

# **Cooperating against failure? Assessing administrative burden and co-production practices in the digital implementation of minimum income policy in Spain.**

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There is a growing interest in social policy literature in understanding the delivery of digitalized welfare services (Busemeyer et al., 2022). The digital transformation offers the potential to boost administrative efficiency, but it can also be a challenge for those welfare claimants lacking socioeconomic resources and digital skills. In this light, despite Spain's high levels of digital competitiveness in comparative perspective (Verdin et al., 2023), the initial two-year online implementation of the IMV exhibited poor outcomes in terms of non-take up (AIReF, 2022), casting doubts on its effectiveness (Ayala et al., 2022). This article asks how digitalized public services became a burden for vulnerable individuals when applying for the IMV, and to what extent coproduction practices among front-line professionals and third sector contributed to the reduction of (learning, compliance and psychological) costs of benefit claimants in a multilevel setting context. Our contribution is twofold. At the theoretical level, we bring together the administrative burden and co-production literature (Burden et al., 2012; Moynihan et al., 2015; Madsen et al., 2022; Köppe et al., 2016; Sicilia et al., 2016). Empirically, we provide qualitative evidence of claimants' administrative burdens through focus groups and expert interviews with NGOs, frontline professionals, and officials. Our findings suggest that the policy's failure was rooted in: (1) an overestimating potential of claimants' digital capabilities in the policy design; (2) the lack of effective coordination across administrative levels; and (3) the hindered administrative procedures to prove vulnerable situations. These three factors have led to substantial barriers in learning, compliance, and psychological strain, ultimately either excluding benefit claimants from the process or incentivizing them to abandon it. Yet, we illustrate that this situation prompted co-production efforts among local governments, NGOs, and frontline professionals to alleviate administrative burdens in policy implementation, suggesting that such practices can minimize administrative challenges in a multilevel governance context.