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**REVIEW** of the book: *Der neue Fischer Weltalmanach 2019. Zahlen – Daten – Fakten, Schwerpunkt Arbeit* [New Fischer's World Almanac 2019. Figures – dates – facts. Focus on Work], Ch. Löchel, J. Bogumil, E. Beriè, L.L. Laloire (eds.), S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt am Main 2018, pp. 736

*Der neue Fischer Weltalmanach* was first published in 1959 in Germany. 2019 is, therefore, the year of its fiftieth anniversary. The phrase 'world almanac' was first used in the United States. In the modern understanding of the word, an almanac is an annual review of socio-economic, ecological, political and cultural events, supplied in the form of a lexicon. Each issue of *Der neue Fischer Weltalmanach* is an important editorial event as the publication provides German-speaking readers with a comprehensive body of knowledge. Beyond a doubt, the volume discussed here contains a vast amount of well-organised information indispensable for scientific, social, and political activity. The attached CD ROM, as well as the website [www.weltalmanach.de](http://www.weltalmanach.de), greatly add to the substantive data base offered by the book.

The latest issue of the Almanac, published in 2018, is *Der neue Fischer Weltalmanach 2019. Zahlen – Daten – Fakten, Schwerpunkt Arbeit*. The vast volume consists of the following parts: 'Foreword'; 'Global Topics'; 'Countries from Afghanistan to Cyprus'; 'Polar Areas'; 'Basic Data, Flags, and Maps'; 'The European Union'; 'International Organisations'; 'Economy'; 'Environment'; and 'Glossary'. Information regarding the topic of work can be found on the so-called 'yellow pages' of the section 'Global Issues', the entries devoted to particular countries, as well as in the chapters 'The European Union', 'International Organisations', and 'Economy'. Traditionally, much attention is paid to German language countries: Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

The brief foreword presents the main ideas of this edition of the Almanac. The authors indicate such fundamental problems as: women in the labour market (Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia), legal child labour (Bolivia), the role of migrant workers (Chinese People's Republic), part-time temporary work (Germany), attempts to implement a basic income guarantee in Finland, labour migration (many countries), mechanisation schemes for small-scale farmers (Mozambique), the shortage of labour force in Poland, persecution of trade union members (Turkey), globalisation of the shoemaking industry (Vietnam), or new job opportunities resulting from the

Ugandan ban on import. The Almanac also emphasises the role of the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation in regulating employment relations.

The first part of the reviewed volume contains the following articles: 'The Future World of Work', 'Population', 'Nutrition', 'Natural Disasters', 'Outer Space', 'Wealth', and 'Wars, Crises, Conflicts'. 'The Future World of Work' is undoubtedly one of the most important articles. It focuses on such issues as: long-term trends, technological advancements, youth unemployment, demographic change, or women's professional activity. The discussed long-term trends concern the employment situation in agriculture, the manufacturing sector, and the service sector. In industrialised countries, the service sector already employs 75% of the working population. Because automatisisation processes are gaining momentum, unemployment may grow dramatically. By 2015, the number of available jobs will have declined in the USA (by 38%), Great Britain (30%), Japan (21%), and Germany (35%). In the textile industry, the introduction of ever more modern equipment might cause a reduction of jobs even by over 80%. Computers can replace people in many prestigious professions, for instance, surgeons lawyers, real estate brokers, or tax advisers. The most significant technological innovations include artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of things, and 3D printing. North Africa, Latin America, and Sub-Sahara Africa are strongly affected by the problem of migration in search of work.

In 2017, our planet was inhabited by 7.6 b people, while a further steady rise in the global population is predicted (9.8 b in 2050). In 2100, the Earth will have 11.2 b inhabitants. The greatest demographic growth is recorded in Africa, which in 2100 will be home to 40% of the world's population, i.e. about 4.5 b people. Angola, Niger, Nigeria, and Tanzania are expected to experience the strongest demographic surge: a five-fold increase in the number of citizens. Meanwhile, the number of Europeans will have fallen by 15% by the year 2050. This is also true about Poland. Worldwide, the average life expectancy is 71.9 years, but by 2100 it is predicted to have increased to 82.6 years. The global fertility rate (average number of children per woman) stands at 2.75. It is the highest in: Niger (7.2), Somalia (6.1), and DR Congo (6.0). The largest number of people wish to emigrate to the USA, Germany, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and Russia.

Even nowadays, large segments of the world's population are undernourished or malnourished. According to FAO, in 2016, 815 m people were chronically or dramatically undernourished. This was the case in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan. The most serious humanitarian disaster is ravaging Yemen, gripped by a civil war (17 m of its citizens are suffering famine). On the other hand, in industrialised countries, many people are overweight and have excess body fat. In the USA, for instance, 40% of men and 30% of women are overweight.

In 2017, the reinsurance company *Munich Re*, recorded 734 significant loss events (in 1988-2017, there had been 503 such events on average). As many as 93% of the loss events had been caused by weather conditions (e.g. hurricanes or monsoon floods). This is likely to be a result of climate change. The article devoted to outer space discusses such topics as planets outside our solar system, or the new space

strategy for the USA (e.g. the mission to Mars, the Cassini orbital mission to Saturn, space Internet, and the problem of environment satellites). Other topical issues regarding outer space are, among others, private space flights or the problem of space waste.

Wealth and its distribution are among the most significant challenges, both globally and domestically. The Almanac quotes outrageous statistics concerning, among others, global wealth and poverty distribution, assets according to country, lack of social balance. Also interesting are the remarks concerning individual fortunes. Jeff Bezos, who has replaced the founder of the Microsoft, Bill Gates, is currently the richest person in the world. The article on wars, crises and conflicts points to the deterioration of the relations between the West and Russia, as well as between the USA and Iran. Armed conflicts are still continuing in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, or Myanmar. In Europe, deep antagonisms are troubling Ukraine and Spain.

The part entitled 'Countries from Afghanistan to Cyprus' constitutes the largest section of the Almanac. It presents countries in terms of their structure, population, political system, type of government, economy, also offering an extensive chronicle. Special attention is given to the labour situation in each of the discussed countries. In this context, worthy of note are: Afghanistan (the problem of women in the labour market, equal rights for women vs. social reality), Egypt (high youth unemployment and rapidly increasing population), Argentina (violent protests against the neoliberal policies of the government), Ethiopia (creation of new jobs in the textile industry in an attempt to solve the problem of poverty in the country), Australia (the problem of low-skilled seasonal workers, also faced by New Zealand), Bangladesh (dramatic social situation of women working in the textile industry). Legal child labour in Bolivia is subject of much debate. It is, however, supposed to protect children against excessive exploitation and assert the dignity of the working man. Huge social disparities persist in Brazil. The rampant corruption and high crime rates in this country prompted people to elect a far-right government.

The situation in China, where the communist party is consolidating its power, has recently been a widely commented topic. The country uses elaborate social control policies (the so-called social credit system). China is grappling with a serious problem of migrant workers. Their banishment from the major cities (e.g. Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen) is a source of numerous conflicts. Considerable attention is devoted to the labour market in Germany. The authors discuss the characteristics of this market, including the unemployment rate. Unfortunately, part-time jobs and fixed-term contracts are still fairly common in Germany. Many people are employed on such terms without reasonable justification.

France is undergoing a reform of the labour market. It is focused on the flexibility of the market, protection of notice periods, redundancy packages, and corporate councils. Great Britain struggles with a gender pay gap, although efforts are being made to eliminate it. This is partly related to the conditions in which women work. In India, where people are hired on an informal basis, working conditions are very different. As a result, the situation of employees is extremely difficult there (lack of

legal security, susceptibility to corruption, limited access to state aid and banking services). Similar problems are encountered in Indonesia.

Ireland can serve as an example of successful integration of migrants and local host communities. Polish immigrants have become fully assimilated in the Irish labour market. Also, no populist tendencies can be observed there. Even Japan, with its advanced robotisation and automatisisation schemes, needs to import workers. Canada has vast experience in integrating foreigners: it is home to immigrants from all over the world. Characteristically, many migrants are also working in Russia (they mainly come from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and other Central Asian countries). As a result, for instance, Moldova has been nicknamed 'a country of grandparents', as most parents are employed in Russia or Western Europe. The social tensions caused by the large numbers of refugees and migrants living in Northern European countries gave rise to right-wing populism directed against them. This is the case in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland.

Poland is an interesting case as far as the labour market is concerned. Because of the recent high economic growth and the fact that 2.4 m Poles are permanently residing abroad, the country is facing a shortage of workers. It is foreigners, mainly Ukrainians, who have arrived here to fill this void. Meanwhile, the government of Uzbekistan forces its citizens to grow and harvest cotton (the so-called cotton slavery).

Multiple problems, primarily ecological ones, are associated with the Arctic and the Antarctic. The former is already being intensely exploited for natural resources, which poses a threat to the local ethnic minorities, whereas the latter does not have permanent inhabitants except for the residents of research stations.

The section of the Almanac devoted to 'Basic Data, Flags, and Maps' is extremely informative. It offers such data as: countries according to size, countries according to number of citizens, basic demographic information, data regarding education and health, basic data related to economy, military issues, and labour. This part contains the flags of particular countries, world time zones, and political maps of all the continents.

The subsequent parts of *Der neue Fischer Weltalmanach 2019* comprise such important chapters as: 'The European Union', 'International Organisations', 'Economy', 'Environment', and 'Glossary'. The first of the above-mentioned sections comprises up-to-date knowledge of EU objectives, scopes of activity, origin and development, number of member states, and the external relations between the EU and the rest of the world. Considerable attention is paid to the main organs and institutions of the EU, its budgets, as well as the chronicle of the major events. In 2018, the European Union consisted of 28 member states, covered 4.4 m km<sup>2</sup>, and had 510 m inhabitants. However, on March 29, 2017, the United Kingdom had notified the EU Council of the UK's intention to withdraw from the European Union. This was when the Brexit procedure was set in motion. On the other hand, many European countries still wish to join the EU. Among the main EU problems, one can mention: Brexit, free trade agreements, migration and refugee crises, media pluralism, democracy, and rule of law. The European Union has also been troubled by high youth unemployment rates, particularly in Southern Europe.

Another significant part of the Almanac regards the United Nations and other international organisations. Discussed are the main aims and operating principles of the UN, its most important organs, programmes, and funds, as well as specialised agencies. Among them is the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It has been deeply involved in work against child labour and efforts aimed at ensuring health and safety in the workplace. Other international organisations presented in the chapter include: Amnesty International, the Arab League, the African Union, European Council, G7, G20, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Organization for Migration, NATO, the Organization of American States, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Reporters Without Borders, and World Trade Organisation.

The following parts of the Almanac are devoted to the economy. They broadly discuss 'Global Economy', 'Countries and Regions', 'Food and Resources', 'Energy', 'Industry', and 'Services'. The phenomenon of protectionism is a characteristic element of the modern economy. The U.S. government has introduced, for instance, duties on imports of selected goods from China, EU, or even Canada. The problem of the so-called 'working poor', who live on the breadline despite being employed, has become a modern social norm. The authors also draw attention to the question of gender pay gap and the statistics regarding unemployment. China and the USA, as well as India, Russia, Japan, Canada, and Germany use the highest amounts of energy. Among the main issues of the energy economy are renewable energy carriers: they are even referred to as 'job motors'. Automatisations in freight and passenger transport (i.e. autonomous driverless cars) is likely to have a negative impact on employment.

The problems of the environment are closely associated with economic activity. The Almanac analyses climate change, biodiversity, forests, fresh and salt water, chemical environmental threats, as well as questions relating to steady and sustainable development. The objectives of sustainable development were adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 1, 2015. The most urgent of them are sustainable exploitation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, climate protection, healthy living conditions, and sustainable industrialisation. The 7th Environmental Action Programme of the EU also emphasises the need for steady and sustainable development. The most challenging issues for sustainable development include the problem of soils and surfaces, efficient use of water resources, accumulation of waste, and renewable sources of energy. Ecological footprint is a measure of the human demand on the natural resources.

*Der neue Fischer Weltalmanach 2019* deserves the attention of Polish readers. It offers the most current and thorough information, illustrated with informative photographs. Additionally, the texts are accompanied by numerous graphs and tables. The Almanac is an invaluable resource for those who wish to understand the socio-economic, ecological, political, and cultural factors which determine the domestic, international, and global relations. It is useful for persons involved in scientific, social and political activity.