

Editorial

The current issue (2007-1) of the *South-East Europe Review (SEER)* aims to focus on the principles of decent work and labour standards in south-east Europe. Well-paid, high quality jobs are not obvious features even of the labour markets of the developed economies of the EU-15. Employee compensation and working conditions are under continuous strain from globalised product and capital markets. Pressures for the greater flexibility of employees are also on the agenda, as a result of which precarious forms of employment are growing to alarming levels. The idea of decent work is, however, a core element of the knowledge-based economy for which Europe is striving. What is the situation in south-east Europe? As we see in this issue, there are no straightforward answers ready. South-east Europe finds itself in the midst of a lengthy process of moving towards a modernised economy and society. Yet, we only have some of the elements in place that may well be necessary in the creation of a society in which decent work might once again be a reality.

The first such element is the European integration process itself. Wolfgang Tiede examines the road of Croatia and Serbia towards EU accession, pointing to several crucial factors of the process in the case of each country. After summarising the different accession criteria of the EU, the author puts these into the context of the different institutional processes of the EU which aim at the long-term goal of EU membership, including the Stability and Association Process and the Thessaloniki Agenda. Then, he evaluates the progress made by Croatia and Serbia in recent years towards fulfilling the criteria of EU accession.

Nataša Cvetković and Slavenko Grgurević deliver an overview of the paradigm of the knowledge-based economy and examine where contemporary Serbia can be placed in this perspective. From the policy focus, the authors present some strategic options with which the Serbian economy might become incorporated within the economic flows of the global knowledge-based economy.

Marija Obradović examines the privatisation process in Serbia from a socio-historical viewpoint. She gives a thorough overview of the social consequences of the applied privatisation practices of the last fifteen years, pointing to the increasing exploitation of employees, the increasing share of precarious work and the severe implications for at-risk groups on the labour market.

Edita Kastratović and Vladimir Marinković sketch the key elements of a development strategy for the south of Serbia based on a long-term strategy of local economic development. With a view to implementing this strategy, training and education for entrepreneurs and ordinary people interested in starting up their own businesses has been located as a central objective.

Ilija Telo sets out a trade union agenda for reforming the system of social insurance in Albania. He gives a broad overview of the major social indicators in the country to back his view of the indispensability of such a reform agenda.

Finally within our central theme, Seyit Köse and Aytekin Güven examine the correlation between government education expenditures and income inequality across different provinces of Turkey. Their results suggest that, even though relatively poor provinces have benefited from public expenditure more than have rich ones, relatively

rich provinces have benefited from government higher education expenditures more than have poor ones. The result of these dual processes is that inequality between provinces has not decreased.

The second half of this number tackles two other issues from Turkey.

Rasim Özgür Dönmez discusses the paradoxical image of the west in Turkey from the perspective of the modernisation process and nationalist ideology within Turkish politics.

Nurullah Tac and Ozan Aglargoş describe an innovative, unique model for making global brands out of Turkish products, referred to as ‘Turquility’.

Bela Galgoczi
Calvin Allen

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