

# Preface

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Since the 1970s, the long-term historical decline in self-employment as a proportion of total employment has slowed in most Western economies and in some countries even reversed. Traditionally, self-employment has been associated with independent entrepreneurship. Although there is still limited insight into the nature of new forms of self-employment, in recent times self-employment is increasingly interrelated with precarious forms of work. This book aims to provide evidence-based information to address current and future challenges related to the changing nature of self-employment and demonstrates where, when and why self-employment emerges as precarious work in Europe.

Being your own boss has not only been topical in private conversations and in the media, but the changing historical pattern also renewed interest in self-employment among economists and other social scientists. Since 2013, the editors of this book participated in a research project ‘Self-employed without personnel: between freedom and insecurity’, funded by the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung. The research was conducted by a research team from Utrecht University School of Economics (USE) in the Netherlands in collaboration with the Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI) in Germany. The research project studied dynamics and consequences of making the transition into solo self-employment and examined attitudes and behaviour towards pensions and other social security provisions among self-employed.

In order to discuss the outcomes of the research project, an international meeting was organised at Utrecht University in 2016. Experts from various European countries presented their research and developments in self-employment were discussed intensely from different perspectives, providing us with new insights which we believe are valuable also to a broader group of scientists, students, policy makers and others interested in the subject. During this meeting, the idea was borne to bundle this knowledge in an edited volume; this book is the result of this endeavour.

In this preface we would like to thank all the authors of the single chapters in this book for their valuable contribution. We are also indebted to many other researchers who gave us helpful feedback and suggestions on various parts of the book and during presentations at seminars and

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