

Historical evolution of unemployment

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Abstract:

The present paper attempts at defining unemployment and then presents a short history of the social insurances in Romania, referring to the legislation framework in the field under scrutiny.

Key words: *unemployment, labour force, economically active population, labour market, unemployment rate, social insurance.*

The word unemployment in Romanian language derives from the word *chomage* in French, which was taken from the latin word *caumare*, the latter deriving from the Greek *cauma* which means „great heat”, the reason for which every activity ceased. Therefore, at the very origin, the notion of unemployment is identified with that of inactivity (Maniac, E., 1999).

The definition of unemployment was largely debated in the literature of specialty. Thus, “The dictionary of economic Sciences“ since 1968, done under the supervision of Alain Cotta, characterizes unemployment as “ the situation of the individual deprived of labour “, but it mentions that it’s necessary to make the distinctions between the voluntary unemployment, highlighting that “ only involuntary unemployment must be taken into account in judging the economic situation of the country “ (Raboaca, Gh.,1998).

The word unemployment is translated in English as *unemployment*, but this last term started to be used in the mid 1890, until then being used *want to employment* and *involuntary idleness*. The usual German term for unemployment, *Arbeitslosigkeit* (literally: the state of not having to work), has been rarely used before 1890. Marx used in “Capital“ the term *die Unbeschäftigten* (inactive, not busy) (Bădulescu, A., 1997).

An ambiguity of the concept derives from the fact that, in its common usage, this presupposes an odd mixture of freedom and dependance. Slaves cannot be affected by unemployment, but, on the other side, not even the workers that are truly independent cannot be unemployed: writers, artists, and to a certain extent doctors, layers, patrons.

Historically, the unemployment has been associated with the capitalism of the free initiative, because, on the other hand, the system enlarged the dependence of the labourers by separating the work from the means of productivity. For short, only those who are working as employee and which can be deprived of them, can become unemployed..

The vague character of the term *employment* is rendered by the bivalent attitude of the majority of people towards labour. The desire to work, of earning is a human need, but it also exists a desire for serenity, for rest, of not having responsibilities. These desires vary according to the individuals, culture, along time, offering the phenomenon a physiological and psychological dimension.

The unemployment concept in its usual sense has a social dimension; the absence of this term suggests that the situation of not having to work was regarded as a personal and not a social problem and reflects the opinion of the majority of economists in the XIX th century, including Marx) according to whom the *involuntary idleness* was a necessary element in the capitalist system of production (Maniac, E., 1999).

“The Sociology dictionary” defines unemployment as being a ”negative phenom of economy that affects a large part of the economically active population who