Preface

This volume, *Justice and Vulnerability in Europe: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, synthesizes the results of the research programme ‘Towards a European Theory Of Justice and fairness’ (ETHOS) funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 72711. ETHOS aims to unravel what justice in Europe implicates. Questions tackled relate to European (normative) foundations of justice, the scope, scale, grounds and site of justice, what boundary lines are drawn between populations and what mechanisms impede (in)justice. The research grant enabled an interdisciplinary consortium with participants from five universities and a research institute across Europe (in Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Turkey and the UK) to study these questions during a three-year period (2017 to 2020).

This volume provides an overview of our interdisciplinary attempt to integrate political-philosophical normative thinking about justice with results of empirical studies on law in books and in practice, media, political and/or institutional discourses of justice and daily experiences of (in)justice by vulnerable populations. It claims that a non-ideal theory of justice must be preferred above an ideal theory of justice because in a culturally diverse and still social-economically unequal Europe a utopian end-state theory will fail to address the complexity of justice dilemmas that Europe is facing. The volume also argues that the multi-level legal and governance framework of decision making in Europe necessitates an integrative perspective on justice that would allow ‘practising’ justice by attending simultaneously and to an equal degree to its redistributive, recognitive and representative aspects that together make up the idea of participatory parity. ETHOS applied these three aspects of justice, formulated by the political philosopher Nancy Fraser, as a critical starting point of our theoretical search and empirical investigations in six European countries and the European Union (EU) as a supranational body (co-)determining their normative and legal frameworks. Our investigation reveals a few interesting insights into the nature of (in)justice in Europe. First, they highlight a discrepancy at the EU level between recognitive justice on the one hand and redistributive and representative justice on the other, exposing how the latter is being overruled by the dominance of economic profits, exploitation of mobile and flexible (labour) markets and by a lack of mutual solidarity between and within nation states. Second, our findings suggest that boundary lines of justice

are still drawn at the disadvantage of some sectors (for instance care work and education) and some categories of the population (frail elderly, disabled persons, ethnic minorities and migrants, young people) whose capabilities are misrecognized and whose needs tend to be dismissed.

As argued throughout this volume, a theory of justice in Europe must take into account the various constituencies that make up the political, legal, social, cultural and economic entity of Europe. While competing justice discourses, combined with the multi-layered character of the EU, and increased inequality between and within European countries may raise doubts as to the possibility of reaching justice in Europe, counter-developments take place. European populations engage in formal and informal protests against being misrecognized, discriminated in the processes of (re-)distribution and/or being misrepresented. Whether these protests will result in more justice for *all* vulnerable persons or will end up reinforcing old and/or drawing new boundary lines between the 'ins' and 'outs' of justice will depend on the degree of commitment of all involved to the ideals of justice that constitute the core of European values and the European Social Model.

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