

Editorial

This second issue of the *SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* for 2019 has two focus issues – climate change and wages – with the headline title: ‘Climate change: a trade union issue’. It is the first time that *SEER* has taken up the topic of climate change and related policy initiatives in the region which, furthermore, can also be seen as an element within the broader European integration process. Although climate change and the decarbonisation of the economy have not been at the centre of policy debates in south-east Europe in the recent past, given the top priority of the matter in the international, and in specifically the European, context, its policy relevance will certainly grow. Wage developments, on the other hand, have always been a key topic for *SEER* and this issue is not an exception.

The article by Bruno S. Sergi, Paul Arkoh, Chaimae Batta, Rim Drissi, Antonio Licastro and Alessandra Rodà look at initiatives and programmes related to the greening of the economy in south-east Europe in a comparative manner, and examine the prospect of EU membership as a driver for change in south-east Europe. The authors focus on how a selection of south-east European countries have started to implement a broad spectrum of policies in support of a more sustainable economy, reviewing the choices in this area made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Slovenia. The article also discusses the major drivers and barriers to greening the economy, in particular how far EU membership, and access to social and cohesion funding, is a major factor in the development of policy.

Gabriele Lombardo provides a brief overview of investment programmes into renewable energy in the western Balkans with a focus on Albania and Croatia, examining also the role of Italy and that of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in boosting related projects.

As regards wages, Bruno S. Sergi, Enisa Salimović, Sanja Paunović and Rajko Kosanović provide a comparative analysis of wage developments in south-east Europe and point to the influence of economic policy. The article analyses developments between 2008 and 2019 in five countries from the region – Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Montenegro; North Macedonia; and Serbia – pointing out also that, where there are lessons to be learned, they may be most beneficially learned from those south-east European countries that are also the three newest EU member states – Bulgaria; Romania; and Croatia. The authors examine wage and economic developments, the relationship between wages and productivity, and the tax burden on the average wage, and also provide also some comparative insights into calculations of how minimum wages are uprated.

Lyuboslav Kostov looks at the impact of labour productivity on wages in Bulgaria in the period between 2000 and 2017. The author uses an econometric model that, in four variations, demonstrates that a 1 per cent growth in gross value added per employee lead to wage growth of between 0.10 per cent and 0.28 per cent in the examined period. He concludes that the impact of gross value added, in terms of the change in average wages in Bulgaria, has diminished as a result of the crisis; and that the dynamics of gross value added per employee do not play a decisive role in explaining the dynamics of wages.

Zoran Stojiljković provides a broad-based overview of strike actions and union power in the context of Serbia. Starting with a typology of strikes and their regulation, the author gives a chronology of major strikes in recent decades in Serbia, linking developments to the drama of the decay of labour and trade unions as well as to the crisis in society.

In the open section of this issue, Marsida Feshti, Ela Golemi and Greta Petriti examine the effects of a recently-passed law on social housing in Albania.

Kozeta Vuksanlekaj provides an analysis of the Albanian civil service with a focus on the functioning of the principle of merit. By combining historical and analytical method and analysing the history of meritocratic competitive testing, the article makes recommendations for the development of public administration in Albania.

Finally, Artan Fejzullahu and Mirlinda Batalli take a look at the role of ethics in public administration in the context of Albania. The authors see the role of the reform of the civil service in terms of building the necessary organisational structures with capable individuals selected through an objective method and under a competitive process and who are independent of politics. The article concludes that, in all public institutions, it is necessary to create codes of ethics with a perspective on the legal framework in force.

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