

Editorial

This 2009-2 number of the *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs (SEER)* continues to deal with various impacts of the economic crisis on south-east European countries. Similar to the previous number, it also touches upon the circumstances that have had a major influence on the way the crisis is affecting employees and the wider population of these countries. Among others, the relationship between transition and the crisis will be discussed, as will be the impacts of the crisis on wages, taxation and human resources. Moreover, environmental efficiency and competitiveness will be looked upon in the context of overcoming the crisis.

After that, we return to a previous topic of the *SEER* – health care reform – with an article by Wolfgang Tiede and Christine Simon devoted to a comparison of the legislation on the emergency medical services in Serbia and in Germany.

Before we address our focus topic, we give place to a pioneering research project that aimed to explore how trade union freedom and collective bargaining function in the practices of south-east European countries. Heribert Kohl was commissioned by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung to investigate the background of the continuing erosion of trade union influence in the region. He conducted a large number of interviews with trade unions and social dialogue experts and explored the relevant literature into the economic and social data background in order to establish the roots and patterns of this process. The novelty of his work is that he examines trade union freedom and the scope of union activity not on the basis of the respective legislation of the countries, but looking deeper and focusing on actual practice, exploring the hidden factors that often block or seriously limit the ways in which the interest representation of workers is practised. The reader will find a rich overview of the different layers of social dialogue in the countries of the region in this article, which is a modified and shortened version of a book published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

We commence the focus topic of this issue with an article by Darko Marinković and Vladimir Marinković, who discuss the interdependence of the world economic crisis and the transition process in the wider central-eastern European region, with particular reference to the peculiarities of Serbia.

Dragan Đurić gives a detailed overview of the collective bargaining and wage development processes in the short history of independent Montenegro as a means of analysing the most recent impacts of the crisis on wages and wage formation in the country.

Pavel Janičko and Ilona Švihlíková take a look at the way that the ‘flat tax system’ has functioned in the Czech Republic during the past few years and draw conclusions for the negative repercussions that this once-fashionable tax policy trend, which is coming under more and more pressure in the economic crisis, has for the region.

Natalia A Piskulova, from the MGIMO Institute in Moscow, investigates the issue of enhancing competitive advantage in environmental technology at the national and company level in the context of the crisis – an issue which has considerably gained in importance due to the current financial and economic crisis. She comes to the conclusion that the environmental aspects of competitiveness will play an increasing role in

the exit strategy of nations and enterprises from the crisis in the next years and that this is likely to frame the main restructuring trend of the next period.

Finally, the article by Irena Zareva examines the quantitative and qualitative aspects of human capital formation in Bulgaria in international comparison.

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