Converging Europe: Transformation of Social Policy in the Enlarged European Union and in Turkey. Ed. İpek Eren Vural. Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. h/bk 274pp. ISBN 9781409407096. Price £68.00.

This volume, edited by İpek Eren Vural, has the objective of evaluating the impact of European integration on social policy development since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy. The Lisbon Strategy or Lisbon Process was a development plan devised in 2000 to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs, higher rates of employment for men and women, adequate pension schemes and greater social cohesion by 2010. At the end of the 10 year period, however, the general consensus was that strategy progress had been uneven and disappointing. One of the main reasons for this was the global economic crisis of 2007-2009.

The book, which is the product of four years of collaboration, contains five main parts. The first offers a comprehensive assessment of European integration and the impact of policy coordination among member states through the Lisbon Strategy. The next three parts offer assessments of the Strategy's impact on the national social policies of senior member states, new member states in Central and Eastern Europe, and one candidate country, Turkey. The last part compares the findings of the contributors and assesses the impact of the 2007-2009 economic crisis on the prospects for EU social policy integration.

Among the issues and policies explored in this volume are: employment, poverty, flexicurity (i.e., the combination of labor market flexibility in a dynamic economy and worker security), pensions, the welfare state, and gender equality. Drawing primarily on time-series data provided by Eurostat, the contributors generally find that while there has been some policy convergence in Europe, it varies by convergence type, time period, and the specific policy area.

Contributor Julia S. O'Connor, of the University of Ulster, describes four strategies for conceptualizing convergence: 1) 'growing together' (i.e., states becoming more similar to each other), 2) catching-up by some countries with smaller, weaker economies, 3) ranking change convergence,

and 4) minimizing distance from an exemplary model. The book generally focuses on the first two. Part three looks at how the economic stratification of post-Communist EU member states has shaped social policy. Of these countries, chapters three (O'Connor) and four (Otto Holman) address the issue of catch-up convergence with respect to the integration of Ireland, Greece, Spain, and Portugal. The authors of chapters five (Karl Hinrichs) and seven (Jan Drahokoupil and Martin Myant) examine the issue of pensions, their relation to other social expenditures, and the roles national politics and history play in mediating international pressures for pension convergence.

Chapter six (Marcel Fink) focuses on flexicurity and questions the extent to which Denmark should be seen as the prototype of the flexicurity model promoted by the EU. Denmark's social democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen had coined the term 'flexicurity' in the 1990s. In chapter eight, Noemi Lendvai speculates that the economic crisis and the socio-economic shock it caused may be more significant than EU governance in forging EU convergence. Asuman Göksel (chapter 9) examines gender equality and inequality in employment in Turkey. She notes that although equality between men and women is written into the Turkish constitution and equal pay rights exist in Turkish Labor Law, achieving gender equality as envisioned by the Lisbon Strategy has been a challenge. For example, the Turkish parliament failed to pass a bill on parental leave right that would have brought Turkey more in line with EU policy. In chapter ten, Galip L. Yalman offers a critical assessment of poverty alleviation strategies as they relate to Turkey. He notes that market reforms without redistribution have not alleviated poverty in that candidate country.

All of the chapters were competently written. Each offers rich data. Persons interested in the EU, policy realization, and the relationships among EU enlargement, convergence, and global economic pressures will find this book a valuable resource.

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