

Collective Bargaining Developments in Times of Crisis

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In many EU Member States, the various economic crises of recent years provided grounds for a rarely equalled level of state intervention in the regulation of labour relations with an explicit aim: the decentralisation of collective bargaining. An extensive body of research – summed up and analysed expertly in the chapters of this very important book – reveals that the process of decentralisation has more often than not led to a situation where salaries and labour conditions are ever more frequently determined by direct negotiations between employer and employees, with the State becoming the sole guarantor of employee protection even as it encourages decreasing labour costs to ensure that companies remain competitive.

The comparative approach offered in this book adds to this synthesis by providing examples of specific recent developments in fourteen Member States and Turkey. Among the numerous topics and issues that arise are the following:

- ‘opt-out’ clauses that derogate unfavourably from sectoral agreement standards;
- extension of the employer’s unilateral decision-making power;
- ‘memoranda of understanding’ imposed by the ‘troika’ (EU, ECB, and IMF); and
- ‘stand-by arrangements’ imposed by the IMF.

However, notwithstanding the strong emphasis on changing the structure of collective agreements by shifting the centre of gravity closer to the company, research finds promise in the reconstituted support for sector-level agreements increasingly found among very small businesses, networked businesses, and work via digital platforms.

This is the first book to take stock of the current state of collective bargaining in Europe. It is an essential study for labour and employment law practitioners, and an exemplary analysis of immeasurable value to policymakers and academics in the field.

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