

Studien aus dem Max-Planck-Institut
für Sozialrecht und Sozialpolitik

Ulrich Becker | Irene Domenici [Eds.]

Life in Dignity

A Comparison of National Approaches
to Minimum Income Protection



Nomos

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Preface

The present study begins with a seemingly trivial yet fundamental question in view of social reality: Do states guarantee minimum subsistence to individuals under their jurisdiction? Despite the abundance of legal and socio-political promises, combatting poverty remains an unachieved goal to this day. Addressing this question touches on the core responsibilities of the welfare state and reveals the underlying normative conceptions about the relationship between the political community and individuals in need. We explore this question by analysing social benefits designed to ensure a minimum income, which form part of the social protection architecture of many countries. These benefits have grown in importance in the face of the transformations and crises over the past two decades, from the lasting impact of the financial crisis to the pandemic, the rise of non-standard forms of employment, and the current challenges posed by inflation and rising energy and living costs.

The idea for this collective project, bringing together experts from different countries across the globe, took shape building on these reflections. It began with a workshop held in Munich in November 2022 and evolved into a fruitful dialogue. Most of the chapters reflect the legal and policy landscape as of late 2024. The scientific exchange has been very stimulating, and our first heartfelt thanks go to all the contributors. We are deeply grateful for their enthusiastic commitment to this ambitious endeavour and for the smooth collaboration.

The publication of this book would not have been possible without the support and dedication of other colleagues. We are grateful to Monika Queisser and Herwig Immervoll from the OECD for their thoughtful feedback. Our sincere thanks also go to Christina McAllister and Niki Rodousakis for proofreading, and to Matthias Elbert, Jil Sophie Maier, and Oumar Diallo for their assistance with the editing process. We also thank Nomos Verlag for their professional support throughout the publication process.

Munich, June 2025

Ulrich Becker, Irene Domenici

Table of Contents

Part I: Introduction

Ulrich Becker

Life in Dignity Through Minimum Income Protection: Introduction	13
--	----

Part II: European Perspective

Teodora Petrova and Yaroslava Guenova

On the Search for Dignity Amidst Restrictiveness: Minimum Social Income in Bulgaria	39
--	----

Linxin He

The Quest for a Decent Minimum Income in France	71
---	----

Ute Kötter

Minimum Income Protection in Germany: The Relevance of Fundamental Social Rights in Times of Crisis	107
--	-----

Anastasia Poulou

Guaranteed Minimum Income in Greece: The Transition from Fragmented Measures to Comprehensive Constitutional and Legislative Protection	149
---	-----

Elaine Dewhurst

Life with Dignity: Minimum Income Support in Ireland	175
--	-----

Table of Contents

Eva Maria Hohnerlein

- In Search of a Guaranteed Minimum Income:
Continuity and Discontinuity in Ensuring Dignified Subsistence
Benefits in Italy 197

Anika Seemann and Henriette Sinding Aasen

- Constitutional Change and Minimum Social Protection in Norway 243

*Agnieszka Górnicz-Mulcahy, Monika Lewandowicz-Machnikowska and
Ariel Przybyłowicz*

- Ensuring a Dignified Life in Polish Law 273

Luka Mišič and Grega Strban

- Minimum Income Protection in Slovenia:
A Dignified Life Beyond Social Assistance 311

Cristina Sánchez-Rodas Navarro and María Dolores Ramírez Bendala

- Minimum Income in a Decentralised State:
The Complex Articulation between the Regional and State Level in
Spain 341

Nikola Wilman

- Regressive and Precarious? –
(Legal) Protection of a Subsistence Minimum in the United
Kingdom 375

Part III: Latin American Perspective

Flavia Piovesan, Julia Cunha Cruz and Daniel Wainstock

- Putting People First:
How Brazil's Minimum Income Program Promotes Human Rights 415

Viviana Ponce de León Solís

- Social Protection in Chile: Building a Life in Dignity? 433

Gabriela Mendizábal Bermúdez

A Life in Dignity for Vulnerable Populations in Mexico	469
--	-----

Part IV: Asian Perspective

Eri Kasagi

Life in Dignity in Japan – How Can the Constitutional “Right to Life” Be Adequately Guaranteed?	501
---	-----

Kwang Seok Cheon

The Guarantee of a Minimum Standard of Living in the Republic of Korea: A Constitutional and Social Security Law Perspective	537
--	-----

Part V: Conclusions

Irene Domenici

Life in Dignity Through Minimum Income Protection: Conclusions from a Comparative Perspective	569
--	-----

List of Authors	601
-----------------	-----

