

Editorial

This 2013-3 edition of the *SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* focuses on economic and social developments in south-east Europe. The main article, edited by the International Trade Union Confederation's Pan-European Regional Council (ITUC-PERC) Sarajevo office, draws upon contributions from trade union-related economists from the region and provides a comparative analysis of economic and labour market performance across western Balkans countries. A second article looks at the EU accession perspectives of individual countries, while two other contributions address labour market issues. A second group of articles deals with a variety of issues related to the core interest of the *SEER Journal*, from an account of the Turkish uprising to perspectives on the economic crisis and their impact on employment trends and long-term wage development processes in central-eastern Europe.

The ITUC-PERC article, edited by Grigor Gradev, Enisa Salimović and Bruno Sergi, provides a comparative analysis of macroeconomic trends, public finances, unemployment, employee compensation and income inequality in the countries of the western Balkans. The aim of the article is to identify the major challenges for individual countries, but also for the region as a whole in the course of post-crisis consolidation and in the process of European integration, among others, with particular concern for trade union experts and decision-makers. The main conclusion of the report is that, in spite of the relative success in GDP growth, the labour market situation is alarming. This is the biggest social challenge for trade unionists across the region. Positive wage developments and positive results on conventional measures of income inequality only show that a large part of the economy is not visible.

Ela Golemi discusses the common challenges that south-east European countries face in the process of European integration, pointing also to the importance of collaboration and co-ordination in the region for the future of these countries in the European Union.

The article by Eduart Lika deals with the big wave of labour migration from Albania in the last decade that followed a fifty-year period of isolation and puts these developments also into their historic perspective.

Ladislav Mura, Renáta Machová and Andrej Hevesi provide an analytical overview of the main trends in youth unemployment in Slovakia. The focus of the survey is youth unemployment in Slovakia between 2005 and 2011, with particular emphasis on the labour market chances of fresh graduates from Slovakian universities.

Andrea Olšovská and Marek Švec review the practice of agency work in the Slovak Republic, a labour market segment which has been liberalised in the last few years and which ought to bring benefits to employer and employee alike. Nevertheless, current practice is bringing instead some problems as regards individual labour law and the social security system, as well as some distortions to the operation of the market.

Emre Eren Korkmaz gives a first-hand account about the June uprising in Turkey. Beside a chronological overview of the events, the author also provides an in-depth political analysis of the background. He argues that the Taksim uprising opened a new

chapter in Turkish political history by actualising the most massive, determined and militant mobilisation against the oppressive measures of the government.

Next, Nada Petrusheva and Aleksandar Nikolovski review the operation of credit rating agencies and their role in the financial crash of 2008, as well as in the subsequent over-heating within the Euro-zone: an issue which has some resonance also for countries in south-eastern Europe. The authors examine the aims of the recent EU regulation seeking to limit their activity, with an acceptance of accountability key to the recovery of credibility.

Finally, Béla Galgóczi provides a comparative overview of two decades of wage developments and wage-setting in central and eastern Europe, identifying the lessons for south-eastern Europe. Before the crisis, it had been taken for granted that European integration would bring economic and wage convergence, but this has now been questioned. One thing is sure, however: these countries cannot rely on low wage competitiveness in the long-run; the way ahead is through increased public investment in education and research and improvement in the quality of the institutional environment. The crisis has, however, also highlighted the weaknesses of industrial relations which make difficult the resolution of some of the social aspects of these issues.

Béla Galgóczi

December 2013

Calvin Allen