

Dietmar Sternad/Thomas Döring (eds.): Handbook of Doing Business in South East Europe, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2012

I believe that this handbook is a very useful and timely book for scholarly, professional and business people. Why? Business people are hungry for information about this region on how to do business effectively. This book gives full details of SEE (South East Europe) region that may help to invest, trade or plan to work in this countries. Handbook of Doing Business in SEE also fills the need for a book that can be used to teach economic and management courses, for example business culture or international business management because the literature about the business context of this region is limited.

What can we learn from this book? The main purpose of the handbook is to introduce the ways of doing business in this part of Europe. I think it completes this task because the three main parts with analysis of empirical data give holistic and scientifically well-grounded information about the “business as usual” and business conditions, opportunities of SEE region. We can recognize in every detail the political and legal perspectives, perspectives on economic developments and social and cultural perspectives of these states. The tables and figures give support to the reader and help understand the authors’ main ideas and messages and if you need further information you can find the list of rich references at the end of every study. Having read the book, we can realize that SEE region means business. It is an untapped and vibrant market of 55 million people that can be reintegrated in the wider continental or global economy.

Maybe the most people reckon this region as Balkan while these countries are working to become EU member states and many external and internal factors, conditions have been changing in SEE since the fall of communism. The book help to understand although these countries are characterized by diversity in economic, religions, languages, developments, cultures and markets but the SEE region are now on the way of European integration (Europeanization) and there can be again cultural and economic synergies among the states. I think after you read the book you will reposition this region and these countries in your head, and hopefully due to this book finally the whole SEE region will be re-branded and seen in more positive and up-to-date light.

What are the strong and the weak points of Handbook of Doing Business in SEE? Well, I think the same: the many authors. The 27! authors are from wide variety of disciplines (eg. economy, social sciences, history or law) and every academic is living or working in different countries of this region or originally came from here but now work abroad. This diversity makes the whole book authentic, original and multi-faceted with many perspectives. Behind the words there is a real professional calling and knowledge. Why is this also a weak point? It could be seen that the editors tried for standardization in using similar

data and writing style. The authors' writing style is coherent, clear and fluid, so it suits the intended audiences. But wide variety of authors means distinctive approaches and therefore the individual chapters vary according their approach. The other point that can be opened to criticism is the range of the studied countries. Greece and Turkey, which are geographically part of SEE region, are left out, and Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia, which are nowadays rather part of Central Europe, are included. But for this problem we can find the acceptable answer in the introduction by Dietmar Sternad and Thomas Döring. The authors deal only with SEE's former communist countries, therefore we can find full particulars about the following countries: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria (the last four are EU member states).

To sum up this review, Handbook of Doing Business in South East Europe is an up-to-date and authentic book about a region with limited literature using scientifically well-grounded information and many useful tables and figures. The book confirms that the ways of doing business in these countries is different, but they are not impenetrable. I recommend the book for students and teachers who are searching this field, for business people who invest or trade or just are planning to work in this region and finally for everyone who are just interested in the development, growth and change of SEE region.

Petra Putzer, University of Pécs