In the first article, ‘Employment regulation and productivity: Is there a case for deregulation?’ by Michael Brookes, Newcastle University, Philip James, Middlesex University, and Marian Rizov, University of Lincoln, UK, the authors analyse if a minimal approach to employment protection is correlated with manufacturing productivity performance in a comparison of countries with varying degrees of employment protection regulation. The authors suggest that there is no straightforward negative relationship between productivity and employment protection.

The second article, by Alessandra Innesti, legal consultant, UK, formerly University of Bergamo, Italy, Elena Radevich-Katsaroumpa, Tomsk State University, Russia, and Malcolm Sargeant, Middlesex University, UK, ‘Disability quotas: Past or future policy?’, examines the functioning of quotas in relation to employment of workers with a disability. The authors emphasize the complex character of quotas, and discuss the disadvantages of quotas in certain respects.

In the article ‘The roles of shared perceptions of individual job insecurity and job insecurity climate for work- and health-related outcomes: A multilevel approach’, by Lena Låstad, Stockholm University, Sweden, Katharina Näswall, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, Erik Berntson, Stockholm University, Aram Seddigh, Stockholm University, Stockholm School of Economics, and Magnus Sverke, Stockholm University, Sweden, the authors suggest that the work group is important in job insecurity climate perceptions, in terms of self-reported health and burnout. In the conclusions, the authors also point out the importance of including this social component.

Tod Rutherford, Syracuse University, USA, and Lorenzo Frangi, University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada, discuss the abolition of an important piece of labour legislation in Italy, in the article ‘Overturning Italy’s Article 18: Exogenous and endogenous pressures, and role of the state’. The authors argue that the overturn of this specific Article in favour of the new Jobs Act was determined by both external and internal factors. However, they point out the tacit role played by the state in this process, thus emphasizing the power of the state.

The article ‘Farewell to flexicurity? Austerity and labour policies in the EU’, by Thomas M Hastings and Jason Heyes, both at Sheffield University Management School, UK, analyses the impact of the financial crises of 2007–2008 in terms of flexicurity. The security part was found to be less important in several EU countries. Further, the diverse developments in various European countries after 2008 are discussed against the Varieties of Capitalism literature.

The role of outsourcing is analysed in the article ‘Outsourcing in 18 European countries: The role of worker power’, by Fabian Dekker, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and
Ferry Koster, TIAS School for Business and Society, and Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The authors suggest that a workers’ perspective is needed in the discussion of the various forces of outsourcing. Further, and somewhat surprisingly, according to the authors, including factors in terms of worker power, the results suggest that these factors were important in terms of explaining outsourcing decisions.

Gunilla Albinsson and Kerstin Arnesson, both at Linnaeus University, Sweden, discuss local policy level in Sweden in terms of managerial jobs in the article ‘The managerial position in a Swedish municipal organization: Possibilities and limitations’. The authors studied various managers on a municipal level in Sweden. By using qualitative methods, they found that the managers had a complex work situation, confusing responsibilities and gendered work conditions.

In the final article in this issue, ‘The promises and pitfalls of collective bargaining for ending the victimization of trade union activists: Lessons from France’, authors Cécile Guillaume, Queen Mary University, UK, Sophie Pochic, Centre Maurice Halbwachs – CNRS, and Vincent-Arnaud Chappe, Mines ParisTech, France, suggest that the trend of union victimization is important to analyse from a French perspective. They point out that despite the strengthening of the support for unions in terms of legislation, this is not enough to prevent union victimization. Further, focusing on case studies over a long period, the authors emphasize the changing role of HR specialists and the unions in this respect.

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