Preface

The future of the welfare state depends on economic and political as well as social factors. In any economic circumstances, welfare policies have to be rooted in ordinary people’s attitudes, preferences and willingness to maintain welfare arrangements. This book compiles the work of fifteen researchers who have dedicated much of their time to studying welfare attitudes, their determinants and variation within and between European nations.

With one exception, the chapters in this book are based on the module ‘Welfare Attitudes in a Changing Europe’ in the European Social Survey 2008. This unique module makes possible more comprehensive comparative analyses of welfare attitudes than previously was possible. Without the long-lasting and hard work of the ESS staff in more than 30 countries and, of course, without the cooperation of the tens of thousands of respondents across Europe, the studies reported in this book would have been impossible.

One of the main initiators of the ESS was Sir Roger Jowell. His pioneering work on survey research significantly improved the quality standards of comparative surveys and especially helped to make the ESS a great success. Sadly, Roger passed away during the process of writing this book. The editors wish to dedicate this book to the memory of Roger’s life and work.

This book was initiated in cooperation with REASSESS, a virtual Nordic Centre of Excellence in Welfare Research for ‘Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model’. Under the leadership of Professors Bjørn Hvinden and Viggo Nordvik, this Centre combines distinguished researchers from ten different institutions across the Nordic countries. REASSESS is funded by NordForsk in the period 2007–12. REASSESS has helped to fund workshops in which papers and draft manuscripts for this book were discussed. Moreover, REASSESS funded the meetings of the editors.

The meetings and workshops were held at SFI – the Danish National Centre for Social Research, Copenhagen. We wish to thank SFI for generously hosting the meetings.

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