation of more and better jobs. The EU promotes a flexible labour market organisation along with a minimum desirable level of security for the employees. The right balance between flexibility and security should be defined by and is depended on the particularities of the member states' labour market and the preferences of the social partners.

The concept of flexicurity (a lingual product of modern coinage, a portmanteau of flexibility and security) was first coined by the Dutch sociologist Hans Adriaansens in the mid 90's. The Netherlands had a restrictive dismissal system of permanent workers, which led enterprises to hire temporary workers on fixed-term contracts. Temporary workers enjoyed low levels of social and employment security compared to permanent workers. The aim of the 1999 labour law reform, the "Flexibility and Security Act" was to correct the imbalances of the dual labour market, namely the inflexible primary labour market and an increasingly growing insecure labour market (Wilthagen and Tros, 2004). Flexicurity is based on the idea that both dimensions, flexibility and security, are not contradictory, but they are rather mutually supportive, especially in the new reality of globalisation (Commission EC, 2006a; Madsen, 2006).

Since flexicurity is a relatively new term, the related bibliography is not extended and consequently there is no single definition of the concept universally accepted. However, there are two main, partly overlapping, definitions. According to Wilthagen and Rogowski (2002), flexicurity is a policy strategy that aims to enhance labour market, labour relations and work organisation flexibility (labour mobility, fixed-term contracts) on the one hand, and employment and income security, in particular of the sensitive social groups that are located at the margins of the labour market on the other hand.<sup>3</sup>

The second definition, as noted by Wilthagen et al. (2003 and 2004), is a more comprehensive one and applies, mainly, to the (more successful in terms of labour market performance) flexicurity model developed in Denmark.<sup>4</sup> Flexicurity is defined as a degree of job, employment and income

security that strengthens the labour market position of sensitive social groups (unskilled, young and older employees, women, immigrants, minorities etc.) and promotes high labour market participation and social inclusion, providing at the same time numerical, functional and wage flexibility that facilitates the in time adjustment of labour markets to the rapid pace of the challenging global changes, upgrading productivity and, therefore, increasing competitiveness.<sup>5</sup>

The central characteristic of flexicurity is the deregulation of employment protection legislation (e.g. low level of dismissal protection). It is based, however, on a generous Nordic style welfare regime of high social security (relatively high unemployment benefit levels), the activation of the unemployed in quest of a new job and the upgrading and the modernisation of skills, through active labour market policies (ALMPs) and the continuous and lifelong learning programs aiming first of all at the unemployed and secondly at those already employed (Plougmann and Madsen, 2002; Ibsen and Mailand, 2009).

Flexicurity is firstly quoted in an official EU document in the 1997 Commission's Green paper "Partnership for a New Organisation of Work", where it is stated that the right balance between flexibility and security should be the main issue to preoccupy the labour market agents, social partners and policy makers. From 2000 and thereafter the discourse on the accomplishment of the optimal balance between flexibility and security continues however with no specific policy measures and guidelines to be followed in the context of European Employment Strategy (EES) and Lisbon Strategy until 2006.

The Brussels European Council (March 2006) calls on member states to direct special attention to the key challenge of "Flexicurity" (balancing flexibility and security) and invites them to pursue in accordance with their individual labour market situations, reforms in labour market and social policies under an integrated flexicurity approach, adequately adapted to specific institutional environments and taking into account labour market segmentation.<sup>6</sup>

The 2006 Green paper 'Modernising Labour Law to meet the Challenges of the 21st Century' (Commission EC, 2006c) aimed at launching a public debate on how labour law may evolve in order to support the Lisbon Strategy's objective of achieving sustainable growth with more and better jobs in a constantly changing environment. The Green paper brings forth the important role the policy choice of flexicurity should play in the successful creation of a sound up-to-date and competitive knowledge based economy, whose inclusive labour market would facilitate the integration of sensitive social groups.

The Commission, member states and the social partners jointly explored the development of a set of common principles on flexicurity in an attempt to achieve more open and responsive labour markets and more productive workplaces. In July 2007 the Commission's publication "Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security" defines flexicurity as an integrated strategy to enhance, at the same time, flexibility and security in the labour market. The Commission and the member states have reached a consensus that flexicurity policies can be designed and implemented across four policy components: a) flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, b) comprehensive lifelong learning, c) effective ALMPs and d) modern social security systems. All these four elements combined shall improve total and of sensitive labour market groups employment, at-risk-of-poverty rates and human capital.

The 2008 Brussels European Council reiterates that flexicurity helps both the employees and employers to seize the opportunities offered by globalisation. Furthermore, since flexibility and security are mutually reinforcing throughout the lifelong circle, intergenerational solidarity should be considered within all four components of flexicurity.<sup>7</sup> In order the targets of Europe 2020 strategy to be met, at EU level, the Commission will work to define and implement the second phase of the flexicurity agenda, together with European social partners, to identify ways to better

manage economic transitions and to fight unemployment and raise activity rates. At national level, Member States will need to implement their national pathways for flexicurity, as agreed by the European Council, to reduce labour market segmentation and facilitate transitions as well as facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life.

The Commissions clearly states that social dialogue among the relevant stakeholders is of key importance to the development of a comprehensive flexicurity policy. It may lead to the adoption of an adequate national integrated flexicurity strategy that would be accepted by policy actors and the public, if it succeeds to promote consensus building (Commission EC, 2007; Commission EC, 2009). The importance of discourse within the context of a flexicurity model is discussed in the following section.

### Box 1

#### The Flexibility-Security Nexus

There are four different types of flexibility according to Atkinson (1984): a) External numerical flexibility, b) Internal numerical flexibility, c) Functional (organizational) flexibility and d) Financial (wage) flexibility.

External numerical flexibility refers to the freedom of enterprises to adjust employment to product demand fluctuation. It is largely defined by institutional factors, namely the institutional framework of a labour market. In other words, the relaxation of employment protection legislation facilitates the external numerical flexibility that is to say easing hiring and firing regulations, adjusting the number of employees to the enterprise needs.

Internal numerical flexibility or working time flexibility refers to the freedom of enterprises to adjust working hours and schedules according to their work-load. It includes part-time, flexi-time (flexible working hours/ shifts (i.e. night or weekend), working time accounts and leaves such as parental leave or overtime.

Functional flexibility refers to the extend employees can be transferred to different activities and tasks within an enterprise. It has to do with organization of operation, management and workers training. It can also be achieved by outsourcing activities.

Wage flexibility is related to wage adjustment to altering labour market conditions, namely to what extend pay and other employment costs reflect labour supply and demand. A non-centralised wage bargaining system in which wage levels are not decided collectively and there are differences between the wages of workers, increases the flexibility of employment cost for enterprises.

Labour market security for the employees, on the other hand, has a four dimensional content: a) Job security, b) Employment security, c) Income security and d) Combination security (Wilthagen et al., 2003; Andersen and Mailand, 2005; Ibsen and Mailand, 2009).

Job security refers to the possibility of keeping a job with the same employer. It is related to the degree of external numerical flexibility. Employment security is dissociated from individual job security since it has to do with the ability of being not only in the labour market but also continuously in employment during the entire working life. Continuing, further education and life-long training systems are important contributors to employment security enhancement. They guarantee that the workforce obtains much needed up-to-date qualifications. Active labour market policies also contribute to ensure the reemployment of the currently unemployed workforce.

Income security is ensured by a generous social security system serving as a safety net against unemployment. In other words, it is related to income maintenance, when paid employment ceases (i.e. high unemployment benefits replacement rate), in order for unemployed to be able to keep their standard of living.

Combination security allows employees to combine paid employment with other forms of civic activities and obligations (family life and social responsibilities, education etc.). A flexible organized labour market offers employees the right to temporarily suspend their working life (i.e. maternity, educational and sabbatical leave schemes) and then return afresh to ordinary employment.

The four dimensions of flexicurity as identified by The European Commission are Lifelong Learning, Active Labor Market Policies (ALMPs), Modern Social Security Systems and Flexible and Reliable Contractual Arrangements.

## 2.2 Discourse and Flexicurity

Due to its outstanding success, the Nordic flexicurity model, especially the Danish combination of a flexible labour market and high social security,<sup>8</sup> has been cited by OECD as a role model for other European countries (OECD, 2004, chapter 2). The EU (European Employment Strategy, Guideline 21, Kok Report, 2004) promotes a combination of flexibility and security (of enterprises and employees) in the labour market as an adequate model capable of achieving the objective of the Lisbon Strategy: making the EU 'the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy' and of the freshly new Strategy 2020 as the optimal means to address the impact of the crisis on the labour market.

Flexicurity may be understood as a reinterpretation of the one hundred years' old tradition of social dialogue in the Nordic (corporatist) countries, where labour and capital do not operate antagonistically, but rather collaborate. Through social dialogue the state, the social partners and other stakeholders negotiate and agree upon the adequate combination of flexibility for the enterprises and security for the employees in the particular labour market of each and every member state (for the central role of social dialogue to Danish flexicurity model see among others Wilthagen and Tros, 2004; Andersen and Mailand, 2005; Bredgaard et al., 2005; Keune and Jepsen, 2007). Nevertheless, problems differ among member states as also do public preferences, due to different culture, history and institutional structures (see among others Algan and Cahuc, 2005 and 2006; Zingales et al., 2006).

Then, what about those non corporatist EU member states, where such a tradition is not well embedded and the relation between employers and the trade unions have historically been much more confrontational, like the Mediterranean member states, for example, or the UK.<sup>9</sup> In those (non-corporatists) member states, where the social dialogue tradition is limited, newfangled and therefore not well embedded, the governments, in order to launch comprehensive flexicurity reforms and ensure the consensus of social partners and the majority of the electorate, should promote the communicative function of discourse (Schmidt, 2002a, p.p. 210-1) through the public presentation and deliberation of their reform program. Single actor polities, such as Greece, Portugal and the UK channel governing activity through a single authority (the elected government), statist policy making process and unitary institutional structures (Crewe, 1998;



Schmidt, 2005, 2002a). Consequently, they are capable of imposing reforms, provided they have persuaded the electorate lest people go to the streets and elections are lost. As in these cases the coordinative function of discourse is limited, governments may focus only on the communicative function of discourse (see first section, p. 2). Therefore discourse could play an important role to the promotion of integrated flexicurity policies.

The concept of flexicurity rests on the assumption that flexibility and security are not contradictory, but complementary and even mutually supportive. Flexicurity denotes an optimal configuration of flexible labour market legislation and secure social protection. But how much and which combination of flexibility and security is desirable and therefore accepted in the specific labour market of a member state? Social dialogue, in the context of industrial relations, is the key tool for carrying out the main objective of modernising the European social model ensuring greater (more desirable) social protection for workers, while at the same time allows the competitiveness of the labour market to increase in light of globalisation (the well-known combined aim synthesised in the neologism "flexicurity") (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007; Commission EC 2007 and 2009).

The 2006 Spring European Council (European Council 23/24 March Presidency Conclusions, No 31) stressed the need for more comprehensive policies in order to improve the adaptability of markets and enterprises. It made clear, though, that member states should launch reforms in labour market and social policies under an integrated flexicurity approach in accordance with their individual labour market institutions, their specific institutional environments. As the interim report from the Flexicurity Expert Group (2007) underlines, one of the main components of flexicurity is supportive and productive social dialogue between employees and employers, the social partners and the latter and the state, a crucial factor for introducing comprehensive flexicurity policies.

The non corporatist EU member states, where social dialogue is not a well embedded practice and the relation between employers and the trade unions have historically been much more confrontational, may succeed to legitimise their political action and convince the public about the necessity and the appropriateness of the proposed reform plan, counterbalancing, for example, the opposition of trade unions through discourse, rhetoric in particular. Discourse could, for instance, place emphasis on internal numerical flexibility, on work/family reconciliation and on employment and income security (see Box 1).

A convincing argumentation could focus on how precarious a job is, the more an economy is exposed to international competition, explaining to the public that due to the rapid pace of technological progress it is inevitable (de facto) for the capital-labour ratio to increase and consequently to afflict un/less/skilled labour demand and therefore render the EPL practically impotent. A strict employment protection regulatory framework may indeed decrease labour turnover rate, although Messina and Vallanti (2006) have shown that in the rapidly developing sectors of the economy this ramification emaciates. Moreover, it can be argued that a strict employment regulatory framework has little positive impact on total employment, no impact at all on total unemployment, while it increases long-term unemployment and impedes labour distribution. Women, older workers and the new labour-market entrants are the groups most affected by strict EPL unlike young and middle-aged men (Young 2003; Commission EC, 2006; Cazes and Nesporova, 2003 and 2004). The deregulation of EPL would therefore lead to the reduction of long-term unemployment and the increase of vulnerable workforce groups' employment. Combined with ALMPs, it could at the same time reduce long-term unemployment and contribute to the employment maintenance of those workforce groups most afflicted by

flexible industrial relations, directing them towards the more dynamic sectors of the economy. Hence, the increased flexibility of enterprises due to the relaxation of the employment protection regulatory framework rather than harm, is expected to enhance employees' security.

Furthermore, governments could overcome negative reactions, by placing emphasis on the provision of generous unemployment benefits that ensure worker's income, security<sup>10</sup> in case of dismissal. However, it is argued that the provision of generous unemployment benefits weakens job search efforts and therefore distorts the labour market. Additionally, the high unemployment benefit replacement rate exerts upward pressure to nominal wages afflicting unemployment. To limit the aforementioned impact, certain conditions for granting unemployment benefits should be determined (i.e. limited duration of benefits, active job search etc.). ALMPs, in turn limit considerably the implications of granting high employment benefits (Commission EC, 2006). Governments may also underline the important role of ALMPs in a labour market model combining flexibility and security as they improve the process of matching job vacancies and unemployed workers in terms of time and quality, allocating more efficiently the increased flows from unemployment to employment, caused by the deregulation of EPL. Enterprises face problems to fill job vacancies with the right worker, especially when there is increased flow from unemployment to employment because of the limited number of unemployed (Blanchard, 2000). ALMPs, through the retraining programs and employment search services provided, facilitate the matching process even in periods of high flows from unemployment to employment, thus helping the unemployed to find more rapidly a new job according to their skills, needs and interests.

In addition, governments could also argue that lifelong learning strategies will be introduced to meet the employees' aspirations to grasp new knowledge and know-how in order to evolve in their professional careers and reassure that professional learning and training will be provided for every worker. Moreover, it could be underlined that workers will benefit from flexible working arrangements and working time flexibility as career and family responsibilities can be effectively combined. Paid employment can more easily be combined with other forms of civic activities and obligations (familial and social responsibilities, education etc.). A flexible organized labour market offers employees the right to temporarily suspend their working life (e.g. maternity, educational and sabbatical leave schemes) and then return afresh to ordinary employment.

Governments should make it clear that flexicurity is not about less security but another form of security that responds to the insecurities related to modern economic and labour market reality and that it also provides opportunities for work-life balance. Additionally, they could counterbalance social partners' opposition and gain the electorate's support by using comprehensive arguments that do not contradict national values and culture.

In the following chapter, I will present and analyse the flexicurity discourse as it unfolds in quality press columns. The press is a common communication medium that keeps the public informed and facilitates the projection of the views and actions of the government and the social partners organisations, as well as of other relevant stakeholders, when there is no well-embedded social dialogue tradition or any other long-standing consultation procedure (non-corporatist tradition). Press favours the freedom of speech and therefore provides the floor for discourse to evolve acting as a mediator between governments and the public, facilitating a communicative discourse about the necessity and appropriateness of reform programs.

### 3. Flexicurity Discourse unfolding in European Quality Press Columns

This section is an attempt to outline the flexicurity discourse in three EU member states with no corporatist tradition, namely Greece, Portugal and the UK, as it unfolds in national quality press columns. Articles are gathered from (The Kathimerini) for Greece, Diário de Notícias for Portugal and Financial Times (also references to The Guardian) for the UK. The aforementioned newspapers fall in the category of 'newspaper of record'. Quality, high circulation, non- (evident) alignment (with a certain political party), free archive accessibility via internet are the criteria that led to the selection of the aforementioned newspapers. The starting point of research, determined by the time the words flexicurity or flexisecurity (UK, Portugal and Greece), flexigurança or flexisegurança (Portugal) and evasfaleia or evelisfaleia (Greece) make their first appearance in an article, differs. It is 2002 for the UK, 2003 for Greece and 2006 for Portugal.

As I have already argued, it is expected from governments to use (public) discourse (its communicative function) in order to persuade the public, the social partners and other relevant stakeholders about, on the one hand the necessity of reforms and on the other hand the appropriateness of their reform program. As the concept of flexicurity is rather newfangled (and largely controversial), governments have to ignore political legacies, switch the perceptions of problems and therefore influence public preferences, if they want to launch an integrated flexicurity reform according to the incitements of the European Commission. This section therefore attempts to shed light on what the flexicurity discourse reveals us about the governments' efforts in Greece, Portugal and the UK.<sup>11</sup>

#### 3.1 The Greek Case

The flexicurity discourse in Greece as it unfolds in the newspaper The Kathimerini (The Daily) mirrors the reluctance of Greek governments, whether socialists or conservatives,<sup>12</sup> to launch integrated reform policies, in fear of public unrest and jeopardizing their re-election prospects. Instead, they announce the initiation of social dialogue, a not well embedded consultation process for the Greek political reality (see among others Kouzis and Robolis, 2000 in Greek; Kouzis and Mouriki, 2008 in Greek; Mouriki 2001 and 2002 in Greek). The social partners, and especially the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), sooner or later, deny participation or pull back and the government, measuring public opposition, either postpones the introduction of reform programs, due to major strikes, or implements fragmented and therefore ineffective reforms. Note that the Greek labour market is among the most highly regulated and segmented in the EU (highly regulated public and broader public sector, a more flexible private sector and an extended informal labour market).

Fifty-nine articles from a total of seventy-two between 2003, when the neologism flexicurity (flexicurity/flexisecurity, evasfaleia and evelisfaleia in Greek) is for the first time quoted in The Kathimerini, and April 2010, are related to a major European event or action (European Councils, Summits, Elections, Commission announcements, proposals or publication of reports) and published just before, the same day or the day after. The raising of the issue in the media as early as , in 2003 should be attributed to the fact that, at the time, Greece was holding the rotating EU presidency. It is remarkable that the vast majority of the articles are only of informational nature, containing simple references to the flexicurity as a model of labour market organization

that combines flexibility for the enterprises and security for the workers without expanding to its core. However, there are articles that consider flexicurity inappropriate for the Greek labour market due to its high implementation cost (welfare state and ALMPs financing) and the particular Greek values and legacies, the cultural differences that impede reforms towards a Danish-style flexicurity model. One may read in *The Kathimerini* '...flexicurity is a clumsy attempt to interrelate the American lifestyle, the Chinese way of working and the so called European social model' and further down 'The Danish model may sound a good idea, but there, tax evasion is extremely limited and the income tax extremely high.' (29.1.2006), '...we should take into account a major cultural difference, the highly developed sense of civic responsibilities and obligations of the state.' (2.4.2006), 'Do we here in Greece have a strong welfare state, high unemployment benefits, a fair taxation system and unemployment less than 5%?' (14.4.2006). It is even quoted that the then Prime Minister K. Karamanlis favored the Irish labour market model (*The Kathimerini*, 2.4.2006).

The attitude of the Greek administrations in power at the time of these publications was almost indifferent; there was hardly any sign of an attempt to counterbalance the social partners' opposition and the public negative reactions about the necessity and the appropriateness of the reforms proposed. The seventy-two articles quoted only eleven statements made by politicians belonging to the governing parties, six of them by Labour Ministers, two by S. Tsitourides (ND), one by V. Magginas (ND), and two by F. Petralia (ND) and one by An. Loverdos (PASOK) in the margin of relevant EU Employment and Social Affairs Councils, on the occasion of the presentation of the report redacted by the Committee of Experts for the reform of the Greek labour law<sup>13</sup> and the most recent in connection with the Greek economic crisis. The two former ND Ministers S. Tsitourides and V. Magginas embraced the model, albeit reluctantly, emphasizing the importance of social consensus and declared the initiation of a relevant social dialogue (*The Kathimerini*, 2.12.2006, 30.1.2007, 6.12.2007). For example, S. Tsitourides stated that 'the only realistic rational and socially accepted labour law reform is towards the direction of balancing the needs of employers and employees and safeguarding social cohesion' (*The Kathimerini*, 7.12.2006). On the contrary, the most recent ND Minister of Labour, F. Petralia ignored deliberately the report of the Committee of Experts and made it clear that, 'even though the government is conservative, its priority is to enhance the security of the employees, especially because of the financial crisis' (*The Kathimerini*, 11.6.2008). Note that even though there was an attempt to burke the report of the aforementioned Committee because its recommendations were in the context of a flexicurity model, the head of the Committee (law professor Ioannis Koukiades) decided to give a press conference (22.4.2008) to present the recommendations proposed. *The Kathimerini* dedicated five articles to the issue (13, 16, 22, 23 and 26.4.2008). A. Loverdos as soon as he took office set up again a Special Scientific Committee under professor Koukiades. The newspaper quotes also a speech of G. Alogoskoufis, the former ND Minister of Economy and Finance at Oxford University (*The Kathimerini*, 19.2.2008). G. Alogoskoufis spoke in favour of greater labour market flexibility, combined with better education and welfare financing and R&D investment: 'There are not many countries, with exception of the Nordic ones, ready to accept the high taxation that comes along with Flexicurity. On the other hand, in Central Europe and the Mediterranean there is widespread skepticism about the labour market flexibility of the Anglo-Saxon model. Reforms should include elements from both models. Better financing of the welfare state, more labour market flexibility and more emphasis placed on education and R&D is needed'.

The Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) supports the flexibility component of flexicurity: a) the deregulation of employment protection regulation (reduction of the financial cost of dismissals

etc), b) the simplification of the procedure and form for concluding part-time and temporary employment contracts and c) more flexible working time arrangements (The Kathimerini, 19.3.2006). GSEE, the major trade union is opposed to the deregulation of EPL and the modernization of labour law in order to facilitate policies in the context of a flexicurity model. Ultimately, GSEE refused to participate in the social dialogue process for integrated flexicurity policies (The Kathimerini, 30.1.2007 and 15.9.2007). The president of GSEE stated that 'flexible working arrangements are a reality in all EU member states and Greece, of course. The main issue is the security of those employed under flexible working arrangements' (The Kathimerini, 22.2.2007).

In accordance with the above findings, it is more than evident that there is hardly any sign that the former New Democracy government put considerable effort into persuading the social partners and the public about the necessity of an integrated flexicurity policy and the appropriateness of the launched reforms, let alone to alter the perception of problems, redefine economic interest and influence public preferences. It is notable, however, that former Ministers of Labour, S. Tsitourides and V. Magginas, articulated a reluctant pro flexicurity discourse. PASOK administration under the burden of the Greek economic crisis may be forced to launch extensive reforms in the context of flexicurity. The highly segmented Greek labour market and the increased insecurity faced by all those who work in precarious jobs demand reform and certain flexicurity policies could work. However the present national economic crisis does not seem to offer the appropriate conditions... or may be it does?

It is at government's hand to decide, launch and implement labour market reforms towards flexibility and/or security in the context of the flexicurity concept. There is no doubt that in terms of cultural values and civic attitudes Greece differs from the Nordic member states (see among others Algan and Cahuc, 2005 and 2006; Zingales et al., 2006), but the relevant discourse is also not at all helpful. If (public) discourse and/or the process of conducting social dialogue ameliorates (see among others the relevant suggestions in Kouzis and Mouriki, 2008) and focuses not on obsolete perceptions of security that are supposed to promote social cohesion and solidarity in an effort to maintain the electoral majority, but rather on comprehensive argumentation (see section 2.2) to legitimize much needed reforms, this may help to launch and implement integrated (flexicurity) reform plans, instead of fragmented and ineffective piece meal reforms. In fact Greece, as a recent report which measures flexicurity achievements of EU member states (Manca et al., 2010) indicates, has a very good performance in the dimension of flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, while it ranks last for the lifelong learning dimension and at an intermediate level for modern social security systems.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.2 The Portuguese Case**

Diário de Notícias (News Diary or a free translation: Daily News) is a Portuguese well-known daily newspaper being regarded as a newspaper of record. Although Correio da Manhã (Daily Mail), another major daily national newspaper, is the most read national newspaper in the country, it is considered a tabloid. Therefore Diário de Notícias is a more appropriate choice. It contained sixty-one articles related to the concept of flexicurity between 2006<sup>15</sup> and April 2010, eleven less than the Greek newspaper, The Kathimerini. Nevertheless, the quality of the communicative discourse is, undoubtedly, higher. References are made to experts' opinions and scientific studies. A paper by Algan and Cahuc (2006), for example, is used to verify that 'The Danish model cannot be imported by other countries such as Portugal, France, Greece and Bulgaria. The reason is that the Danish model is based on 'public spiritness' that does not exist in social and labour market institutions

of several European countries.’ (Diário de Notícias, 19.10.2007). Furthermore, it is argued that ‘In Portugal, social protection is lower than in most of the developed European countries, because of less generous unemployment benefits, of their shorter duration period and also of low wages.’ (Diário de Notícias, 19.10.2007). On the contrary, there is an interview of Claus Hjort Frederiksen, the Danish Labour Minister about the Danish flexicurity model and the way European countries should move towards that direction (Diário de Notícias, 7.7.2007). One may read that ‘...it should be explained what it is all about. Be realists and honest. It is important to prepare this model after one or two years of extended discussion’.

2007 was the year when flexicurity issues were extensively discussed in Portugal and it is not a coincidence that the country was holding the rotating EU presidency at the second semester of the year. The Portuguese government articulated a relatively organized public discourse. Vieira da Silva,<sup>16</sup> the then acting Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity (March 2005- October 2009) was the leading voice. Initially, his words revealed reluctance and cautiousness. For example, before the presentation of the European Commission’s Green Paper for the modernization of labour law, he stated that ‘it will only contribute to the general discussion’ (Diário de Notícias, 27.3.2007). With time passing though, he favored reform policies in the context of flexicurity openly and more decisively. His words were clear, consistent and comprehensive. He even blamed the political parties of the opposition that they tried to avoid a flexicurity debate: ‘We cannot have an easy and misleading attitude as if the debate over flexicurity does not exist’ (Diário de Notícias, 30.10.2007). It is made clear that the government’s will was to launch reforms towards that direction at least prior to international financial crisis outbreak. As quoted in Diário de Notícias (19.10.2007), ‘If flexicurity does not come in through the door, it will use the window. That’s why it is better to regulate it than to leave it loose and wild’. The arguments were concrete and in accordance with those used by the European Commission. Vieira da Silva underlined that the social model should be reformed to address the contemporary challenges. Moreover, he insisted that a flexicurity approach could be beneficial for Portugal explaining the benefits of flexibility for both enterprises and workers, stressing out that job security is obsolete due to globalization, but that there were also other dimensions of security to be enhanced in order employees to enjoy more efficient social security schemes (Diário de Notícias, 6 and 7.7.2007 and 19.10.2007). One may read that ‘...there exist various dimensions of security that should be enhanced. However, this does not mean more regulated EPL’ (Diário de Notícias, 7.7.2007). Furthermore, he stated that policies towards flexicurity are not limited to the deregulation of EPL, in an attempt to reassure the unions that the Labour Law reform was not aimed at empowering employers and harming employees. As noted in Diário de Notícias (19.8.2007) ‘It would be quite simplistic to say that flexicurity is limited to the (revision of the) labour law’. He kept repeating there are not fit-for-all solutions. Portugal, like every other EU member state, should find the appropriate flexicurity policies according to labour market particularities, mapping out its own route. One may read in Diário de Notícias (14.9.2007) ‘A solution that works in a country does not necessarily fit all. The common base on which we agreed allows every country to select its own way’. The outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008 and the Portuguese national elections the following year may explain why the flexicurity discourse began to fade out.

The Portuguese Confederation of Employers was reluctant towards a flexicurity reform process, fearing that employers would carry the burden of a potential implementation of high taxes for the financing of the security component of flexicurity. CGTP, the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers were also opposed to the concept of flexicurity, fearing, in turn, its first component i.e. flexibility, accusing the government for isolating unions from the relevant processes. One may

read that 'The debate over the so called flexicurity started badly! Nevertheless, we shouldn't have illusions, it is an important issue that came to stay...The unions see only the flexibility part and the liberalization of individual dismissals, the employers defend themselves against a potential rise of social contributions.' (Diário de Notícias, 8.12.2006). They argued, on the one hand, that flexicurity would phase out their social rights and, on the other hand, that the labour market was flexible enough (20% precarious fixed-term contracts), insisting that more security was what should be pursued. As it was noted: 'This type of Portuguese flexibility is responsible for the number of fixed-term contracts used, which already account for 20% of employment' (Diário de Notícias, 19.10.2007). Moreover, it was also quoted that there is no tradition of employers-employees negotiations in Portugal: '...collective bargaining...the particularities of the education system and the dynamism of the small and medium sized enterprises are presented as factors of the success of a flexicurity model. Interestingly, none of these factors is found in Portugal' (Diário de Notícias, 29.11.2006).

Even though, the Portuguese government was more decisive than the Greek government and stated its will clearly, at least prior to the international financial crisis, it did not seem to persuade the social partners. Although the communicative discourse articulated was consistent and the arguments used comprehensive, they have not been persuasive enough to convince about the appropriateness of promoting an integrated flexicurity reform program. Nevertheless, the social partners recognized the need to proceed to labour market reforms. The case here is that the government failed to change the public perception of the problem (in/security, unemployment). The arguments used by the European Commission were incorporated the Labour Minister's speech almost verbatim. National and cultural values were not successfully incorporated to the discourse articulated and new ones did not emerge. For example, the "other" dimensions of security underlined by the Portuguese Labour Minister were not incorporated to a discourse about the (historically formed) values they serve or, if this is not the case, the new emerging values they bring to the fore, which the public should be persuaded to embrace, replacing the old ones. Consequently, reforms towards flexicurity were launched in Portugal, but they were piece-meal and incomplete. According to Manca et al. report (2010), although Portugal scores in top position in the dimension of flexible and reliable contractual arrangements and has a high score on modern social security systems dimension, in the pillar of lifelong learning and ALMPs it records a relatively modest performance.

### **3.3 The British Case**

The Financial Times (FT) has published, between 2005 and April 2010, thirty-three articles related to the concept of flexicurity, while The Guardian fifteen between 2002 and April 2010.<sup>17</sup> The articles mirror the distinctiveness of the UK and the distance that separates the British (not in terms of geography, but rather in terms of mentality, idiosyncrasy and the way things are viewed) from the rest of Europe. There is hardly any statement regarding flexicurity made by government officials quoted in FT or The Guardian articles. The vast majority of the articles were of informative character. Discourse unfolds in a distinct, nevertheless, predictable way. It seems to be detached from the developments at the EU level. As it was quoted in the FT 'If you are already familiar with the term "flexicurity" the likelihood is that you spend more time in Brussels than in London or New York.' (15.2.2007). Note, however, that the French reform initiatives were regularly reported especially by The Guardian, providing food for thought regarding the flexicurity concept.

The Anglo-Saxon model was presented as an alternative to the Nordic model of flexicurity. One may read in the FT 'Could it (the Danish model) be replicated? Substantial tax rises to increase welfare support are as unpalatable to electorates as more liberal working practices are to trade

unions. Yet the UK has shown that more flexible working arrangements can be achieved where there is a dialogue between employees and managements.' (15.2.2007). It was argued that the Anglo-Saxon model is quite successful and effective as the labour market performance reveals, and it has to be protected! An article of the FT was titled 'A streamlined EU must keep British labour law flexible' (18.5.2007).

The European social model was viewed hesitantly, if not suspiciously and the reforms proposed were considered inadequate, too focused on Europe and omitting the importance of the global framework. One may read in *The Guardian* (9.3.2007) 'In the European year of equal opportunities the reform of the European social model is at the top of the political agenda. Tax dumping, international competitiveness and the right balance between labour market flexibility and social security are the central points of debate. On a general level however, the discussion about the reform of the European Social Model suffers from a structural shortcoming: it is too much focused on Europe itself and thus omits to adequately consider the importance of the global framework.'

Moreover, emphasis was placed on the long history and tradition of the Anglo-Saxon model. The success of the Nordic model was attributed, among other things, to the protestant leisure ethic that replaced the protestant work ethic of other times. As it was quoted in the FT (17.1.2007) 'Now that Germany has taken over the EU presidency, it may be the right time to reveal the secret behind Nordic success. It is not about taxation. It is not about the public sector and has absolutely nothing to do with the Scandinavian welfare model. It is all about culture. It is about the rise of the Protestant leisure ethic.... So how can the Protestant work ethic help to explain the success of the Nordic countries? The answer is that citizens of the Nordic countries are as serious about leisure as they are about work. Having a good balance between life and work is considered as important as working hard once was. Nowadays, a good work-life balance is seen as a sign of being among the chosen ones. In other words, the Protestant work ethic has been complemented by the Protestant leisure ethic.'

The prominent argument was that countries (Nordic and Anglo-Saxon) with very different laws and institutions have performed just as well economically and therefore they have much to learn from each other and not only from a specific labour market model (e.g. the Nordic flexicurity model). One may read in *The Guardian* (25.6.2006) '...countries with very different laws and institutions have performed just as well economically, and have less wage inequality and a higher quality of working life for their citizens'. We have as much to learn from them as the other way round. Interestingly, the only elements of flexibility the 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Nordic' models have in common are wage flexibility and competitive product markets. But getting people to adapt wage demands to circumstance can be achieved in two ways. Anglo-Saxons leave it to the free market'.

There is widespread fear of the consequences of the over-regulation of the labour market. As it was noted 'The British government has signaled that it is unhappy with draft EU legislation that would give Britain's one million temporary workers the same rights as permanent staff. The government fears that the commission is in danger of over-regulating the British labour market, which uses more temps than any other country in the EU.' (*The Guardian*, 19.2.2002). Nevertheless, the aforementioned models have something in common i.e. wage flexibility and competitive product markets. The problem rests on the second component of flexicurity i.e. security. Unions in the UK started to exert pressure for higher levels of security in the labour market. As it was noted, 'While employers see new waves of EU-inspired employment legislation, the unions see the flow drying up. The latter want what Mr. Bradley calls "flexicurity" - European-style security in exchange for flexibility, including that of employees to determine their own work-life balance' (*The Guardian*, 2.9.2003).



The flexicurity discourse as it unfolds in the British case study reveals that there was absolutely no intention on the part of the British government to persuade anyone about the need to launch reforms towards flexicurity and in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission. One may read in the FT 'While this works for Danes, it is questionable whether a system based on trust and tradition could be transferred easily to a country with a very different history' (10.6.2005). On the contrary, the Anglo-Saxon model was promoted as an alternative model, capable of addressing the challenges of globalization and defending its long tradition, counterbalancing the European Commission's pro flexicurity argumentation. Nevertheless, the performance of United Kingdom is quite good overall as Manca et al. (2010) indicate, with its highest score being registered in the dimension of flexible and reliable contractual arrangements followed by modern social security systems and ALMPs dimensions.<sup>18</sup> This result may obviously be explained considering the flexibility that characterises the industrial relations in the UK.

## 4. Concluding Remarks

**I**n conclusion, the flexicurity discourse articulated by the Greek and Portuguese governments as it unfolds in *The Kathimerini* and *Diário de Notícias* respectively lacks of convincing argumentation, political vision and apparent ideological influences. Both governments failed to place flexicurity reforms into the actual reality of their labour markets and to associate their policy reform goals and ideals with the historically shaped values, beliefs and specific preferences of the majority of the electorate. In the Greek case, discourse was full of controversies and lacked argumentation. It consisted mainly of statements of intention for or against the concept of a flexicurity model. Its limited extent mirrors the reluctance of the government to stand up to social partners' pressures. In Portugal the more consistent and 'comprehensible' argumentation of the government did not manage to appeal to the public because of the mechanical reproduction of European Commissions rhetoric. National values and well established public preferences were not incorporated into the reasoning of the proposed reform. The failure of discourse to persuade and therefore to promote integrated reform policies towards flexicurity resulted to the introduction of fragmented, piece-meal reforms. A more consistent, determined and integrated discourse could contribute to the implementation of much needed welfare state and labour market reform programs to address the challenges of globalisation.

However, in the distinct case of the UK, the relevant discourse served to promote, maintain and reinforce the long-standing tradition and the historical formed values of the Anglo-Saxon model, counterbalancing the pro Nordic style flexicurity model voices.

EU promotes integrated flexicurity policies as the solution to emerging problems and an instrument to meet the objective of the, then, Lisbon Strategy and, now, the new Europe 2020 Strategy. The concept of flexicurity may be familiar to Nordic EU member states and relatively easily adopted by member states with a corporatist background. However, in the case of member states with no corporatist background and not well-embedded social dialogue tradition, it may appear to contradict national values, hard-fought policy legacies and rights based on historically established institutional structures and strong time-proofed public preferences. Through discourse, governments could persuade social partners and the public to agree on reform programs, only if they use comprehensive argumentation that relates the aim of the proposed reform to cultural values and traditional public preferences

## Notes

1. I would like to thank the two anonymous referees of the article for their helpful comments. Thanks are owed to Nikos Koutsiaras for his critical comments and his valuable encouragement. I thank, also, Panos Kazakos.
2. See among others Haas, 1992; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993 and Keck and Sikkink, 1998.
3. This first definition applies, mainly, to the Netherlands.
4. See also Michalaki and Filinis, 2009 (in Greek).
5. For different definitions of the concept of flexicurity see Klammer (2004), Keller and Seifert (2004), Madsen (2006) and Eamets and Paas (2007).
6. For the full text see Council of the European Union, Presidency Conclusions 7775/1/2006 REV 1.
7. For the full text see Council of the European Union, Presidency Conclusions 7652/1/08 REV 1.
8. In connection with EU's employment strategy, and in individual EU countries such as Germany and France, Denmark has been used as a textbook example of how a member country can combine a dynamic economy, high employment and social security.
9. In the UK, following the anti-trade unionist policies of the Thatcher and Major administrations, and the hostile economic environment, British trade unionism had fallen in size from its 1979 peak and was no longer much consulted by governments, leaving no room for social dialogue... There signs though that the situation may change.
10. According to Young (2003), in the case of strict EPL, employees exchange the security provided by it with the mitigation of wage demands. Although a looser EPL would most probably encourage increased wage demands as a means of heightening employees' sense of security in case of dismissal, a generous unemployment benefit system would enhance employees' income security. That is to say the employees shouldn't be too hesitant to accept a lower redundancy level, without demanding higher wages, if the unemployment benefit replacement rate is high. Besides, unemployment benefits are an effective means to ensure income security as the particularity of every case is passed into (OECD, 2004).
11. To avoid any misconceptions, I wish to make clear that there is no pretension of analyzing the specific role of the press to the promotion of a flexicurity model, although relevant references are included.
12. Two are the Greek political parties that compete for the formation of government, namely the conservative New Democracy party (2004-2009) and the socialist movement PASOK (-2004 & 2009-).
13. S. Tsitourides, former ND Minister of Labour gave the Committee the mandate to make recommendations in accordance with the European Commission's Green Paper on 'Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century' (Commission EC, 2006c).
14. This paper presents the findings of a research project carried out by the Joint Research Centre and DG Employment of the European Commission<sup>1</sup>. The project aimed to develop statistical tools to measure flexicurity achievements of EU Member States through a set of four composite indicators corresponding to the four dimensions of flexicurity identified by the Commission, i.e. Lifelong Learning, Active Labour Market Policies, Modern Social Security Systems and Flexible and Reliable Contractual Arrangements. The dimension of ALMP has not been computed for Greece because of missing data.
15. 2006 is the year, when for the first time a reference to flexicurity was quoted in a *Diário de Notícias* article, relatively late in comparison with other EU member states.
16. José Antonio Vieira Da Silva is since October 2009 Minister of Economy, Innovation and Development.

17. I decided to select the two newspapers because of the lack of reliable data, if only one of them was selected.
18. The UK had been excluded in the computation of the lifelong learning composite indicator because of problems of missing data.

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