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Bulgaria and the Global Crisis – Economic, Social and Political Implications

Bulgaria with its high economic dynamism and financial stability is in a good position to counter the global crisis. Over the past seven years it succeeded in registering high growth rates, in attracting foreign investors and capital and in bringing down unemployment. Thanks to a prudent fiscal policy, it managed to build solid reserves and even to generate budget surpluses in recent years. The Currency Board has been and will remain the guarantor of stability.

In the last quarter of 2008, though, the repercussions of the global financial and economic crisis could clearly be felt in Bulgaria, too. It is to be expected that under its impact growth will slow down considerably. Bulgaria does not face the risk of a collapse in its banking sector and tremors in the national economy can be cushioned with additional economic programmes, while social disruptions can be minimized through adequate labour market policies. The crisis will accelerate an overdue market consolidation, especially in the property market.

However, it may also lead to a new boom in Bulgaria's "corruption economy". With foreign investments going down and public expenditure rising "corruption pressure" for public contracts in the institutions involved will increase. The extent to which the crisis will have an impact on Bulgaria will determine how substantial this might affect social and political parameters.

Siniša Kušić

Hoping to Be Good Neighbours! – The Slovenian Blockade of EU Accession Talks with Croatia

The Croatian government has proclaimed membership in the EU as its primary goal in foreign policy and is aiming to conclude technical negotiations by the end of 2009 and become a full member of the EU by 2011 at the latest. However, despite some progress in the reform progress, Slovenia's veto could jeopardize Croatia's roadmap to EU membership.

Since December 2008 Ljubljana has been blocking several stages of Croatia's EU [accession negotiations](#), because of a long-standing border dispute with the southern neighbour. The two former Yugoslav republics have been unable to agree on a sliver of land and the Adriatic Sea border since they jointly proclaimed independence in 1991. Currently Slovenia attempts to cash in its EU membership by solving the

dispute, which centres on Slovenia's access to international waters, while Zagreb [requests](#) a solution according to the rules of international law and insists that the border dispute remains a bilateral issue and that its resolution is not a prerequisite for EU membership.

The next few months will be crucial for Croatia's way towards EU membership as well as for the future relationship between the two neighbours.

Fahri Türk

Turkey and Turkmenistan – a Special Relationship

A new Turkish foreign policy towards Central Asia focusing increasingly on Turkmenistan has emerged in recent years. This leads to a reinforcement of Turkish-Turkmen relations in the era of the new president Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov. The Turkish foreign policy towards Turkmenistan is based primarily on educational and economic fields. The Turkish student project and the foundation of Turkish schools in Turkmenistan play an important role in the prospering of Turkish-Turkmen relations. As concerns the Turkish economic relations, Turkish private companies contributed to create the Turkmen textile industry and to build the infrastructure of the country. In addition, the Turkish company Calik Holding built five electricity power stations in Turkmenistan until the end of the year 2008.

In addition to the fact that the Turkish and Turkmen languages and cultures are very close with each other, the intergovernmental relations of both states can be considered as a special relationship regarding the other Turkic states of Central Asia.

Will Guy

Roma: Living Conditions, Social Perception and State Policy in the Macro-Region of 'Eastern Europe' before and after 1989

The article compares the situation of Roma populations in former 'Eastern Europe' during the period of Communist rule with their subsequent experience, concentrating on differences in living conditions, popular perceptions and state policy towards them. In spite of broadly assimilationist policies of Communist regimes and certain human rights abuses, Roma people benefited overall from the need of command economies for the unskilled labour they supplied and the relatively high wages paid for such work, as well as from improved access to housing, education and health services.

The post-1989 shift to market economies led to mass unemployment among Roma and their rapid impoverishment, although a small minority prospered as entrepreneurs. The majority's growing dependence on social benefits sharpened popular resentment and discrimination, providing an unfruitful environment for any initiatives to improve their situation, even when these were made a condition for EU membership and supported by EU funding. After the EU-accession of former Communist countries the plight of their Roma peoples appears no better but now they have become EU citizens, posing intractable problems which are both political and human.

Ilona Tomova

The Roma in Bulgaria: Employment and Education

The paper explores the routine of Roma social exclusion in Bulgaria during Post-Socialism. It mainly concentrates on the Roma's prolonged mass unemployment and on their uneven access to schools. It explains the main factors for Roma social exclusion from the labour market and the school system and their perspectives for the years to come.

Peter Vermeersch

In Search of a Movement: The Opportunities and Limits of Romani Political Solidarity

The article is a brief reflection on the position and political activities of those Roma who are politically active and strive for a better situation for the larger group of Roma. The article identifies a tension within the Romani movement between demands for recognition and demands for equality. It discusses some implications of this tension for the development of movement strategies of and for the Roma. Finally, it highlights some implications for outsiders who want to write about the Roma: funding institutions, observers, journalists, and researchers.