

Preface to the Book Series “German Social Policy”

The welfare state originated as a project of nation states, with roots in the nineteenth century. This book is part of a book series about the German tradition of social policy, which is one of the three paradigmatic European traditions of social policy besides the British and the Swedish traditions. The book series covers modern social policy in Germany from its beginnings under the early modern state to its breakthrough in the nineteenth century to the present day, ranging from poor relief to Bismarckian social insurance to the post World War II “social market economy” and the current crisis. The series provides even more: it also locates Germany in the wider context of a comparative study of European welfare traditions, complemented by a study of the USA and the Soviet Union proposed to be non-welfare states (volume 5). Furthermore, volume 4 contrasts a democratic welfare state with a communist “welfare state”, namely the Federal Republic of Germany with the German Democratic Republic which resided side by side 1949–1990, followed by an analysis of the transition to the new unified Germany in 1990.

Beyond the empirical case of Germany, the work yields insights into general issues of social policy which have been addressed in German discourses in-depth and at an early stage. This includes the distinction “state versus society” which is essential for a theoretical understanding of the welfare state; the meaning of “the social” and the “social question”; the identification of what a “welfare state” is compared to non-welfare states; and social policy issues arising during the transition from communism to democratic capitalism.

The unique quality of the book series derives from its authors. The grand old men of German scholarship on social policy, coming from diverse disciplines, have rendered their legacy to the scientific community and to politics: *Franz-Xaver Kaufmann* (sociology) writes on the history of the idea of “social policy” in German politics since the nineteenth century (volume 1); *Michael Stolleis* (legal history) presents an overview of social policy in Germany from the middle ages to 1945, with an emphasis on the years after 1871 (volume 2); *Hans F. Zacher* (constitutional law) investigates the history of the German post-war welfare state and its normative

foundations (volume 3); *Manfred G. Schmidt* (political science) analyses communist East Germany, the German Democratic Republic (GDR, 1949–1990), followed by *Gerhard A. Ritter’s* study of German unification (1989–1994) (volume 4); and *Franz-Xaver Kaufmann* provides an international comparison of welfare states (and some non-welfare states) (volume 5). All authors take a distinctly historical approach to their subject, elaborating the formative forces of social policy in Germany.

The book series is a translated, revised and up-dated version of the first of the 11 large volumes of the “History of Social Policy in Germany Since 1945”.¹ While two contributions of the first volume have been left out, a study of German unification by Ritter (based on his award-winning study of the subject) has been added to the English version. The 11 volumes of the German work add up to the most ambitious and comprehensive study of the history of German social policy ever published. The work not just displays the state of the art but includes original studies which draw on historical sources that have not been accessible before. Especially for this work the government lifted confidentiality from many documents. Volume 1, which underlies this book series, provides a general framework for the more specific Vols. 2–11 that cover 17 fields of West and East German social policy chronologically. The work was initiated by Chancellor Kohl in 1994. The idea was to take stock of the German social policy tradition at a historical moment: the Iron Curtain over East Europe had fallen, the Treaty of Maastricht had created the “European Union” (1992/1993) and German politics had eventually realized that the “golden years” of the post-war welfare state had come to a close. At the same time, the new challenges of globalization and demographic change had become apparent. In the early 1990s, German politics was only just beginning to face up to these challenges while the authors of Vol. 1 of the German work were already sensible of the inherent tensions and uncertainties of the advanced post-war welfare state.

Translating, revising and extending the original German “History of Social Policy in Germany Since 1945” was not an easy task. It required a joint and protracted endeavour of a number of persons and a considerable sum of money. I am indebted to Richard Hauser for bringing up the idea of a translation (and joining, with Werner Abelshausen, my application for funding with the Volkswagen Foundation); to Franz-Xaver Kaufmann for continuously supporting the project in many ways and with verve; to Thomas Dunlap, David Antal and Ben Veghte who translated the demanding texts with admirable skill and care; to Günter H. Ast, formerly Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, who acted as operative editor of the texts with unceasing commitment and patience; to Werner A. Müller, Katharina Wetzel-Vandai, Irene Barrios-Kezic and Kay Stoll from Springer publishers who supported the project with diligence; and, last but not least, to the authors for their support and patience.

¹Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland seit 1945. Edited by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (*Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales*) and the Federal Archive (*Bundesarchiv*). 11 volumes, Nomos publishers, Baden-Baden. 2001–2008. The book series is based on a translation of the first volume, *Grundlagen der Sozialpolitik*. (See footnote on p. 158)

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Lutz Leisering

²Leisering L (2003) Nation state and welfare state. An intellectual and political history. *Journal of European Social Policy* 13:175–185.



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Stolleis, M.

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