

Preface and Acknowledgments

This book is part of the series *Legal Issues of Services of General Interest* that publishes topical issues arising from the underpinning research project: the *Transformation of the Market and the State (ToMaS)*. *Social* services of general interest (SSGIs) are a new concept in EU terminology. As the chapters in this book reveal the concept is not used in national law or policy. However, it is a concept that is emerging as a special category of Services of General Interest in the EU. SSGIs are not a legal concept and do not have a clear definition in either EU legislation, policy documents or soft law. Indeed EU legislative competence in the field is limited. Often SSGIs are conceptualised as exemptions or exclusions in EU law. Yet the economic downturn in Europe alongside attempts by the European Commission to modernise public and social services and introduce efficiency have propelled issues of the regulation of SSGIs to a prominent position in EU policy-making. They are a central concern of the modernisation of the internal market project, embracing issues of state aid, procurement and competition policy. We believe that this topic is currently one of the most politically sensitive, controversial and legally complex topics in the EU.

EU policy, alongside the case law of the European Courts has led to the fragmentation of the various policy responses towards SSGIs at the EU level. Thus, it appeared timely that research should be undertaken in the area to chart the EU—and national—responses. This book represents an initiative in this field. It has been an ambitious project, co-ordinating some 21 authors, pulling together common underlying themes and emphasising divergence and difference. We would like to thank all the authors for their stimulating contributions which constitute important first steps in grasping the challenges of the area.

The book is the outcome of an international conference held at the University of Copenhagen in May 2011. We would like to thank the University of Copenhagen, including in particular the Faculty of Law. We are especially grateful to the Dean, Henrik Dam, and the research centre Welma for the generous financial support (granted through the University's research program 'EURECO'). The research centre Welma focuses its research on legal studies in welfare and EU market integration. We would also like to thank the staff at the Faculty of Law, especially

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The book was edited mainly during 2011 with a good working relationship between the four editors. As with all edited books the final manuscript can only be delivered when the last chapter is complete. Many authors delivered their manuscripts soon after the conference in May 2011. Where possible we have updated information when necessary to reflect recent developments. We have also discussed how much 'editing' of work written in English when English is not the first language of the author should take place. We have agreed that a light touch should take place to allow each author to express their views from national linguistic perspectives. Grateful thanks are owed to Rasmus Bogetoft, who has been extremely helpful and meticulous in the compilation of indexes, reference checking and transforming chapters into house-style. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jim Davies who also provided editorial assistance.

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