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
context of the activities of Work package three of the network: ‘Supporting Labour Market Mobility and Dynamics’.

Acknowledgements
The editor is primarily indebted to the authors of the chapters for their invaluable contributions to the substance of the book dealing with the intriguing issue of the relationship between flexibility and security and their cooperation and support during the editing process.

The book hinges on two major socio-economic approaches: ‘Transitional Labour Market (TLM)’ and ‘Flexicurity’, the founding fathers of which were members and contributors to the network. The TLM.Net network is therefore much indebted to Professor Dr. Günther Schmid, the inventor of the Transitional Labour Market Model and the instigator of a number of networks and research endeavours preceding this network, who inspired the group on many occasions during the project with his work and ideas. We also want to acknowledge Professor Ton Wilthagen’s contribution to the network and this book with a view to his scholarly work on the notion of ‘flexicurity’ that by the European Commission is currently accepted as the leading principle for European policies in the domain of labour market and social security.

Further we want to express our gratitude to a number of people who contributed directly or indirectly to make the network a success either by acting as invited speakers or discussants at the workshops and conferences held in Amsterdam and Budapest, or by commenting on previous drafts of the papers and the book: Dr. Peter Auer, Dr. Jean-Claude Barbier, Maarten Camps, Professor Axel van den Berg, Professor Gösta Esping-Andersen, Dr. Stefano Cagliarducci, Professor Erik de Gier, Dr. Nick van den Heuvel, Dr. Egbert Holthuis, Dr. Nigel Meager, Professor Dr. Günther Schmid, Professor Albert Tuijnman and Professor Ton Wilthagen.

The editor is also much indebted to Kees Boos for the pleasant cooperation with him in organising the editing process and for painstakingly compiling the typescript. A last word of gratitude goes to the publisher Edward Elgar for the shown trust in the endeavour and for the excellent way they have guided the publishing process and supported the editor and the authors.

Ruud Muffels, March 2008