

Cohesion programmes could give some strength to the arguments for more change – towards increasingly integrated programmes, more specific outcome criteria and greater focus on member state monitoring and compliance. While the electorate’s views on the EU as demonstrated in the 2016 Brexit referendum does not appear to be replicated in other member states, there are issues about the extent of EU power for determining governance and funding allocations that may grow in some member states. However, while this takes place, the position of the EU as welfarist and socially redistributive organisation is not in doubt. Dellmuth’s book should help to raise the questions about how it can be more effective in achieving these objectives.

JANICE MORPHET
UCL
j.morphet@ucl.ac.uk

Will Bartlett, Vassilis Monastiriotes and Panagiotis Koutrumpis (eds) (2020), *Social Exclusion and Labour Market Challenges in the Western Balkans*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, £64.99, pp. 309, hbk.
doi:[10.1017/S0047279422000381](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279422000381)

The labour market is the segment of the economic system which has arguably suffered the most profound and lasting dysfunction under the impact of violent disintegration of former Yugoslavia, and the transition to market economy upon which the Western Balkans countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) embarked some three decades ago. For most of this time, labour markets have performed poorly. Low activity rates, high unemployment, proliferation of informal and other types of precarious work and gender pay gaps all stubbornly persist despite gradual progression in the overall labour market’s institutional architecture in alignment with the European Union’s institutional practices. The most recent 2020 data on labour market trends produced jointly by the World Bank and the Vienna Institute for International Economics (World Bank/WIIW, 2020) show that over time, improvements in the main aspects of labour market performance recorded by this set of countries have been modest and unstable. An additional twist to what in terms of economic development prerogatives is already an unsatisfactory labour market input is accelerating outward migration whose scale and profile differ significantly from the historical trends.

Against this backdrop, the volume edited by Bartlett, Monastiriotes and Koutrumpis applies the lens of social exclusion in order to analyse the factors and processes that lead to the discrimination and disadvantage in access to the labour market for three distinctive groups (namely, young people, women and Roma) while extending the inquiry to migration and social protection as two areas entwined with the persisting labour market deficiencies. The introduction to the volume sets the scene for the research findings discussed in empirical chapters by summarising in a comparative fashion the main characteristics of the labour markets in the Western Balkans, which complements the country-level analysis conducted in all but one empirical chapter. This is useful since although there are strong commonalities across countries, each labour market has its own idiosyncrasies, which reflect distinctive historical and contemporary developments. The volume’s main objective is to contribute empirically to the body of research on labour market developments in the Western Balkans as a foundation to design more concerted and innovative policy responses. Most chapters include a reflection on policy issues, and some lay out concrete policy proposals.

The twelve empirical chapters (5 on Albania; 3 on North Macedonia; one each on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and one cross-country) take a dive into some of the most intractable structural (skills mismatches), transient (education policies) and social factors (culture/ religion/ norms) affecting labour market development in the Western Balkans, and explore how those factors impact different groups and categories within the labour force. The chapters apply a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, and use novel data sets including some collected through large-scale surveys, which make a valuable contribution to otherwise modest scholarship on the Western Balkans labour markets.

Scrutinising labour market data through the social exclusion lens reveals sharp differences among various sections of the labour force: those employed and unemployed, between workers with non-standard employment contracts (part time work, temporary work, self-employment) and workers with regular employment contracts; young graduates with social capital to access jobs, and those without; women who hail from traditional families and young, educated women in urban centres; those between different ethnic groups, and lastly, Roma as a disadvantaged group compared to any other. While some of the findings fit general patterns in terms of who is excluded and why – for example, lower participation of women married to unemployed men (Giannelli and Micklewright, 1995), educational status of young people as a barrier to employment – the volume also provides several unexpected insights which capture the distinctive developments in the labour market shaped by the more recent socio-economic and political dynamics in the region.

The study of female participation in North Macedonia which clearly shows that one of the main factors of the activity gender gap is cultural, is telling of the extent to which recent re-traditionalisation of society has eroded the legacy of labour market equality promoted under the socialist system. The other unexpected findings concern different aspects of migration. Historically, economic considerations have been the main push factors of outward migration in the Western Balkans. While those still play a significant role in decisions to emigrate, the research shows that the desire for professional development and better working conditions – for example, in the case of health professionals in Albania – is an important factor which explains the more recent increase in migration from the Western Balkans. These findings underscore wider institutional and governance problems that reflect on labour market performance. The lack of strong correlation between migrant employment and remittances in the Western Balkans and limited brain gain effect from returning female migrants are another two unexpected discoveries from this research that serve to further reinforce the challenge of developing effective policies to address labour market dysfunction. Passive social policies focused on redistribution, which have in the main mimicked European Union practices, have proved woefully ineffective.

Disaggregated data on the Western Balkans labour markets is notoriously difficult to obtain, and the research underpinning this volume makes a salutary contribution. Still, analyses in some chapters rely on data ten or more years old, which potentially opens to question some claims. This shortcoming is perhaps most evident on the issue of migration where a couple of authors suggest that the new economics of labour migration (NELM) is best suited approach for the study of the Western Balkans, while anecdotal evidence suggests that over the last 5 years or so, there appears a strong trend of entire families emigrating permanently. Access to more and better data remains key to better understand labour market dynamics in the Western Balkans and to inform more effective policy responses.

References

- Giannelli, G. and Micklewright, J. (1995), Why do women married to unemployed men have low participation rates?, *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 57(4): 471–80.

World Bank/WIIW (2020), *Western Balkans Labour Market Trends 2020*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

VESNA BOJICIC-DZELILOVIC
LSE IDEAS- London School of Economics and Political Science
V.Bojicic-Dzelilovic@lse.ac.uk

Dennie Oude Nijhuis (ed) (2021), *Business Interests and the Development of the Modern Welfare State*, Abingdon & New York: Routledge, £36.99, pp. 376, pbk.
[doi:10.1017/S0047279422000393](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279422000393)

The question if business groups might have an active interest in at least some progressive welfare reforms has sustained one of the major debates of comparative welfare state research. This question has been so controversial because it contradicts a basic assumption of dominant welfare state theories – namely, that the development of the modern welfare state has been the outcome of a class struggle between labor and capital. Revisionist welfare state scholars like Peter Swenson have argued that some business groups may indeed genuinely support the introduction of expansive or solidaristic social policies, primarily due to competitive advantages they can confer, and thus become part of a cross-class coalition behind welfare state development. Similarly, Varieties of Capitalism scholars have suggested that business groups will support the development of public social policies if they expect them to enhance human capital formation and ultimately productivity.

Business Interests and the Development of the Modern Welfare State, edited by Dennie Oude Nijhuis, revisits and seeks to resolve this debate. The edited volume empirically examines employer interests in a variety of welfare programs across a range of countries. The volume contains twelve empirical chapters, which are framed by an editorial introduction and conclusion. The empirical chapters include six single-country studies as well as three two-country, two three-country, and one eight-country comparison. The volume thus studies a total of 13 countries as either primary or shadow cases: namely, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In terms of policy areas, the volume studies traditional social insurance programs (work injury, disability, sickness, old-age, and unemployment), job security regulations as well as active labor market policies, work-family policies, vocational training policies, and occupational pension policies.

The case selection of the book contributes to a welcome broadening of the so far very narrow geographic focus of the literature on business interests and welfare state development. Several of the chapters draw on previously published material. Novel empirical insights are therefore not among the main strengths of this book, at least from the perspective of scholars who are well versed in this literature. This is not a real problem, however, as the main strength of this book is arguably its contribution to a resolution of the business interest debate. In this regard, the book greatly benefits from its careful attention to differences between types of social policies and even between specific policy designs. Previous contributions to this debate have often overgeneralized from business support for specific welfare programs to business support for the welfare state in general.

The book emphasizes the heterogeneity and contingency of business interests in different welfare programs and draws several more general conclusions in this regard. The book