

# Preface

These proceedings are the final result of the international conference “Social Policy and Regional Development” held in Zagreb on 30 November 2006. The conference was organised in a joint effort made by the Institute of Economics, Zagreb and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The objective was to cover social aspects of regional development and regional aspects of social policy. Over 100 participants engaged in a lively interdisciplinary discussion confirmed the objective was achieved and that such topics deserve more attention both in the Croatian academic discourse and the policy-makers’ considerations.

The conference committee had received 60 abstracts, accepted 30, and finally received 20 papers. Nine were chosen and presented after a double-blind review by international reviewers. Two keynote speeches were delivered as well. Simin Davoudi from Newcastle University, England reported on the problems of polycentric development and metropolitan regions in the EU, which re-emerged in the European planning discourse after the introduction of the territorial cohesion concept. Yuri Kazepov from the University of Urbino, Italy advocated for a territorial reorganisation of the European social policy.

Keynote speeches were a good introduction to presentations that followed. The papers dealt with incentives to the unemployed in 39 poorest neighbourhoods in England, unfavourable change in social and economic structure of the poorest Turkish regions that resulted from growing regional disparities, poverty in the rural areas of Croatia, negative social impacts of the private sector participation in water supply in the South Caucasus, the role of social partners in the management of the European Regional Development Fund in Poland, deinstitutionalisation, diversification and decentralisation in social services reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, attitudes of social groups towards some aspects of the quality of life in Primorje - Gorski Kotar County in Croatia, implications of the EU enlargement and cohesion for economic and social development in Turkey, and regional aspects of agricultural policy in Norway.

Diversity of the papers contributed to an interdisciplinary discussion which brought more light to the fact that regional disparities quite severely affect the regions left behind in economic and social development. The importance of social policy in the

regional development management, and no lesser importance of its regionalisation, became more and more evident as the presentations went on. This was noticed by the discussants Will Bartlett from the University of Bristol, Ivo Bićanić from the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Zagreb, and Nenad Starc from the Institute of Economics, Zagreb, but also by the chair women Marijana Sumpor from the Institute of Economics and Sandra Švaljek, Director of the Institute. Notorious but often forgotten requirement that regional development ought to be managed was particularly stressed since the presenters showed well that growing regional disparities in the EU and the accession countries as well have been producing more social than economic problems. Departments of Economics at Croatian universities that have been avoiding regional economic courses for decades could use the outcomes of the conference as an incentive to enlarge their programmes. Economists who graduated from these Departments could find an incentive to re-discover regional economics in all its aspects.

Finally, we would like to thank Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, anonymous reviewers, discussants, representatives of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, colleagues from the Institute, and all the participants for contributing to the realisation of this project.

Editorial Board