Preface and acknowledgements

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This book deals with new developments in active labour market policy. It consists of three parts. Part I focuses on changes in the toolbox of active labour market policy, comprising three types of changes. First, a changing pattern in the use of the various active measures is observed and the question is raised to what extent this changing pattern leads to an increased overall effectiveness of labour market policy. Secondly, new types of measures are evaluated. Finally, active measures are highlighted for a group that tended to be forgotten in active labour market policy, namely the jobless that are not officially counted as unemployed.

Part II deals with public-private partnership in active labour market policy, by which we mean the increasing tendency to outsource implementation of active measures to private agencies. The contributions in this section contain different views on the extent to which the resulting system resembles a true market and can be expected to produce the level of efficiency usually associated with markets.

Finally, Part III contains a number of contributions on benchmarking. Benchmarking is transforming output indicators of implementing agencies into indicators that give a reliable picture of the relative performance of these agencies. A transformation is necessary because the output indicators are influenced by factors out of the control of these agencies. One would like to correct the indicators for this influence. Although the contributions in this volume all concentrate on benchmarking public agencies, the conclusions are equally relevant for a system in which implementation is outsourced to private agencies.

In total, this volume contains 13 contributions from researchers from different European countries. Their contributions cover the following countries: Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The research reported in this volume is a product of the Transitional Labour Markets network (TLM.NET) which was sponsored by the European Commission. Starting from Günther Schmid's concept of 'transitional labour markets' the TLM.NET defined several work packages that were supposed to deal with a number of aspects of this concept, active labour market policy being one of them. The TLM.NET

was led by SISWO (an organization affiliated with the University of Amsterdam) and the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). Lieve de Lathouwer chaired the work package on active labour market policy.

Two workshops have been organized in Rotterdam to discuss the papers produced within the work package. During the first workshop some of the papers appearing in this volume were presented, but this workshop held a broader scope on active labour market policy than the present volume and also included papers on different themes in active labour market policy than the three themes covered by the book. During the second workshop, which focused totally on the book, the remaining papers that appear in this volume were presented and discussed.

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