

FLEXICURITY AND THE LISBON AGENDA

A Cross-Disciplinary Reflection

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Flexicurity and the Lisbon Agenda. A Cross-Disciplinary Reflection

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FOREWORD

The European Union is confronted with many challenges. It faces the results of globalization and the challenges of a new knowledge-driven economy. These challenges are affecting every aspect of people's lives and require a radical transformation of the European economy. It is important that the European Union shapes these changes in a manner which is consistent with its values and concepts of society.

In the Lisbon Agenda, resulting from the Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of 23-24 March 2000, the Union has set itself a new strategic goal "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".

This will be achieved by preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society, by stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation and by completing the internal market; by modernizing the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion.

It is important that this Agenda maintains and emphasizes the economic as well as the social dimension of European integration.

This is why an academic study on the issue of 'flexicurity' may be welcomed. This notion is on the forefront in current European debate. Although it is highly focused on employment and labour market policies, it is interesting since it represents the pursuit of a balance between flexibility and security as a key target of the European economy, taking into account the mission of the EU Lisbon Strategy. It combines strategies to provide for flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness of workers, enterprises and labour markets, but it is also set to enhance security of people and a better life for citizens in Europe.

Flexicurity is, therefore, committed to a Europe with a human face. It embraces a well-trained workforce, a modern social security and a productive social dialogue. It has a place in the core tension between the economic and social policy dimensions in the European Union. It therefore goes into the key debate on the shaping of a European Social Model.

Taken from its very beginning, the European Union has achieved a great deal. There is the internal market. An economic and monetary union has been established. We have the euro. There has been a major successful enlargement. The Union has social policies and recognizes fundamental rights. This has led to economic progress, increased welfare, stability and peace.

This is the historical evidence that Europe lays the ground for a better future. It reinforces the Union's attachment to its values in endorsing that the European integration process is more than a simple market oriented project. Let this book on "*Flexicurity and the Lisbon Agenda*" be an academic exercise that can contribute to a roadmap for an increasingly improved Europe, in which economic and social progress continue to go hand in hand.

Mr. Leo Tindemans
Former Prime Minister of Belgium
Former Member of European Parliament
Minister of State of Belgium

INTRODUCTION

On 17 January 2008, the Lessius University College organized an international conference in the context of the **Leo Tindemans Chair**.

The conference aimed to foster the debate on flexicurity in the European Union from a **multi-disciplinary approach**. It raised some key questions, such as: In what context does flexicurity play a role? What are the current challenges for the world of work? What is the meaning of flexicurity? How is it to be understood in European economic and social policy? What is the success of the ‘Danish model’ and is it transferable? What is the effect of the flexicurity debate on labour laws? How will European flexicurity policy develop and what can member states do to become flexicure?

This book contains the papers that were drafted in view of the conference. They are written from different disciplinary angles, such as economics, political sciences, labour market studies, social policy and law.

As flexicurity results from the strategic objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, which promotes an active response to the challenges of globalisation, **Roger Blanpain** has addressed the main challenges for the world of work in this context. **Ton Wilthagen** and **Sonja Bekker** explain what can be understood by the notion of flexicurity and its perspective in the European policy model of economic and social goals. They also give more insight into different flexicurity pathways in Europe and pay attention to the member state challenges, by using the Dutch example. **Maarten Keune** reflects on the contribution of flexicurity to the broadening of the labour market debate and the way in which the concept effectively manages to inform and guide policy makers and politicians. **Anna Ilsøe** introduces the ‘Danish model’ that is often put forward as the reference example of flexicurity. She also deals with the success as well as the transferability of this model, drawn on experiences from comparative Danish-US research. **Hartmut Seifert** and **Andranik Tangian** give an insight into general empirical findings on flexicurity, the relationship between flexibility and precariousness, and the extent to which flexicurity can be recognised in Germany. Finally, the contribution of **Frank Hendrickx** makes an attempt to transcend the classical discussion between regulation and deregulation. In doing so, this contribution

will position flexicurity in a European labour law context, and look for its potential added value in the modernisation of labour law debate.

It is the hope of the Lessius University College and the authors that this book will contribute to a better understanding of European integration issues, in the spirit of the Leo Tindemans Chair.¹

Frank Hendrickx
Antwerp, 1 June 2008

¹ I am particularly grateful to Professor Dirk Rohtus and Professor Ysabel Nauwelaerts, the Lessius School's Leo Tindemans Chairholder and Coordinator respectively, for enabling this book and the academic work it covers.

ABOUT THE LEO TINDEMANS CHAIR

The Leo Tindemans Chair was created by the Lessius University College in honour of its former chairman Leo Tindemans, one of Europe's leading politicians and advocates of European integration. Minister Leo Tindemans was Prime-Minister of Belgium (1974-1979), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1981-1989), member of the European Parliament and chairman of the Christian democratic European People's Party. He is one of the authors of the report on the future of the European Union, and has been rewarded with many distinctions, among which the Karel de Grote Prize (1976) and the Schuman Prize (1980). He was also a professor extraordinarius at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Leuven (KULeuven).

The aim of the Leo Tindemans Chair is to contribute to the study of the European integration process, taking into account the economic, social and political development of Europe and the ideology of its major leaders. The Chair aims to foster reflection and inspiring debate and seeks to contribute to a peaceful and prosperous future for Europe, which looks back at a moving history and faces an ever globalising world.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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