

INTRODUCTION

The four articles in this issue of the *Review* deal with employment and labour market policies. The first of them reviews and interprets the empirical evidence on job stability in industrialized countries, while the second establishes a complete labour-supply function (in the shape of an inverted “S”) by adding a downward-sloping segment to the upward-rising and backward-bending segments of the conventional neoclassical labour-supply function. The third and fourth articles respectively examine the scope of labour mobility within the European Union and evaluate the significance of incentives to programme administrators in the design of active labour market policies in industrialized countries. This issue of the *Review* also contains the first part of a “perspective” on gender and equality.

For a number of years, high unemployment coupled with extensive media coverage of the growth of atypical employment and the heavy job losses associated with corporate restructuring have been feeding the popular idea that labour markets the world over are in the midst of a revolution that will eventually sweep aside the last remnants of the long-term, stable employment relationship. Tomorrow, the headlines proclaim, belongs to flexibility, employability and life-long learning, with ideal workers nimbly negotiating their way through twisting, multiple-employer career paths. The implications of this supposed shift for labour market policy and for economic and social security already account for a sizeable body of research and recommendations.

But some are beginning to suspect the underlying assumption may be wrong. *Peter Auer and Sandrine Cazes*, in the opening article of this issue of the *Review*, take this view. Their empirical findings suggest that the “end-of-the-long-term-job” theories do not fit the real world. Focusing on trends in employment tenure, their meticulous investigation also looks at the effects of age and ageing, the economic cycle, temporary employment and other factors relevant to job stability. Although the perception of job insecurity seems to have increased, this study shows that the long-term employment relationship is resilient, with little change in employment tenure over the 1990s. In the process, the labour market function of temporary employment in entry-level jobs (especially for young workers) becomes clearer, as does the interaction

of supply and demand in this peripheral segment of the market. The authors' comparative perspective also identifies inter-country variability in patterns of segmentation between the stable labour market core and a flexible periphery. But even inter-country differences in patterns of tenure prove stable over the long term with no trend towards convergence or divergence. This, the authors argue, should refocus the research and policy agendas on optimizing *combinations* of stability and flexibility, as opposed to an either-or approach.

The conventional neoclassical labour-supply function consists of an upward-sloping curve (as wages increase), topped by a backward-bending segment at very high wages. However, it does not reveal labour-supply behaviour when wage rates fall below subsistence level and the worker has no alternative source of income. Reviewing existing theories and empirical evidence from both industrialized and developing countries, the article by *Mohammed Sharif* concludes that distress sales of labour at below-subsistence wage levels generate a downward-sloping supply curve depicting an expansion in labour supply as the wage rate declines. The absence of trade unions, minimum wage legislation, unemployment and welfare benefits makes the assetless poor workers in traditional economies solely dependent on their labour for survival. Adding this downward-sloping segment to the upward and backward-bending segments of the neoclassical labour-supply function provides a complete labour-supply curve, given by an inverted "S".

The countries of the European Union are engaged in a process of economic and monetary integration and confronted with the prospect of the Union's enlargement to central and eastern European countries. In this context, the question of labour mobility and, more generally, that of labour market integration is taking on special importance. Some fear that, on the one hand, enlargement may lead to a large-scale migratory movement from the East to the West and that, on the other, the internal labour market may be closed to migrant workers from outside the Union.

François Vandamme, in his article, deals with this very question. He recalls that free movement of labour had been perceived by the architects of the Treaty of Rome as a fundamental right within the Common Market. Yet the complexity of regulations and the difficulty of applying them, together with the evolution of needs and demand for skills, make labour mobility look more like wishful thinking than a practical reality. Confronted with this, the author provides some insights based on Community policy for regional issues, internal security and justice, social protection and labour standards, before making suggestions for the realization of a genuine European labour market, not turning it into a fortress to keep out workers from outside the Union. To this end, the article proposes an elaborate and concrete programme to facilitate labour mobility (notably from the administrative point of view), making it more attractive and secure, highlighting the labour market experiences of member countries, safeguarding the rights of workers, and consolidating anti-discriminatory policies. Such measures, based on the fundamental rights of workers enshrined in the instruments in force in Europe, should

reduce the often exaggerated concerns expressed about impediments to the integration of national labour markets within the European Union.

The article by *Bart Cockx* begins with the argument that labour market policies, to be effective, must be designed to deal with the underlying causes of persistent unemployment in industrialized countries. Statistical evidence indicates that the probability of re-employment decreases with unemployment duration. The article suggests that mandatory job-search programmes could counter worker demotivation, while temporary work-experience programmes could prevent loss of skills and work habits by those at risk of being long-term unemployed. The article reviews Belgium's social employment programme which — by targeting unemployed workers affected by “job-search discouragement”, loss of work habits and skill deterioration — aims to enhance the employability of participants. But since the programme's administrators have tended to select these among the most productive and highly skilled welfare recipients — in order to provide cheaply the community services for which they are responsible — participation in such programmes has increased rather than decreased welfare dependency for want of a training component. Such drawbacks are noted in similar programmes in other countries of the European Union, while some effective programmes from the United States are analysed for their success. The article also describes the experience of a vocational training programme in Belgium which has been successful in reducing the unemployment duration of the selected participants, and highlights the practical difficulties of aligning programme administrators' vested interests with overall programme objectives.

Societal norms that identify women with the domestic sphere are one of history's most intractable legacies to social policy-makers. Of course, women are now out in the economic and political open — working, earning, speaking out, suing, voting and being elected. But the social choice of *equality* between women and men remains but a goal, especially distant in the world's more traditional societies. How such equality is being promoted within national and international policy frameworks is under critical scrutiny — and reconsideration — from different quarters, including feminism. And some of the current challenges to established thinking and practice are particularly promising. These include the renewed interest in gender, as distinct from women, and the consequent shift in development policy thinking; but also the questioning of instrumentalities like efficiency, the research focus on men and “masculinities”, and the debate on caring labour and on the very concept of equality. These and other recent developments in today's broader thinking on gender and equality will be considered in Part II of the “Perspective” by *Mark Lansky*, to be published in the next issue of the *International Labour Review*.

In order to clarify the context in which today's thinkers and researchers have been considering new options for the future, Part I of the “Perspective” (in this issue of the *Review*) examines some of the conceptual shifts and issues that have shaped the current thinking on gender and, to a lesser extent, equality policy. In particular, it briefly traces the development of the concept of

gender in feminist scholarship. Indeed, the equality agenda is now replete with references to “gender” and related concepts, especially since the official policy shift from “women in development” to “gender and development”. But what has this shift really meant in practice? As with gender itself, the new catchword has proved easier to utter than its meaning has been to operationalize in the interest of greater effectiveness in the pursuit of social justice.

The *Books* section reviews two books, the first of which considers the implications of the recent welfare reforms in the United States for those receiving social assistance payments, for their well-being and for state budget and policies at a time when an economic recession appears to be looming. The second book reviewed is a compilation in honour of former international civil servant Nicolas Valticos, covering general principles of law, general international law, international jurisdictions, European law, human rights law, national and international labour law and public law.

The first of the five books in the *Recent books* section critically examines whether the emigration of knowledge workers from India has had a positive impact on Indian society when they interact with their home economy. The second book assesses the extent of changes in full- and part-time employment in both eastern and western Europe. The third presents country case studies on economic and monetary union and collective bargaining in selected European countries. The fourth focuses on the role of social dialogue as a problem-solving mechanism, particularly for unemployment, in Europe and the United States. The last of these books deals with globalization, touching broadly on economic, social, historical and institutional dimensions relating to five regional groupings of countries.

New ILO publications begin with two books on *Decent Work*, the first focusing on the European information economy and the second reviewing ILO activities in Europe and Central Asia. The remaining new publications deal with economic and employment opportunities in five Andean countries; discrimination against migrant workers in the labour markets of European countries; labour practices in the footwear, leather, textiles and clothing industries; the contribution of labour administration to economic and social development; small enterprise development in the Caribbean; and social budgeting.