

Left-wing Populism and De-Dualization: A Comparative Study of the Movimento Cinque Stelle (2018-2021) and Unidas Podemos (2020 - 2023)

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"In the 2010s new left-wing populist parties emerged in Southern Europe, deeply restructuring the national political context. Little attention has so far been devoted to the concrete policy measures pursued by left-wing populism and the ideational factors underpinning them. Against this background, this paper comparatively investigates the social, labour and income policies implemented by the Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S) in Italy and Unidas Podemos (UP) in Spain, during Conte (2018-2021) and Sanchez (2020-present) governments, respectively.

Through the analysis of policy documents and secondary sources, I demonstrate that the Movimento Cinque Stelle and Unidas Podemos share a commitment to 'de-dualize' the national labour market and welfare institutions, i.e. extending protection to outsiders. This shared orientation is manifest in key policies, such as the regulation of temporary work, the substantial raise/introduction of a statutory minimum wage, and the introduction of minimum guaranteed income schemes.

Despite commonalities, I argue that Unidas Podemos has gone far beyond the Movimento Cinque Stelle in de-dualizing the national labour market and the welfare state. I claim that this difference can be traced back to party ideology, as Unidas Podemos has a more radical and coherent ideology than the Five Star Movement, as largely discussed in the existing literature. Ideological specificities, also explain why some policies implemented by the M5S are exclusionary towards foreign nationals. This argument is confronted with alternative – and complementary – explanations, such as the respective government composition and duration.