

## Book review

# European social protection -systems in perspective

*Michael 2006;3:47–8.*

**Paqui, Lucie. European Social Protection -Systems in Perspective**  
Compostela Group of Universities and the Phoenix TN, 2004. 130 pp.  
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The Compostela Group is one of many broad university networks, set up to further develop university cooperation in Europe. This group was initiated in the Compostela Holy Year of 1993 by the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, with the aim of establishing a university network to preserve the historical and cultural heritage around the pilgrimage roads across Europe to Santiago de Compostela. The network has gradually expanded and now consists of almost 80 European universities. The scope of the work in the group is wide, encompassing many aspects of research and higher education. The European Union participates in financing some of the activities in the group.

This rather brief text (130 pages) is one of the publications in the Group's series "European Issues", and is one of the results of the Socrates/Erasmus project "Phoenix: Thematic Network on Health and Social Welfare Policy", approved by the European Commission in 2001. Contributions came from five meetings, from 1994 to 2000, assembling researchers from various nationalities and disciplines.

The author gives an interesting outline of the development of welfare systems and welfare states in Europe, outlining the differences in underlying philosophy, scope and approach among groups of European countries. As the term Social Protection in the title implies, the emphasis is on social benefits, as well as on comparative data on measures against poverty, unemployment and exclusion. Financing and organization of health services and health care are touched upon but not dealt with in depth. Nevertheless, to a reader with a public health background one reflection is that this is yet another pub-

lication which labels and describes health services as part of the social services, not as in my opinion as an independent main sector of society in line with and in cooperation with social services and social security systems.

The data provided extend up to the late 1990s. Recent years have shown a trend towards restrictions in the role of the state, reduction in the levels of social protection and increases in the proportion of health expenses paid by patients. Towards the end of the 1990s such signs of a weakening of the welfare state appeared in many European countries in recent years, whether with conservatives or socialists/social democrats in political power. The book briefly outlines this development, but detailed and up-to-date information on this development must be sought elsewhere.

The rapid changes in financing and organization of health and social services of the welfare state seen in many countries in recent years illustrate politicians' beliefs or hopes that such measures might solve problems of budget restrictions and increased demand. This publication outlines the historical background and as such it will be of interest and be useful to politicians, administrators and researchers.

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