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Different Paths to The Same Social Reform: A Comparison of The UK's Universal Credit and The Czech "Super-Benefit"

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Abstract

This article offers a comparative analysis of two reforms to non-contributory social benefit systems: the UK's Universal Credit and the Czech welfare payment known as the *superdávka* (or "super-benefit"), introduced in October 2025. Both reforms respond to the same underlying problem: a fragmented benefit system that discourages recipients from working and places a disproportionate administrative burden on the most vulnerable households.

The aim of the article is to analyze the institutional design of both reforms and identify how their different structural features affect work incentives, administrative complexity, benefit take-up rates, and distributional outcomes. The analysis draws on a qualitative comparison of secondary sources, legislative documents, government evaluations, and academic literature. The conclusions are ex-ante in nature; the Czech reform is assessed shortly after its introduction, and empirical data on its real-world effects are not yet available.

The comparison shows that, despite a similar starting diagnosis, the two reforms differ significantly in their key parameters. The UK's UC uses a uniform taper rate and strict activity conditions, which in practice led to implementation problems and unintended negative consequences for specific groups of recipients. The Czech *superdávka* took a different approach: a component-based structure with a work bonus as a positive incentive for employment, and milder sanctions. The article argues that the final shape of each reform was largely determined by the different institutional contexts of the two countries, particularly the degree of fragmentation in the original systems and the administrative capacity of the state.

Keywords: Universal Credit; Welfare reform; Work incentives; Super-benefit