

Editorial

This 2013-1 edition of the *SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* focuses on democracy and labour relations in south-east Europe. Recent political developments in a number of countries in the region have highlighted how fragile democracy still is in this ‘backyard’ of Europe and how vulnerable young democracies are to shocks posed by the economic stress caused by the crisis and by austerity policies. These political developments have also had a decisive effect on labour and social relations as well as industrial democracy, an issue which is the core interest of this journal.

This edition also returns us to two previous *SEER* topics: employment policies; and trade union weakness. We also give space to a debate, with two reflections on one of our previous contributions on the latter topic.

Political developments in Hungary, and more recently in Bulgaria, seem to raise wide-ranging attention throughout Europe and have particular importance for the central-eastern and south-eastern Europe region.

András Tóth gives the background on how the post-socialist industrial relations system has collapsed in Hungary as a result of both trade union weakness and power centralisation by the government.

Meanwhile, Dobrin Kanev evaluates the results of the national elections in Bulgaria this May that followed the mass protests in the country earlier this spring. With the formation of the government in spite of the narrow election result, the political crisis in Bulgaria seems to have reached an end for the time being, but the key question in the current unusual situation remains open: Is Bulgaria’s fragile democracy able to overcome the ‘Borisov phenomenon’, with its tendencies of authoritarian populism, and thus further develop into a consolidated democracy with a vital and more socially-oriented economy?

In a *Comment*, Florian Bieber addresses the political deadlock in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the light of recent protests in the country.

In contributions written prior to the recent events in Turkey, Koray Tütüncü examines the dynamic relationship between politics and virtue in a theoretically-inspired piece, while Koray Tütüncü and Fatma Tütüncü discuss the unexpected rise of liberalism in the public discourse in Turkey, facilitated by what seemed – at least, prior to the protests and the government reaction to the re-development of Gezi Park – to be an apparent change in the approach of the regime from authoritarian to liberal. The authors proceed to discuss the opportunities this seemed to have presented for the establishment of a truly democratic regime in Turkey. The reaction to the protests might have set back the second of these starting points, but may even, in the long-term, have helped enhance the first.

The second bloc of this issue comes back to our earlier focus topic of labour markets and employment policies.

Jeton Mehmeti delivers an overview of the employment crisis in Kosovo. With 25 % of the working age population in employment, this newly-emerged state accounts for the lowest employment rate and the highest unemployment rate in Europe. The basic

framework of employment policy sketched in the article tries to take up the challenge of what this means for public policy.

Ledio Milkani examines the labour market situation in Albania, also giving an insight into the country's employment policies and future perspectives.

Emre Eren Korkmaz sheds light on the role of the global labour movement and transnational solidarity campaigns in three case studies of conflictual labour relations in Turkey. The case studies show that organised labour has been able to force transnational corporations and their suppliers to accept labour's demands with respect to the building of better working and living conditions. The author also discusses how to make these positive results sustainable and more widespread.

Finally, as the main mission of *SEER* is to provide a platform for an exchange of views and to promote debate, we are happy to give space to a debate on one of our recent articles 'The trade union right to organise and its exercise in the Republic of Macedonia' by Temelko Risteski *et al.* in *SEER* 2012-3. Živko Mitrevski, President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia (SSM), questions the foundations of the criticism addressed to the Macedonian trade unions by quoting evidence from the achievements of SSM, while Temelko Risteski and his co-authors defend their original views in their response.

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