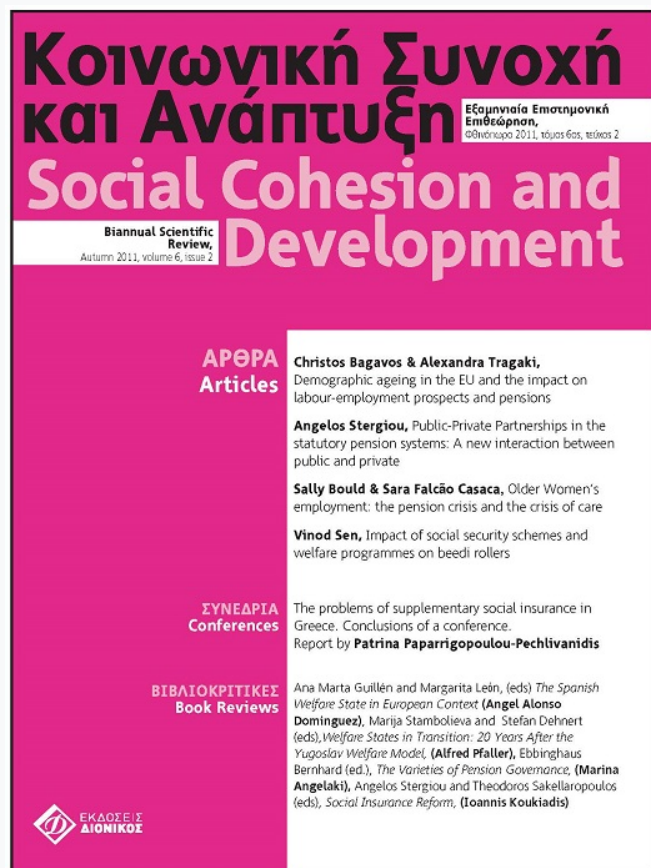


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A. Stergiou – Th. Sakellaropoulos (eds) Social Insurance Reform, Dionicos, Athens, 2010 (in Greek)

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A. Stergiou – Th. Sakellariopoulos (eds)

Social Insurance Reform,

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Social insurance has been under postponement for several decades now. It has constituted a hot potato for both politicians and social partners, while an informal consensus was reached regarding its constant delay. Nonetheless, the scientific debate was lively throughout these years and therefore cannot be accused as an accomplice to the silence as critical studies and serious proposals could have fed the political tools. And here lies the inability to adopt rational solutions. Clientelism and short-term political tactics have trapped social insurance in a constant stillness. This has in turn resulted in social insurance being unprepared to face its current fiscal spiralling, therefore becoming an easy prey to horizontal cuts. The so-called 'noble' funds have carried along their free fall the other funds.

The volume edited by professors A. Stergiou and Th. Sakellariopoulos aims at presenting in an integral and pluralist way the scientific dialogue that took place. It succeeds at highlighting a series of interesting proposals and analyses that could lead to a path-break in a context of social solidarity. The volume adopts an interdisciplinary approach, given the need for a holistic examination of the issue. Lawyers, economists and sociologists with an expertise in social insurance contribute to the formulation of a reformist path.

The first part presents the Report and the interventions made during the dialogue on social insurance that took place in 2009/10, before the sovereign debt crisis and the fiscal adjustment outlined in the Memorandum. It is true that, following the dialogue and the publication of the Report, the reform took a very different path. All measures taken since 2010 –and there has indeed been a great number of laws- have been subordinated to the fiscal imperatives and the austerity policy dictated to Greece. Against this background, the Memorandum has been decisive in dismantling the principles and the level of social insurance.

For the first time, different scientific views were put on the table of the Committee on social dialogue for the pension reform. The dialogue that took place has been particularly fruitful, as the views expressed by experts were commented by the social partners, while those of the latter constituted a food for thought for experts. This interactive relation has been crystalized in the final Report which brought together the basic points of convergence of the Committee members. The Report has in turn been based on the interventions of the Committee members as well as the lively debate that followed. The interventions which constituted the basis of the dialogue between the Committee members have also been included in the present volume.

The Report is in particular divided in two parts: the first focuses on the agreed goals of the reform, while the second presents the twelve points of convergence for the reform of the social insurance system. The former has been dictated by the need to define the 'kind' of social insurance we want. The agreement on the goals in turn defined the specific measures proposed. The latter are presented in the second part of the Report. The conduct of projections (definition on common assumptions), the combat of tax evasion, the control of medical expenditure, the rationalization of pharmaceutical expenditure, the assessment of the system for the provision of disability pensions, the system's computerization, the establishment of a system for the collection of fines, the provision for new sources of funding, successive insurance, the merging of funds and wider organizational and financial issues have been the subject of the Committee's discussions during which divergent views were put forward.

The path-breaking approach of the Report relates to the suggested rationalisation of redistribution through the separation of contributory from solidarity elements. All participants agreed on the new architecture of the pension system. Based on both the interventions and the proposals put forward, it became evident that this transformation would be achieved through the separation of the social insurance from the social solidarity mechanisms. Therefore, the social solidarity part of the pension would cover basic subsistence needs (redistributive justice) while the proportional part would reward the contributory effort of the insured (contributory justice).

The second part of the volume contains a series of studies, which have had an indirect effect on the social dialogue process given that they have been published before it. Among them features the article of Th. Sakellaropoulos ('Social insurance as a social right') rightly emphasizing that economic growth cannot take place in the absence of social insurance, as well as one -co-authored with M. Angelaki- ('The politics of pension reform in southern Europe') in which the Greek case is placed within a comparative framework. P. Tinios 'Pension reform in Greece: reform by instalments – a blocked process?' provides a timely and critical description of the reform impasse in Greece, followed by a thorough analysis by S. Robolis, Ch. Bagavos and I. Hatzivasiloglou on the impact of migration on the sustainability of the pension system. The volume concludes with an interesting research conducted by Th. Margiolos, G. Skolis and E. Groza on the maximum possible ratio of non-workers to workers in the Greek economy refuting the stereotype constructions concerning the sustainability of the social insurance system, a proposal by M. Nektarios for a new pension system and a community-inspired proposal by Th. Tsotsorou and N. Sklikas on the improvement of the system's structure.

The volume edited by A. Stergiou and Th. Sakellaropoulos does not succumb to a dialogue where its general traits are defined by populist morning TV shows. Anyone supporting social justice will find in this volume an ally for a social insurance respecting its historical foundations and its role in the contemporary globalized environment.

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