

LSEE Research Network on Social Cohesion in SEE
Workshop organised in collaboration with FREN, Belgrade

Skills and the Labour Market in the Western Balkans

Friday, 11th May 2012

FREN, Faculty of Economics, Belgrade

Rapid economic restructuring has led to the emergence of serious skill mismatches in many transition economies as structural change has created demands for new skills which have not been adequately provided by education and training systems. Such structural changes have been especially pronounced in the countries of the Western Balkans due to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, the process of EU accession, the effects of globalisation and the subsequent reorientation of previous patterns of economic activity. Structural unemployment has increased to high levels, yet the education and training systems have failed to adapt to the needs for new skills in service sectors and sectors subject to global technological change. Additional problems that have affected the labour markets in the region include exceptionally low employment rates, very high rates of youth unemployment and persistent long-term unemployment. In this context, it is important to be able to identify the skills that future jobs in the region will require; how policy makers could encourage the creation of highly skilled jobs; what the appropriate role of the private sector in providing training opportunities for both employed and unemployed workers might be; how education systems could adjust appropriately to the changing demands for skilled labour throughout the region; and what might be the role of regional cooperation in addressing these issues. These and other issues will be discussed in this workshop which will have an orientation towards policy-oriented solutions to these fundamental economic and social problems.

The workshop aims to gather the latest research on imbalances between labour demand and supply in the Western Balkan region with special attention to analysis of skill mismatch. It will debate ways to improve labour market outcomes, vocational education and training systems, and skill matching policies in the context of the difficult adjustment to the global economic crisis and the need to improve economic competitiveness on the basis of European integration. These issues will be discussed in the light of the emphasis placed on the role of new skills for new jobs in the EU 2020 programme and discuss how appropriate the goals set out in that programme are for the countries of the Western Balkans. It will debate the extent to which there is a role for regional cooperation in creating a common approach to identify and reduce skill gaps and skill mismatches, or whether differences in labour market conditions and in education and training systems mandate different policies in different contexts.

Background

The Workshop is an activity of the LSEE Research Network on Social Cohesion in South East Europe which was established by LSEE in May 2011 in collaboration with research partners throughout the region. The activities of the research network are carried out in collaboration with project partners in the region and with the Regional Cooperation Council based in Sarajevo. The members of the network are leading researchers with expertise in social issues from the region and elsewhere in Europe as well as researchers at LSEE. The promotion of regional cooperation in research activity and the investigation of the benefits of regional cooperation in policy proposals is a key motivation of the research network.

Organisation

The workshop is co-organised by FREN and LSEE and will be held at the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade on 11th May 2012. Participants are requested to provide a short paper (max length 4,000 words) suitable for publication following final revisions shortly after the workshop. The papers presented at the Workshop will be published subsequently in an edited volume.

Key dates

Please send a short abstract of no more than 400 words by 27th March 2012 to Ioanna Antonopoulou at i.antonopoulou@lse.ac.uk and to Aleksandar Radivojevic at aleksandar@fren.org.rs and with copies to Will Bartlett at w.j.bartlett@lse.ac.uk and to Mihail Arandarenko at arandarenko@yahoo.com. The decision on acceptance of abstracts will be made by 31st March. Final versions of accepted papers (max 4,000 words) should be submitted by 4th May. Further details of the programme, the workshop venue and recommended accommodation will be provided closer to the event.

About LSEE

LSEE - Research on South Eastern Europe is a research unit established within the European Institute, a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at the London School of Economics. LSEE provides a forum for research collaboration not only within the LSE and the UK, but also with external partners in South East Europe and beyond. Under this aegis, LSEE organises public events related to its research - lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences – both at the LSE and in the region.

About FREN

The Foundation for the Advancement of Economics (FREN) is a think tank founded in 2005 by the Belgrade University's Faculty of Economics. Thanks to the quality and relevance of its research, FREN has established itself as one of the leading economic think tanks in Serbia. FREN's team comprises of a network of over 30 associates who regularly and systematically monitor economic trends in Serbia, conduct in-depth research and encourage and facilitate the exchange of information and availability of economic data.