

Preface and Acknowledgements

Flexibility and Employment Security in Europe: Labour Markets in Transition traces how individual workers cope with the increasing dynamics on the labour market and the effects that has for their transition patterns and labour market careers. Through the analysis of unique comparative panel data from 14 European countries during the 1990s up to the early 2000s, and tracking the individuals' career fate over a period of eight years, a number of esteemed authors coming from different origins and angles examine the way workers and governments cope with rising demands to meet the needs for increasing flexibility without endangering income and employment security. They address issues as to whether these changes signal the alleged shift in the employment relationship from 'lifetime employment' to the 'boundaryless' career, as for example the Transitional Labour Market theory contends, and how countries through their institutional set up and policies cope with these changes and try to improve the balance of flexibility and security in their societies. The latter has become a key issue now in the European policy debate under the heading of 'flexicurity' since the EU governments have accepted the principles of 'flexicurity' policies in the Autumn of 2007.

It is common among economists to speak about a 'zero-sum game' or the inevitable trade-offs when viewing the relationship between efficiency and equity to which the flexibility–security issue refers, but the authors contend that such trade-offs can be avoided and that a 'positive sum-game' is conceivable. For that purpose they try to draw lessons from 'best policy practices' with a view to transitional labour market and flexicurity approaches in Australia, Canada and Denmark.

The book is the outcome of a collaborative effort among a set of researchers in ten countries, eight from within and two from outside the EU. The project was funded as a network by the European Commission under the 5th Framework Programme and called the Transitional Labour Market Network (TLM.Net). The Network was coordinated jointly by the University of Amsterdam (Dr. Nick van den Heuvel) and the WZB, Wissenschaftszentrum für Sozialforschung Berlin (Professor Dr. Klaus Schömann). The contributions in the book form a selection of the papers prepared and presented in workshops and conferences organised in the

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