In January 2009 we took on responsibility for the Journal of European Social Policy as new editors. Being in charge of such an established and successful project is an exciting honour but also a daunting task. Since its foundation in 1991 the Journal has grown, widened its readership, extended its volume and strengthened its impact. Our main concern as new editors is to ensure that this success continues.

In our view, one of the reasons for the Journal’s success is its clear profile and interest in classic areas of social policy research, such as labour markets, health, pensions, gender, childcare and family policies, issues of poverty and social inclusion, European integration and EU policies, as well as comparative methodology. A second reason is its diverse theoretical and methodological approach and a style which bridges disciplinary boundaries. As incoming editors we intend to maintain these features and further strengthen the Journal’s reputation and commitment to core policy areas, to multidisciplinarity and to publishing theoretically-grounded empirical policy research. Of course, to some extent the Journal will always reflect the concerns and intellectual preoccupations of a particular time, but it will not become dominated by one type of approach.

The Journal’s profile is an asset. However, critical reflection on its course is important in order to avoid scholarly debates becoming too entrenched. Therefore, from time to time, we will promote articles which aim to reflect on and possibly expand the Journal’s agenda. Thus, we would like to revisit widely read and cited articles, some of which discussed the role of gender in European welfare state research, reflected the debate on worlds of capitalism, analysed EU social policy development, contributed to the debate on welfare reform and retrenchment, or introduced innovative approaches in comparative methodology. We would like to reassess the past significance of such articles and discuss their current relevance. Similarly, we would like to initiate symposia or invite think pieces on aspects that have not featured very strongly in the past but deserve more attention, such as for example migration and social policy.

It is important for the Journal to stay in touch with current debates, researchers and authors in the field of European social policy. In this respect we appreciate the collaboration between the Journal and ESPAnet which has continued for some time and is most visible in the annual ‘doctoral researcher’s award’, based on the reviews of PhD papers presented at ESPAnet activities and the publication of the best paper in a particular year. The annual ESPAnet conference has established itself as the predominant forum for networking and exchange for researchers in the field. Other ESPAnet activities such as regular summer schools, doctoral workshops and thematic seminars are important events for social policy debate, training and academic social policy exchange at the European level. In short, we look forward to maintaining and possibly exploring further ways of collaborating with ESPAnet.

From 2009 onwards the editing process of the Journal will be directed from both the University of Edinburgh and the University of Southampton. In order to give the Journal one virtual common location, and to make the submission and reviewing process more transparent and less time consuming, we have assessed the option of employing the online submission software Manuscript Central. Initial concerns that such an efficient, yet perhaps more anonymous, system might negatively affect the interaction between authors, editors and reviewers were dispelled. We hope that experience will confirm our positive view of the new system, and that authors and reviewers will appreciate this innovation. After all, the continuing success of JESP relies only to a very small part on the editors and the editorial board, and to a much larger part on the authors, reviewers and, last but not least, readers of the Journal.

We look forward to working with all of you in making the Journal of European Social Policy a continuing success.

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