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Book Review by

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Further Discussions on Labour Mobility in the EU is a significant follow-up to the 2018 volume *Labour Mobility in the EU*. Edited by sociologist Mojca Vah Jevšnik and anthropologist Kristina Toplak of the ZRC SAZU Institute, the book expands its scope, offering broader, multidisciplinary perspectives on EU labor mobility (p. 9). With contributions from ten scholars across four EU countries, the book is intended not only for academics but also policymakers and stakeholders, aligning with the principles of open science.

The volume situates labor mobility within the evolving framework of “mobilities”. Through eight chapters, the book explores diverse aspects of labor mobility, ranging from cross-border commuting and temporary postings to sector-specific migrations. It balances quantitative analyses with qualitative insights, examining long-term structural challenges like demographic aging, globalization, and social protection frameworks. The editors emphasize the multidimensionality of labor mobility, arguing that it is shaped by intersecting political, economic, and social forces.

The introduction by Vah Jevšnik and Toplak (pp. 9–12) establishes the book’s objectives, positioning it as a deeper and more comprehensive examination than its predecessor. It calls for critical scrutiny of EU policy frameworks and their often-inadequate responses to disparities and vulnerabilities in mobility and social protection.

Chapter 1, *Transnational Social Protection in the EU from a Statistical Point of View* (pp. 13–34), by De Wispelaere, provides an insightful statistical analysis of EU Coordination Regulations (Basic Regulation 883/2004 and Implementing Regulation 987/2009), which safeguard transnational social protection for EU/EFTA citizens. The chapter highlights the scope and impact of these regulations, such as pension portability, export of family

benefits, and cross-border healthcare access, with over 15.8 million citizens benefiting from these mechanisms (p. 28). However, De Wispelaere identifies gaps in coverage, particularly for economically inactive citizens, and critiques national political pressures that undermine cross-border social rights.

Chapter 2, *The Multiple Labour Mobilities of North African Migrant Workers within and through Italy to Europe* (pp. 35–58), by Cillo and Perocco, explores pathways of migration and mobility regimes in Italy. The authors highlight the construction sector's reliance on migrant laborers from both EU and non-EU countries, such as Morocco, India, Tunisia, and Egypt, revealing how temporary work arrangements perpetuate precariousness. Many workers are initially integrated into ethnically segmented “racialized” labor niches, such as agriculture and construction, one of the main sectors of employment, which act as transit sectors “in the heaviest, most dangerous, most precarious and lowest-paid occupations” (p. 40). Through these niches (p.40), workers often transition into other sectors, such as metal, mechanical, and chemical industries, or into low-skilled roles in the service sector, self-employment, and the regular labor market (pp. 38–39). This dynamic reflects different types of mobilities, like inter-sectoral and inter-professional mobilities (p. 39), associated with geographical mobility (p. 41) and circular migration patterns (p. 44), as well as vertical mobilities in employment (p. 41). The chapter also analyzes the case of North African workers posted by Italian companies in core European countries like Belgium, Switzerland, and Denmark, demonstrating how the posting of workers revives, in a new form, the mobility patterns and transitional pathways. The study examines how posting contracts often fail to ensure administrative regularity, exacerbating exploitation, especially among North African workers (pp. 38–42). The analysis reveals that the internationalization in posting of workers is often associated with forms of downward mobility (p. 43), precariousness and under-employment (p. 49), exploitation and human trafficking (p. 50), especially in a context of a decades-long anti-Arab and anti-Islamist climate (p. 41).

Chapter 3, *A Perfect Storm: Demographic Ageing, Severe Healthcare Staff Shortages, and Globalization of Healthcare Labour Markets* (pp. 59–78), by Vah Jevšnik and Cukut Krilić, investigates labor shortages in the EU healthcare sector, exacerbated by demographic aging, migration, low natality and globalization, emerging additional strain after the Covid-19 pandemic (p. 59), addressing the issue under the question of ethics (p. 69). The authors highlight systemic issues such as poor wages, inflexible working conditions, and mental health challenges driving healthcare workers to seek opportunities abroad, often to the detriment of their home countries (p. 65). They stress that demographic disparities, such

as the old-age dependency ratio (p. 63), further exacerbate imbalances. The chapter calls for comprehensive EU strategies to address healthcare worker mobility and its consequences.

Chapter 4, *Care Migration in Care Homes for Older People in the European Semi-Periphery* (pp. 79–102), by Hrženjak and Breznik, focuses on Slovenia's care sector and its reliance on migrant workers from former Yugoslav countries. This sector in Slovenia has historically relied on migration (pp. 87–88). Using Wallerstein's world-systems theory, the authors illustrate how Slovenia's semi-peripheral status perpetuates labor exploitation and systemic inequalities. The chapter emphasizes the feminization of care migration and the structural challenges faced by both native and migrant care workers, exacerbated by limited financial resources and systemic underinvestment in elder care (p. 95). Semi-peripheral countries, like Slovenia, maintain their position in the global economy by keeping labor costs lower than those of core countries, perpetuating social inequalities and labor exploitation. Neoliberal policies exacerbate these dynamics, as budget constraints and reduced public spending lead to deteriorating conditions for care workers and higher financial burdens for households.

Chapter 6, *Intra-EU Cross-Border Workers in the Time of COVID-19 Movement Restrictions* (pp. 103–126), by Toplak, examines the impact of pandemic-induced mobility restrictions on cross-border and posted workers. The chapter critiques the EU's lack of coordination during the crisis, highlighting how restrictive measures disrupted the principle of free movement and disproportionately affected key workers in essential sectors (p. 109). The study shows that cross-border and posted workers, who are often concentrated in precarious sectors, were disproportionately affected by layoffs and reduced opportunities (pp. 111, 116–117). Many were left without access to sufficient social protections or financial assistance, further heightening their economic vulnerability (p. 117). Existing issues such as temporary contracts, language barriers, and lower wages compared to domestic workers were exacerbated during the pandemic. Movement restrictions created additional barriers to employment, escalated commuting costs, and led to significant job losses, particularly in non-essential sectors like tourism, catering, and trade (pp. 118–120). Toplak critiques the lack of coordination among EU Member States, which prioritized national interests over collective strategies. This fragmentation undermined the principle of free movement, placing significant burdens on mobile workers. Slovenian policies, implemented with little notice, failed to align with measures in neighboring countries, leading to confusion and frustration among workers (p. 119). Toplak calls for

improved EU-wide strategies to mitigate future crises and ensure equity for mobile workers (p. 121).

Chapter 7, *Diverse Realities of Roma Labour Migration from Slovakia* (pp. 127–152), by Slavíková and Mýtna Kureková, provides a nuanced exploration of Roma labor migration. The chapter highlights systemic discrimination, low employment rates, and precarious working conditions among Roma communities (p. 127). Migration, often framed as a survival strategy based on family networks, reveals both opportunities and challenges, as Roma migrants face stigmatization and exploitation in host countries (p. 134).

Chapter 8, *Rethinking Health-Related Vulnerabilities of Temporary Migrant Workers* (pp. 153–172), by Cukut Krilić and Vah Jevšnik, delves into occupational safety and health (OSH) vulnerabilities. Using a layered vulnerability framework (pp. 156), the authors examine how Migration-Related Factors (pp. 157–159), Socioeconomic Conditions in the Home Country (pp. 160–161) and Conditions in the Receiving Country (pp. 162–165). Case studies, such as the *caporalato* system in Italy, illustrate systemic exploitation. The chapter critiques the narrow focus of OSH literature and advocates for broader, context-sensitive approaches to address vulnerabilities (p. 166).

The book's multidisciplinary approach and integration of quantitative data with qualitative insights are among its greatest strengths, offering a nuanced understanding of EU labor mobility. Contributions from international scholars enrich the discourse, providing a comprehensive analysis of structural and policy-driven challenges. The thematic coherence across chapters underscores the interplay between EU regulations, labor market dynamics, and workers' lived experiences. However, the book's breadth may leave some readers seeking a more cohesive narrative. The diversity of topics, while enriching, can make it challenging to draw overarching conclusions.

Further Discussions on Labour Mobility in the EU is a timely and essential resource for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. It offers valuable insights into the multidimensional nature of labor migration, making a significant contribution to mobility studies and EU policy analysis.