

Editorial

With this issue, *SEER* has arrived at a crossroads as we have decided to strengthen its background and explore new territory with an extended profile.

In the previous twelve volumes, *SEER* has acquired an expertise in the south-east European region and, having carved out a niche for itself, has established a reputation as a respected journal.

Thirteen years ago, the region of south-east Europe was originally chosen as the focus for the journal on the grounds of the countries' commonly-held plans for EU accession, even though for most this was characterised by a more long-term hope than the short-term ones which were more likely to be the case for their counterparts in central and eastern Europe. With the growing importance of the EU neighbourhood region and the increasing interconnectedness of the economies of the broader European region, with its far-reaching social consequences, it is, however, time to open up our focus towards eastern Europe. The re-direction of the journal to focus on an expanded region is based on a correspondingly expanded resource input, both in terms of the intellectual and network background.

The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), the sole publisher of the journal, can mobilise its expertise on the transformation economies of the new EU member states from central and eastern Europe, while the extended Editorial Board, with members from eastern European countries within the scope of the Pan-European Regional Council of trade unions (PERC), would deliver the knowledge base covering that region. Transformation experience from both the central and south-east European region will be transferred through the journal to readers in eastern Europe, while existing readers would benefit from the wider perspective of opening up the existing profile. The new *SEER* will continue to be a platform for the exchange of information and transformation experience, but now on a wider scale, and with an extended audience.

With this 2010-1 number, *SEER* enters its 13th volume with a new name of *SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*. This issue focuses on political changes and the role of institutions using the example of contemporary developments in certain countries that might have a broader impact on future developments across the entire region.

Three articles focus on the outcomes to recent elections and their impacts on the development of the political landscape and institutional setting of the state in Ukraine, Hungary and Bulgaria, covering issues that are relevant for the broader region. Two further articles from Turkey and Russia touch upon important developments in the institutional system of these countries, related to the state building process in Turkey and to the re-institutionalisation of the trade union landscape in Russia.

Two country-specific articles deal with Serbia and Macedonia, with topics related to our focus in recent previous issues (the crisis and its social impacts) from the aspect of the reform of the pensions system and the role of monetary policy respectively, while an additional generic contribution addresses philosophically-inspired questions on the future of corporate capitalism.

We commence the thematic topic of this issue *Political changes and the role of institutions* with an article by Katerina Malygina who examines the change of institutional design in Ukraine in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, coming to the conclusion that, despite a non-negligible formal democratisation, Ukraine remains a neo-patrimonial state.

Jens Becker discusses the rise of right-wing populism in Hungary at the General Election in April 2010, examining also its economic and social roots and background while putting the question whether what has happened in Hungary might also take place in other countries in the region.

Dobrin Kanev draws the lessons of the 2009 election in Bulgaria, putting this into the context of the post-accession political crisis. The resulting political vacuum coincides with the disappointment and discontent of the population with the current economic and social situation and has prepared the ground for entirely new political actors on the verge of right-wing and populist orientations.

Rasim Özgür Dönmez examines the political struggle and its far-reaching consequences for the state-building process in Turkey that has unfolded between the state elite – namely, the military and secular establishments (the Kemalist elite); and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), a pragmatic conservative party – putting recent events into their historical perspective.

The article by Irina Kozina reviews case studies on trade unions in Russia, showing the ways in which they are structured and their relationships with members, as well as at the impact on their activities, both amongst traditional and alternative trade union structures. She pays particular interest to the impact of emerging transnational companies on the future of trade unionism in Russia; an impact that seems to be unexpectedly positive, with signs of strengthening union structures.

Finally, Kristin Nickel Makszin draws important lessons about continuity and pressures for reform in the context of post-communist central European welfare states using the examples of Hungary and Poland.

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