

PART TWO

Work and Well-being: Policy Challenges in the Global Environment

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

Despite sustained economic growth, in some cases among the highest in the world in recent years, the BSEC-CA region suffers from a pervasive malaise. Part II of this *Economic Outlook* analyses the links between the reformed economies' integration into the global economy and their ability to generate work and promote well-being. The focus is on the former centrally planned economies, with Turkey, Greece and other OECD countries providing a basis for comparison.

Following the end of central planning, privatisation and restructuring led to huge declines in employment in state-owned enterprises during the 1990s, while the non-state sector was slow to generate adequate employment opportunities. The impact of unemployment on well-being was exacerbated by the loss of access to social services associated with the state enterprise. Recorded unemployment was often low, as there was little incentive to register formally as unemployed; moreover, many people were underemployed. Asset stripping or selling personal or household items supported consumption when employment earnings could not. Privatisation contributed to increases in economic inequality as people's share of redistributed state assets varied widely. The market economy also gave differential rewards to human capital; some skills increased in value, while other skills – particularly those valued in the centrally planned economy – became worthless. Widening regional inequality indicates that in many countries, viable national labour markets have failed to develop. Gender income inequality has also increased in some countries, although the picture is complex as some women (e.g. those with university degrees or skills in demand, such as languages or computing) may be better off in a market economy than they were in the planned economy.

Throughout the region, the transition from central planning was associated with an opening up to the global economy. Globalisation provided new opportunities for trade and for some people to migrate. At the same time, however, exposure to the global economy imposed a harsh discipline on producers.

Governments struggled to soften the blow by propping up enterprises, subsidising consumption and maintaining social safety nets. The challenge was, however, huge. Policy makers were unfamiliar with market-based economies. Public budgets shrank as old sources of revenue – primarily turnover taxes on state enterprises – atrophied and new forms took time to establish and administer efficiently. Public expenditure patterns adjusted slowly as some groups were better able to protect their interests than others. As taxes were established and collected, they sometimes posed disincentives for new enterprise formation or drove economic activity into the informal sector. The old universal social benefits could only be funded at low levels, but attempts to replace them by targeted benefits opened avenues for corruption or involved a complexity that overwhelmed the capacity of state agencies.

These outcomes are not obvious from the improvements in the overall macroeconomic situations of the BSEC-CA countries presented in Part I. Clearly then, the rapid economic growth and far improved fiscal situations of all of the BSEC-CA governments, as well as the declines in inflation and increases in foreign direct investment have not yet translated into a general overall

improvement of work and well-being. The legacy of coping patterns established during the 1990s remains evident. The slower expansion of job markets and the relatively slow creation of appropriate, supportive well-functioning social institutions means that the situation of work and well-being within many of the BSEC-CA countries has not improved at the same pace as the macroeconomic situation. Chapter Three provides evidence more specific to the observed outcomes with respect to work and well-being. Chapter Four analyses why these outcomes occurred, and how they are related to the countries' integration into the global economy. The focus in Chapter Four is primarily on the reaction of producers to the external shocks of transition and integration into the global economy. Although employment declined by less than output during the transitional recession, firms were, to varying degrees, exposed to competitive pressures which led to job losses. Job creation lagged behind job destruction, often reflecting a poor business environment. These trends and phenomena still characterise most BSEC-CA countries.

A feature of the transition to market-based economies was people's ability to find coping mechanisms as old sources of economic security disappeared. The variety of coping mechanisms is explored in Chapter Five.

The temporal sequencing was of course more complex in reality, but globalisation did force firms into making decisions faster than their governments might have liked. Households were, from the start, resourceful in adopting coping mechanisms, but they went through a learning process with short-term responses initially dominant before seeking more forward-looking responses to the realities of market-based economies; overall, it is the latter that are more durable and more significant in setting the parameters for future policy choices. Policy responses to problems of work and well-being in the 1990s were often slow and reactive, and only since the turn of the century, have there been concerted efforts to introduce appropriate policies in this area; the policy responses are described and analysed in Chapter Six.

The final chapter brings together some lessons from past policy formation, in order to assess future policy options in the area of work and well-being. The policy environment has emerged from a centralised past, sometimes with more or less appropriate foreign elements superimposed. The way forward must take into account this legacy and the coping mechanisms introduced during the transition.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BSEC	Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DIFD	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
EITI	Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
EurAsEc	EurAsian Economic Community
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDA	International Development Association (of the World Bank)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KILM	Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO database)
LLM	Low- and Lower-Middle-income countries
MFN	Most-Favoured Nation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SITC	Standard International Trade Classification

UMH	Upper-Middle- and High-income countries
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WITS	World Integrated Trade Solution (software developed by the World Bank, in close collaboration with UNCTAD, giving access to the major trade and tariffs data compilations).
WTO	World Trade Organization

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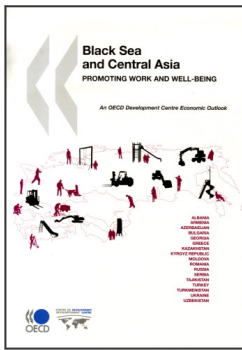
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