

Preface

The IREC network was set up on Richard Hyman's initiative following the first Industrial Relations in Europe Conference (IREC) at the University of Warwick in 1989. Since then, the IREC network has provided a platform for the exchange of ideas and critical debates on work and employment from a European perspective.

The Utrecht School of Governance based at Utrecht University had the pleasure to host the 2004 IREC. The School's interest in governance issues provided an obvious focus when choosing the conference theme: 'Governance issues in shifting European industrial and employment relations'. However, it was not just the Utrecht School of Governance's interest that inspired the conference theme: in 2001, the European Commission had published a White Paper on 'European Governance' recognizing that social dialogue forms part of the democratic governance of Europe and that social dialogue is crucial in responding adequately to the challenges of economic and social reform and of enlargement. Indeed, the enlargement of the European Union, as of 1 May 2004, led to the accession of ten new Member States, with eight of these originating from Central and Eastern Europe. With this enlargement, the diversity within the European Union increased significantly, particularly in terms of employment conditions and social dialogue arrangements. The enlargement spurred European political interest in governance and in the so-called Open Method of Co-ordination as a means to deal with this increase in diversity. A parallel surge in research interest in governance issues can be observed. As a result, IREC 2004 at the Utrecht School of Governance welcomed more than a hundred researchers from 20 different countries, including many from the new Central and Eastern European Member States. Several of the chapters included in this publication, 'Industrial Relations in the New Europe: Enlargement, Integration and Reform', have been developed from presentations at the conference workshops, and others have been specially commissioned.

The success of the conference and the preparation of this book have been made possible by the active support of a great number of enthusiastic supporters, of whom we would like to especially thank Kees Vos and Wim Kool of the Netherlands Participation Institute and David Foden of the European Foundation in Dublin who helped in providing financial support

enabling researchers from Central and Eastern European Member States to participate in the conference, and the Utrecht School of Governance for providing financial and administrative support for the conference. Bas de Wit did a great job running the conference secretariat. Edward Elgar supported the conference by indicating their early interest in publishing a collection of papers dedicated to 'Industrial Relations in the New Europe: Enlargement, Integration and Reform', and this has been followed by advice and assistance from Matthew Pittman and other assistants at Edward Elgar Publishing. Giles Stacey provided an English language oversight to the texts produced by non-native speakers, Eva Knies ensured the texts conformed to Edward Elgar's house style and Jos Thoben prepared the camera ready copy. We would like to thank all of them for their assistance.

Our main debt of gratitude is to all the contributors to this book, who were willing to rewrite their earlier papers in response to our editorial comments and suggestions. We would like to think that this collection makes a contribution to understanding how the process of European integration impacts on industrial relations at several levels, and how various actors attempt to influence the processes of integration and reform. If the collection succeeds in this, it is thanks to the individual contributors' understanding of their domain and their competence in taking on a European perspective. We hope that our editorial work has helped to bring out the overall conclusion that the impact of the European integration process is diverse and depends to some extent on supranational and national actors, and that their strategic actions can help to establish a European Social Model with which European citizens will wish to identify.

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