Preface

This handbook provides a systematic overview of the state of the art in labour market policy evaluation at three levels. First, it outlines and evaluates the various methodological approaches adopted in previous evaluation research. Second, it focusses on particular target areas and evaluates the results of previous evaluation research on the impacts of different policy instruments and policy regimes in contrasting settings. Third, it offers an evaluation of institutional frameworks and existing labour market monitoring and information systems, pointing out where such systems are underdeveloped and where new approaches could be used effectively for intelligent policy design and empirical policy evaluation.

A unique feature of this edited collection is the presentation of a target-oriented approach to evaluating labour market policy. Instead of only attempting to measure the impacts of specific policy programmes along the dimensions of their specified programme goals, researchers following the target-oriented approach ask which combination of policies, under which economic and institutional conditions, contribute most to achieving broadly defined policy goals or targets. Unlike programme-oriented evaluation, the target-oriented approach to evaluation reviews the results of labour market policy evaluation from the aspect of the cumulative impact that interacting policies and policy regimes have on labour market performance and outcomes in selected target areas.

A second unique element of this handbook is its international approach. It presents the insights of renowned European and North American researchers who have first-hand experience in designing and conducting evaluation research. In all the chapters the authors apply an international comparative framework or contribute to the development of an international comparative research methodology as they assess contemporary developments in the field. Lastly, all chapters, except those in the methodological part, are organized around policy targets, with evaluation approaches and results being empirically compared across the whole range of areas that have been at the heart of current labour market policy concerns in OECD countries.

This handbook is intended for policy- and decision-makers, professional programme evaluators and academic scholars interested in labour market policy and policy evaluation. Practitioners may also gain valuable insights into ways to assess the appropriateness of different policy tools and policy approaches and into the requirements for systematic impact evaluation. This volume is designed not as a manual for programme implementors but as a

compendium that draws on the wealth of experience from previous evaluation. It points out the advantages and pitfalls encountered when one must choose specific evaluation methodologies or introduce and implement particular policies. We hope these reflections will help push evaluation research forward towards providing support for more effective policy-making and implementation.

It is, finally, a pleasure to acknowledge the personal assistance and financial support provided to us over the three years of this book's production. Many people have invested an incredible amount of effort in moving this project from the early stages of conception to the final stages of publication. We are unable to mention all of them but feel deeply obligated to make a few exceptions.

First, we cordially thank our secretary, Karin Reinsch, who managed the intricacies of the entire project, including two large workshops in which all contributors discussed preliminary versions of their chapters. She did a splendid job and never lost her cheerful disposition in keeping the network of academics, editors, translators, word processors and publishers to a tight time schedule. She must have gained many valuable psychological insights into the complexity of minds working under continuous and increasing pressure, and we hope that this experience is at least some compensation for the frustration and exhaustion that her task inevitably entailed. We thank Bettina Recktor from WTD (Wissenschaftlicher Text-Dienst), who attentively managed the operative network of the text production. We quickly came to value her endurance and skill in surmounting virtually every difficulty and complication she encountered in this vast project. We thank the compositors of Pinkuin for their marvellous work in transforming the manuscript into its final format. We also thank the language editors David Antal, Niamh Warde and Andy Watt, who greatly improved the style of the contributions, painstakingly checked references and spelling, and saw to all the other chores that academics tend to delegate. We are much indebted to Holger Schütz, who prepared the index of the handbook. His gift of combining creative imagination and reliability is fully appreciated. We are also indebted to Christoph Albrecht, who managed the network of scholars, editors, translators and institutional supporters to which this volume partially owes its existence. We are sincerely grateful to the Directorate-General V of the European Commission in Brussels which provided generous financial support. We especially thank Armindo Silva and Sergio Piccolo for their promotion of this handbook and for the understanding they showed for academic time delays. Lastly, we wish to express our thanks to Edward Elgar and Julie Leppard for shepherding this project so enthusiastically through their publishing company.

As individuals, we have learned together, at first hand, about the difficulties encountered in coordinating such a large project but also about the rewards

to be gained through cooperation. We are deeply grateful to our colleagues who joined us in this multidisciplinary enterprise. We want to thank at this occasion our advisory group, whose members provided valuable comments throughout the handbook's development: Anske Bouman (Netherlands), Christine Bruniaux (France), Karsten Jensen (Denmark), Jaap de Koning (Netherlands), Guy Standing (International Labour Office, Geneva) and John Temple (United Kingdom). We hope that the experience was a rewarding one for all, and particularly, that readers involved in labour market policy evaluation will find this handbook to be a rich and stimulating source of material and analysis.

Günther Schmid, Jacqueline O'Reilly, Klaus Schömann
Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB)
Social Science Research Center Berlin
May 1996