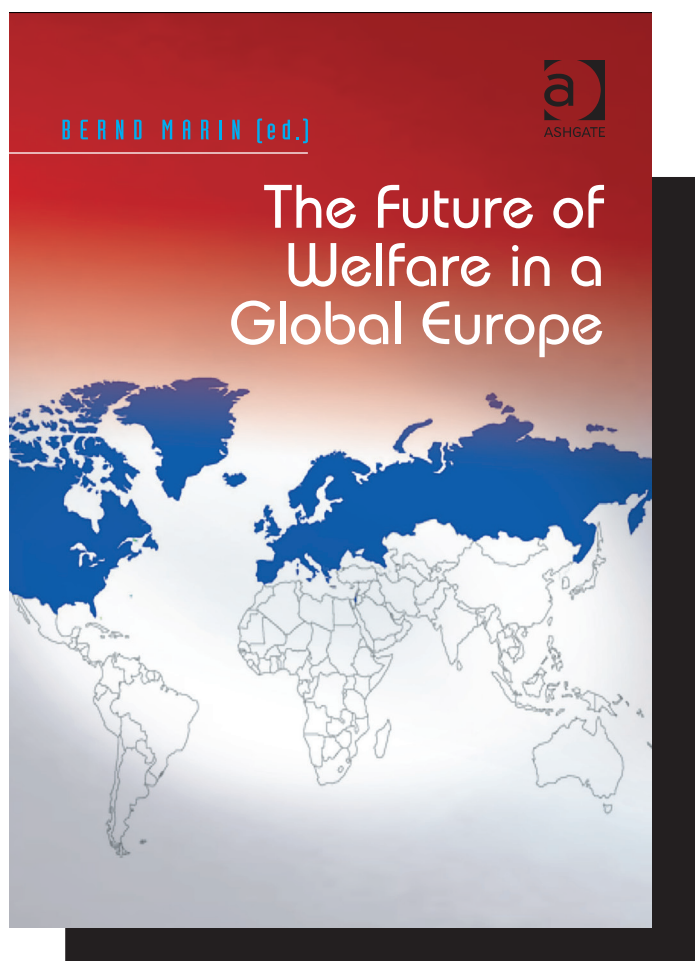


THE FUTURE OF WELFARE IN A GLOBAL EUROPE

Bernd Marin (ed.)



This book publication grew out of the symposium by which the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna, affiliated to the United Nations, celebrated its 40th anniversary, in September 2014. In a way, the collected volume reflects partly the Centre's main topics and priority contents of research, partly the scholars and experts (formerly) linked to the European Centre, partly simply the key challenges of welfare sustainability in the 21st century. It addresses not an inward-looking or a smaller Europe such as the Eurozone-18 or EU-28, but the whole UN-European region, currently spanning 56 member countries across three and a half continents, as visualized on the cover page.

Whether the future of Europe will be of global significance – and that is whether Europe will have a prosperous and humane future at all –, whether advanced welfare societies will actually survive or even prevail across the region, and whether or not a European Social Model will finally become sustainable and as paradigmatic in reality as it has been as a noble but unfulfilled claim and dream, all of this is highly uncertain, even under optimistic assumptions. Core concerns, though, will certainly be of a global dimension, and coping strategies in order to become effective will certainly have to be of a transnational scale. The authors contributing to this book set out to address these new queries and look for convincing and innovative answers, based on the knowledge available.

Many of the major themes relating to welfare sustainability are covered: the historical development of welfare from warfare and its current transformation into a workfare regime; the demographic challenges referred to as demographic metabolism; the new measures of age and ageing in the context of a relativity theory going beyond traditional chronological age and conventional but misleading dependency ratios; or the efforts to grasp phenomena such as active ageing by a new index; the fashionable topic of a social or human investment state, making future-able education and skill-formation – and the inequalities around them – the social policy of the 21st century.

Other puzzles are equally important: the extent to which economic, financial or pension literacy have become prerequisites of an advanced democracy and sustainable welfare society; whether cleavages in ageing societies are predominantly generational, age-specific or class-related; the special role of women's work and pensions; the reallocation of resources across age as measured by the national transfer accounts; the role of mental ill-health as a main driver of mass inactivity and long-term unemployment; and the function of welfare policies in generating well-being, more happiness and life satisfaction – or minimizing misery in society.

In studying fragile welfare sustainability, paradigmatic country cases or pattern recognition from comparative research may play a crucial role: what lessons can be drawn from country-specific critical case studies? Which model cases in point of welfare sustainability can be identified and what can be learned from them: the Swedish vs. the German case of labour market and welfare reforms, or the "rescue Italy" pension reform late 2011? What sub-regional patterns of public policy and social security reforms have been emerging?

The Future of Welfare in a Global Europe

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Is the Nordic model truly juxtaposing the Anglo-Saxon one as polar cases or do the North-Western "Anglo-Scandinavian" work societies actually have more in common with each other than with many of the Continental European or Central and Eastern European or South-Eastern and Mediterranean hybrid regimes? And does Germany need an "Agenda 2020" in order to overcome a series of serious components of social backwardness, in conspicuous contrast to the ambivalent "Agenda 2010" modernization push?

Finally: is there or not or not yet or rather marginally so far a "European Social Model" in Europe? And while the case for a European Social Union can and – for the editor as well as for most of the authors – should also be made, where exactly are we on the way towards a Social Union? Is Europe growing together and falling apart at the same time?

A special feature of this volume is that it includes a number of prominent authors who, apart from having made an academic career as university professors, have been temporary or even long-standing ministers (in Belgian, Italian or Polish cabinets). They were complemented in the Ministerial Roundtable at the symposium ("Europe in the World, Austria in Europe") by former Austrian, Finnish and Russian ministers who have contributed orally but not to the book publication. And it also includes a number of social scientists, demographers and economists, who have played a pivotal role as public intellectuals in their respective countries and beyond, in international and inter-governmental organizations, on a European and worldwide scale.

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