

Werner Eichhorst and Paul Marx (eds.)

Non-Standard Employment in Post-Industrial Labour Markets: An Occupational Perspective

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Edited by two scholars working at the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Germany, this book is a collection of articles written by various international academics who study the changing labour markets in contemporary Europe. The book is divided in two main parts, whereby the first consists of country chapters and the second part contains comparative chapters.

The introductory chapter, written by Werner Eichhorst and Paul Marx, opens with a generally accepted proposition that European labour markets are undergoing a process of deep transformation characterised by deindustrialization and the growth of non-standard work. This premise is further supported and elaborated through specific insights which establish the general framework for this book. For instance, the authors note that for understanding the developments within contemporary labour markets, one must go beyond popular dichotomies such as the industry vs. service sector or skilled vs. unskilled labour as they are too simplistic. Similarly, they note that the replaceability of workers and flexibility of hiring practices are not homogenous within the institutional setting of a particular labour market but that they very much differ across various sectors and occupations. An important insight which arises in many other chapters concerns the asymmetrical effects of labour market regulation. Namely, it is observed that stability and standardization for the core workforce quite often bring higher risks of non-standard employment for others.

The first country chapter is written by Werner Eichhorst, Paul Marx and Verena Tobsch and concerns Germany, which has witnessed the rise of both atypical forms of employment and wage and income inequality in the past decade. Based on rich empirical data, the authors note that in Germany occupations with stable shares of standard employment are mostly stagnant while those which are growing record an increasing

share of flexible employment. In this context, they conclude that research of the German labour market could benefit from the introduction of an occupational perspective which would make sure that the increase in the share of non-standard employment could be interpreted as growth or shrinking of different occupations. The following country chapter written by Anne C. Gielen and Trudie Schils concerns non-standard employment in the Netherlands between 1994 and 2008. The authors conclude that there are two main categories of atypical employment in the country. The first, which is not to the advantage of workers, is found among low-skilled jobs. The second, which is beneficial to workers in terms of building careers, mostly concerns high-skilled white-collar workers. They also note that the development of atypical work in the Netherlands is not entirely driven by market aspects since some changes in atypical work patterns reflect the preferences of workers.

Baptiste Françon and Paul Marx have written the chapter on France which is something of an exception due to its regulatory framework which is quite efficient in fighting inequality. However, such a framework does not protect all workers since low wages and the use of temporary contracts tend to be concentrated in particular occupations. Furthermore, due to its strict regulatory framework, non-standard employment in France often fails to work as a stepping stone towards regular employment. Occupational growth and non-standard employment in the Spanish service sector are analysed in the contribution written by Oscar Molina and Pedro López-Roldán. These authors observe that temporary employment has become a prominent feature of the Spanish labour market and a mechanism that helps employers adjust to new circumstances on the labour market. The economic crisis only intensified this situation resulting with a massive job loss of workers which hold lower qualifications and significantly worsened working conditions of workers with higher qualifications. In the chapter on Italy Fabio Berton, Matteo Richardi and Stefano Sacchi describe the Italian labour market as flexible but highly segmented. In such circumstances workers with lower qualifications share the highest probability of holding a job which is non-standard, part-time and low paid. Furthermore, they also have the lowest probability of transition from non-standard to standard employment.

As noted by Per K. Madsen, a relatively low level of employment protection for employees with standard contracts in Denmark is directly related to the small proportion of temporary contracts on the Danish labour market. Similarly, Alison Koslowski and Caitlin McLean conclude that in the UK the number of temporary contracts is comparatively low because employers have less to lose by issuing standard open-ended contracts. In this context, it is not illogical that in the UK, unlike in Continental Europe, the public sector uses temporary contracts much more frequently than the private sector. The country chapter section of the book concludes with the contribution on non-standard employment across occupations in the U.S. written by Moira Nelson. The author highlights that in the U.S., managers have the lowest incidence of both non-standard employment and low pay. Among teaching and engineering professionals the levels of non-standard employment are high but the pay is not necessarily low, while elementary occupations and labourers exhibit both high levels of non-standard employment and high share of low wages. Accordingly, the author concludes that there are still incentives for employers to hire using non-standard arrangements when replicability and flexibility are high.

The comparative section of the book starts with a chapter on the subjective employment insecurity gap between occupations in Europe written by Heejung Chung. Based on extensive data the author concludes that managers have the lowest insecurity, followed by professionals, technicians and clerks. Service workers have similar levels of insecurity, while elementary occupations have the highest insecurity. However, as noted, gaps in employment insecurity between listed occupations are quite different across various countries. The author concludes that in countries with stricter regulations concerning hiring and firing of workers the employment insecurity gap between professionals and service workers tends to be the highest. Ruud Muffels authors the work on occupational differences in flexibilisation and mobility patterns across Europe. He notes that the trend of flexibility on the margin of the labour market is no longer unique for the Southern part of Europe but increasingly common in Continental, Eastern and Northern Europe. Furthermore, he points that a combination of strong employment protection rules and generous benefits reduces the chance of entering secure employment. Therefore, as a recipe for reducing the notorious insider-outsider divide the author advocates low employment protection for the permanent workers but a strict one for the temporary workers together with centralised wage bargaining.

Janine Leschke's chapter concerns the non-standard employment of women in service sector occupations in Europe. According to Leschke, the situation is very different from country to country, although women in all countries are more likely to be in non-standard employment. Generally, the situation in the UK, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands is particularly unfavourable, while conditions in Nordic countries and to some degree also in Central-Eastern European countries tend to be better. The same issue, only focused on Germany and the UK is analysed in the chapter written by Martina Dieckhoff, Vanessa Gash, Antje Mertens and Laura Romeu-Gordo. These authors conclude that the number of children increases the risk of temporary employment which suggests the negative effect of motherhood on employment outcome. Furthermore, while in Germany the effect of having small children on the probability of being in part time employment decreased, the opposite trend can be identified in the UK.

The contribution written by Maarten Keune presents a comparative analysis of trade union strategies towards precarious employment. After examining the situation in Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK the author notes that efforts of trade unions to reduce precarious work have not been sufficient. For Keune trade unions could hardly influence substantial decline in precarious work on their own. Therefore, he advocates the strengthening of cooperation and dialogue between the trade unions and other actors. Finally, the concluding chapter written by Marius R. Busemeyer and Kathleen Thelen examines non-standard employment in several European countries from a perspective of skill formation. Their findings correspond to the broadly known fact that vocational education and training (VET) systems ease the transition of youths from education to work. Furthermore, they note that the liberal VETs (like the one in the UK) tend to present less barriers to youth entering the labour market, but they come together with significant wage inequality and precarious employment. The authors conclude that the firm based VET system is more effective in reducing youth unemployment, while the school-based one produces better results in terms of mitigating stratification of the labour market.

This book addresses an increasingly relevant subject of non-standard employment which sharply increased in Europe and elsewhere in the past

decades. The subject was made even more relevant after the outbreak of the economic crisis which accelerated numerous previously initiated trends related to labour market transformation. The main research question set in the introductory section is why the share of non-standard employment in Europe differs across occupations. The editors Eichhorst and Marx proposed two possible explanations: the replaceability of workers and the flexibility of the labour markets. This general analytical framework was applied in all chapters of this volume. Therefore, it is not surprising that such an endeavour resulted in a highly useful book with abundant comparative material and valuable insights. As such, this book should be of interest not only to researchers and students of the labour markets and industrial relations, but also to policy makers in related fields.

Hrvoje Butković¹

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1 Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) Zagreb; e-mail: hrvoje.butkovic@irmo.hr