

Editorial

This 2013-4 edition of the *SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* focuses on *labour migration and trade unions* in south-east Europe. The main article in this issue, by Peter Seideneck, delivers a historical account of the dissolution of Yugoslavia from a trade union perspective, also addressing the role of international trade unions, particularly the ETUC, to establish dialogue and collaboration between trade union organisations torn apart by the war. A major block of articles focuses on labour migration and on its effects, reflecting also on the often controversial political debates in various EU member states. A second block of articles deals with various labour and social issues in the south-east Europe region. Finally, an article is devoted to economic trends in the EU neighbourhood region, including Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

The article by Peter Seideneck is a unique first-hand account of trade union diplomacy during the Yugoslav war and of the crucial role trade unions played in the restoration of peace and in finding new forms of co-operation. Accounts of meetings and conferences, and rejected and accepted invitations, give a lively documentation of a turbulent period. The author also shows that trade unions have played a key role in putting the region on a European integration path.

As regards the topical focus of this issue, labour migration is addressed by a number of articles from different angles. At a time when the idea of the freedom of movement of workers is coming under political pressure in a number of important member states, it is useful to have a look at how this core value is embedded in the institutional and legal fundamentals of the European Union. The article by Biljana Čavkoska makes an attempt at this, including also the perspectives offered by the EU 2020 Strategy.

The article by Evelina Staikova puts the issue of emigration and immigration in Bulgaria into the political context. The European media is focusing more on the large waves of Bulgarian workers coming to the labour markets of other EU member states, but Bulgaria also has considerable immigration.

Ermira Kalaj raises an important migration-related issue that is not so frequently discussed in the literature: do remittances alter labour market participation rates? Her survey results, referring to Albania, reveal an interesting gender-based aspect of this phenomenon.

In his article, Darko Marinković deals with the challenges of the new industrial conflicts that the social partners are currently facing in Serbia.

Temelko Risteski and Vesna Sijić look at the realisation of workers' rights to health and safety at work in the Republic of Macedonia. After a review of the respective legislation and related practices, the authors come to the conclusion that the normative framework may turn out to be just words on paper if the state does not provide appropriate mechanisms of implementation.

The level of socio-economic cohesion is correctly identified by Ela Golemi as an important part of the experience of successful regional integrations, although that doesn't stop member states – as we have pointed out above – from questioning some of the essential tenets which underpin such cohesion, not least under pressure of the

economic crisis and the reactionary austerity which has gripped large parts of Europe for so long. Identifying that the various problems of south-east Europe could better be tackled by a more collaborative approach, Ms. Golemi argues the research perspective for more joined-up policy-making to deal with inequality, poverty, poor governance and corruption.

Milica Mikuljević puts the learning organisation into the focus of her article, which explores the key function of the education and training of employees. The author draws together case study evidence on the issues raised at Telekom Srbje, which is on the way to becoming a learning organisation.

Tatjana Dragičević-Radičević and Milica Gavrilović examine the basic features of capitalism, technological change and modernisation and discuss whether inequality is an unavoidable price of economic success within this model.

Finally, Fabian Teichmann looks beyond south-east Europe and the EU to the eastern neighbourhood region, with a comparative analysis of the economic development trajectories of countries on both sides of the EU border. The enduring Ukraine crisis has driven attention to the region, and so the author poses the question as to why the Ukraine economy is the laggard of the wider region, including Russia and Kazakhstan.

Béla Galgóczi

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Calvin Allen