



# The activation of social assistance clients in Switzerland

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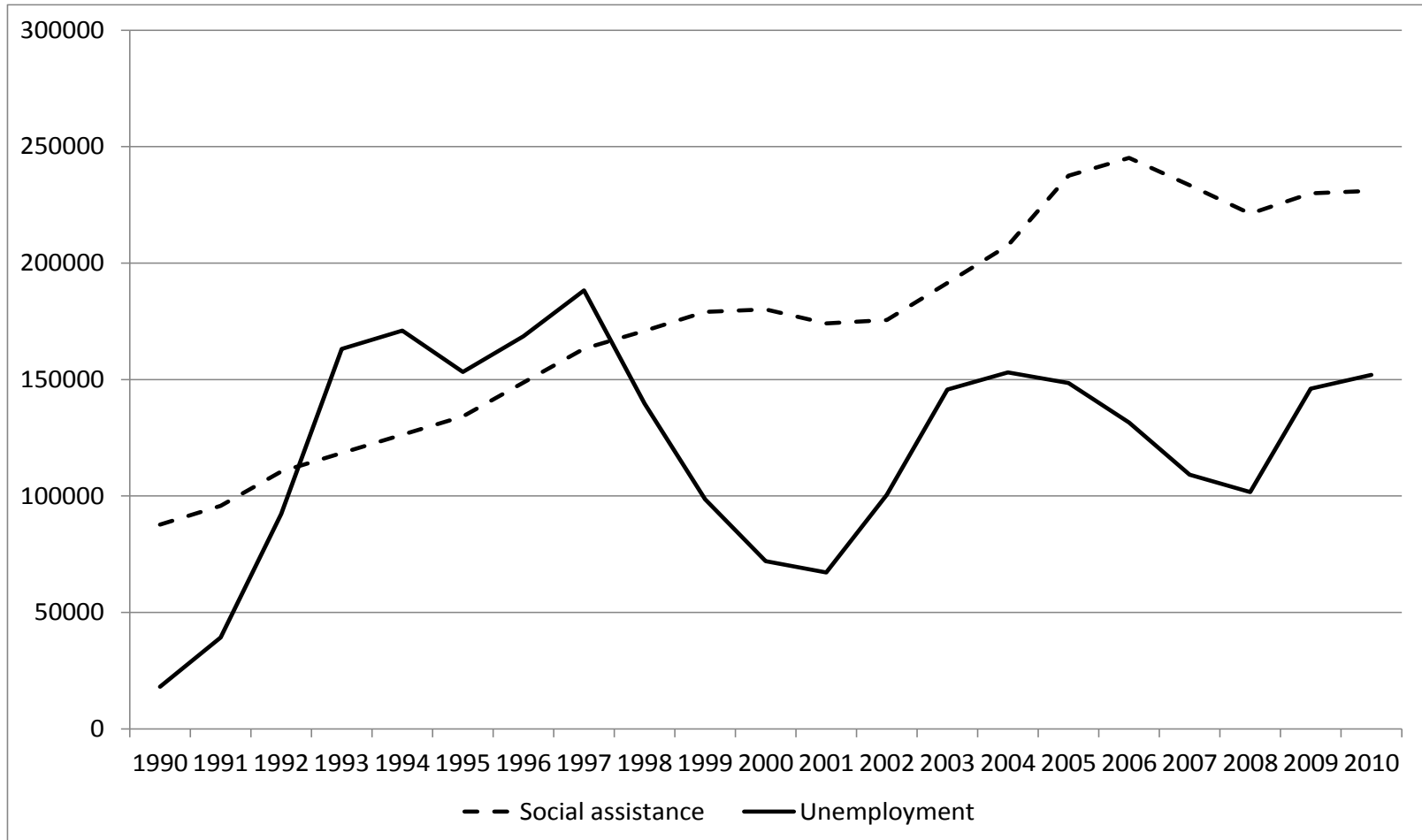
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# Activation in Switzerland

- Like in other western European countries, a general activation turn since the mid-1990s.
- Social assistance has been less affected than other schemes
- Why?
- Lower problem pressure? Federalism?

# Figure 1: Number of unemployed and caseloads of social assistance, 1990-2010





# Social assistance in Switzerland

- Very strong federal country
- Social assistance is cantonal policy
- An unelected body (SKOS) provides guidelines
- Some pre-modern principles and practices subsist



# Responding to the increase in caseload

- Job creation programmes providing entitlement to UI
- A new set of guidelines by SKOS, emphasising mostly social integration
- Innovation from within SA
- Collaboration



# Innovation from below

- More advanced in the big cities (e.g. Zurich, Geneva)
- Country-level evidence is scarce, but suggests that only a small minority (8-15%) of jobless working-age claimants have access to re-integration services.
- The bulk of it, concerns social integration



# Collaboration 1: PES

- Access to PES is available free of charge to any resident who is looking for a job
- Few SA claimants register with the PES
- No reliable data, but what we have suggests huge differences across cantons (between 8% and 47% in a 6 cantons sample)



# Collaboration II: formal interagency collaboration

- Targets clients with multiple problems (often health)
- Several pilots, of which a high profile project led by the federal government
- Evaluation is rather negative
- Remains the main official response to social assistance problems





# A more profound reform?

- A few proposals have been met with skepticism
- Problem pressure is insufficient?
- Absence of a political actor who has an interest in pursuing this strategy
- Populist SVP, strongly attached to cantonal sovereignty