

## *Introduction*

### *Central and Eastern Europe*

#### *— selected social challenges*

The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century helped the CEE region transform from a region shaken by conflicts into a politically and economically stable one. In many respects, the states of the region do not differ from other EU member states, although there are still significant gaps with regards to living standard levels. CEE region faces challenges related to bridging the living standard gaps, but also to the necessity to look for answers to social processes currently taking place. Those can be found mainly in the area of public policies.

Public policies deployed in CEE countries are addressed relatively rarely in academic literature. This might result from the fact that in terms of the development goals there are rather West European countries which serve as a benchmark for single Central European Countries. More rarely, the comparisons within CEE countries — the neighbours which additionally have had shared experiences of post-WW2 period are to be found. Consequently, such an approach results in inadequate knowledge of transformations taking place in CEE countries among Polish and foreign researchers. This issue of the *Social Policy Issues, Studies and Discussions* attempts to shed the light on this research topic. This goal seems particularly relevant in the context of the events in recent years, which again have made the CEE region a topic of political and media debates. The growth of international attention to CEE countries results from the fact that politicians of the region play an ever-growing role in the decision-making process of the European Union. A visible economic successes of the CEE countries on the one hand, and positions taken on the issue of refugees and controversial political reforms reducing the headroom for civic society on the other contribute to this situation.

This issue of the quarterly contains articles describing the situation in various CEE countries. The volume starts with an essay article by Attila Agh, who analyses the functioning of social organisations and social movement and their role in political processes taking place in Hungary. The next part starts with article by Włodzimierz Anioł

discussing the major social challenges from the Polish perspective. The author reflects on what actions have to be undertaken to avoid, or at least reduce, adverse outcomes of social processes that will be taking place in the coming years. Karolis Žibas presents the migration situation in Lithuania and attempts to find an answer to emigration greater than expected. He analyses Lithuanian migration policy in the context of the main social challenges and expectations. As they are one of the topics arousing the greatest controversies in the public debate, a large part of the volume is devoted to migration issues being. Radostina Pavlova and Diana Radoslavova analyse the role of Bulgaria as a transit and destination country for refugees fleeing, among others, Syria and other states affected by political and military conflicts. In the subsequent article Christin Schweiger presents political development of the states of the region that has taken place since their accession to the European Union. The author attempts to answer the question whether membership in the European Union increased the influence of the states in the region on the topics addressed during European Council meetings. In consequence, are the interests of those states better taken into account in the decision-making process? Addressing these issues, he uses the argumentation developed in the discussion about social models in the European Union in recent years. The focus on migration process and policy is present also in the text of Vanya Ivanova, who discusses presents emigration and migration in Bulgaria after this country's accession to the EU. Complementing the earlier text on Bulgaria, it provides the readers with a comprehensive picture of the difficult situation in this state.

We hope that our readers find the articles published in this issue relevant and thought-provoking. If this is the case, the topics of social and economic situation in CEE countries will become a regular part of the *Social Policy Issues*.