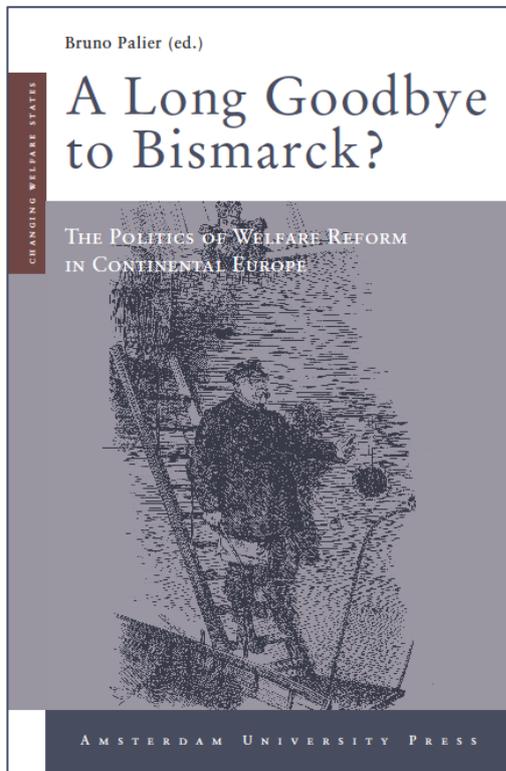


The Politics of Welfare reform in Continental Europe

Bruno Palier (ed.)



This admirably researched study provides an exhaustive comparative account of all welfare reforms in continental Europe in the past three decades, covering Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Contrary to widespread assumptions, all those countries have implemented important structural reforms of their welfare systems. These reforms must be understood as the culmination of a long reform trajectory analysed in detail in this book with the tools of comparative historical institutionalism. The authors demonstrate that

Bismarckian welfare systems have lost their encompassing capacities, partly turned to employment-friendliness, and weakened the strongest elements of their male breadwinner bias. To do so, they have developed dual welfare systems that differentiate between the protection of the core workers and the assistance and activation of the “atypical” ones. A comprehensive work that lends itself perfectly to course use.

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***Bruno Palier** is CNRS researcher at Sciences po in Paris (Centre d'études européennes) and scientific coordinator of the European Network of Excellence, Reconciling Work and Welfare in Europe (RECWOWE).*

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ENDORSEMENTS

"This volume, representing the best available scholarship in comparative socio-economic research, provides important and highly policy-relevant insights: During the last decade, and contrary to expectations, the seemingly reform-resistant Continental welfare states were able to deal with the problems of "welfare without work" that had prevailed in the 1990s. But the impressive gains in employment have generally been achieved at the price of an increasing dualism of labor markets and social-protection systems that threatens social cohesion as well as the potential for economic growth. These new problems are addressed in contributions discussing the outlines of a next wave of reform strategies. A must reading."

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"Ten years ago, comparative welfare state scholars agreed that the continental European "Bismarckian" welfare states faced the most serious problems of all of the welfare state regimes, yet these regimes seemed incapable of reforming themselves. The studies of social policy reforms in most Bismarckian welfare states in this volume show that this view is off the mark: the welfare systems of these countries have undergone profound – and similar – changes in the past decade and a half. The contributors to the volume are all recognized experts on their and provide strictly comparable analyses in their chapters making this volume a gold mine for comparative welfare state scholars. Palier's volume is certain to be a benchmark study for the foreseeable future."

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