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Editorial

Anna Visvizi^a

^a Institute of East-Central Europe (IESW), Poland

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Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe (Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej) is a quarterly, published in Polish and in English, listed in the IC Journal Master List (Index Copernicus International). In the most recent Ministry of Science and Higher Education ranking of journals published on the Polish market the Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe received one of the highest scores, i.e. 14 points.

Editorial

Regardless of its central role in the process of designing regulatory frameworks conducive to sustainable socio-economic growth and development, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) input in the policy-making process remains largely unfamiliar to the broader public and only rarely becomes a subject of media interest. Indeed, the OECD remains a relatively unknown and “one of the least researched international organizations” (Schmelzer, 2016: 9) today. Arguably, the mechanisms and the logic behind the OECD’s functioning are the least explored in this context. To a large extent, it reflects the fact that relatively few venues exist where practitioners, involved in the day-to-day work of the OECD, and researchers, interested in exploring it, may engage in dialogue. From a different angle, the mode of functioning, specific to the OECD, i.e. non-invasive, based on peer-to-peer discussion, relying on peers’ soft pressure rather than conditionality, like e.g. in the case of the financial and technical assistance designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), does not lend itself to sensationalist media reporting. As a result, the correlation between the OECD’s advisory role and the design of certain domains of policy-making in the OECD member states remains not only implicit but also underestimated. It is particularly true in the case of the processes of transition and transformation in East-Central Europe (CEE).

Specifically, a considerable body of literature explored the positive role of the institutionalization of external relations for the domestic reform process in transition economies. Nevertheless, the link between the expertise provided by the OECD and the specific design of specific policies central to the success of the systemic transition, e.g. in Poland, remains underexplored. Certainly, the sequencing, inherent in the processes of the institutionalization of external relations (Żukrowska, 2010) and the cumulative membership acquisition (Visvizi, 2010: 73-76) have been very well described in the literature. Likewise, the institutionalization-transition nexus (Visvizi, 2010) and its diverse facets have been explored (Mihaly, 2001; Csaba, 2007). What is missing in the literature on transition and transformation in the CEE, however, is a sharper analytical focus on the OECD and its modes of functioning as well as an explicit argument on the influence the OECD exerts on its member states and on those countries that aspire to join the organization. The objective of this volume is to do just that.

This Special Issue of the *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* (IESW) takes the opportunity of the 20th anniversary of Poland's membership in the OECD (1996-2016) to shed light on the structure of the organization, its specific committees, its ways of functioning, its members, the process and requirements of becoming a member, the OECD's influence on its member states and, finally, its role in the global governance process. The 20th anniversary of Poland's membership in the OECD also lends itself to a reflection on the OECD's influence on the reform process in Poland over the past years. It also serves as a good moment to reflect on Poland's role in the organization; specifically, on Poland's ability to be effectively involved in the work of the OECD.

Indeed, the volume opens with remarks of two Polish Permanent Representatives to the OECD, HE Prof. Aleksander Surdej and HE Dr. Jakub Wiśniewski, as they share their vision of Poland's role and potential in the organization. The celebration of the 20th anniversary of Poland joining the OECD coincided with the release of the biannual *2016 Economic Survey of Poland*. Dr. Antoine Goujard, involved in the making of this report, kindly accepted our invitation to contribute to this volume. Consequently, this volume offers an insider's perspective, rare in the literature on the subject, into the process of the making of the OECD Economic Survey of a given country (Goujard, pp. 21-32,

in this volume). The selection of papers that follows addresses diverse aspects of the OECD's functioning and makes a distinct case for the OECD's relevance in today's world.

For instance, Rewizorski (pp. 33-54) traces the origins of the OECD and its gradual development into one of the 'control rooms' of global governance and its implications. Szent-Iványi (pp. 55-70) examines the impact of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on the emerging foreign aid policies of the Central and Eastern European (CEEs) countries. He makes a case that the OECD may play a significant role in facilitating a domestic policy reform in politically sensitive domains. That the OECD is not a relic of the past is made evident by Pachocka (pp. 71-99) who dwells on the OECD's role in the uneasy debate on managing the twin migration and refugee crises that Europe has experienced over the past years. The empirical focus in the paper of Mihalyi and Banasz (pp. 101-127) is somewhat different. Extensively using the OECD data bases, they explore the growth performance of the former socialist countries 25 years after the collapse of communism. Remaining in the field of economics, the next paper authored by Maleszyk (pp. 129-149) discusses the advantages and limitations of measuring the employment protection legislation (EPL) by means of the OECD EPL Indices. The Polish labour market is used here as an example.

The three final papers included in this Special Issue address the notion of the influence the OECD exerts either on its current or prospective members. By reference to the accession negotiations between the Russian Federation and the OECD, Lachowicz (pp. 151-172) makes a very strong case for the OECD's role as the harbinger of values and norms, specific to Western liberal democracies. Pelle and Kuruczleki (pp. 173-207) examine how the Visegrad countries' membership in the OECD influenced the 'systemic transition' of their educational systems. Whereas Pelle and Kuruczleki move on to examine the intertemporal correlations between those countries' investments in education and their economic performance, Pleśniarska (pp. 209-225) looks at the variables that shape the positive correlation between education and the knowledge-based economy. The volume is complemented by a book review (Farkas, 2016), a monograph that develops a comprehensive conceptual and empirical frame suitable also for a reflection on the OECD's role in the CEEs.

Overall, the selection of papers included in this volume offers a focused insight into diverse aspects of the OECD and its role in global governance. Special emphasis is placed on the soft mechanisms by means of which the OECD succeeds in exerting tangible and sustainable policy-influence both in its member states and in the countries that expressed the wish to join the organization. In this view, the papers presented in this volume highlight the notion that the OECD may be an even more important agent of liberal and democratic change in the world than many would have wanted to acknowledge. The authors that have contributed to this volume, more or less explicitly, make a case that open access to data is a measure of inclusiveness and that this in turn enables a critical and constructive debate on the issues of common concern. Finally, this volume adds an important component to the academic discussion on the rarely talked-about aspects of the processes of systemic transition and transformation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Poland joined the OECD on November 22, 1996. By virtue of signing the Convention founding the OECD, Poland pledged its full dedication to achieving the organization's fundamental aims, i.e.

(a) to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy; (b) to contribute to sound economic expansion in member as well as non-member countries in the process of economic development; and (c) to contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations (OECD, 1960).

Today, Poland maintains a permanent delegation to the OECD, headed by an ambassador, including a number of diplomats and experts, and is involved in the work of the organization. On the 20th anniversary of Poland's membership in the OECD, this volume offers a useful conceptual and empirical perspective to reflect on the potential inherent in Poland's membership of this organization.

This Special Issue summarizes the outcomes of a project that the Institute of East-Central Europe (IESW) had been implementing since the beginning of 2016.

To this end, on March 23, 2016, the IESW and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland (MFA), Economic Cooperation Department, organized an expert seminar during which the OECD 2016 Economic Survey of Poland was presented and discussed (see also Sobol, pp. 235-238, in this volume). On September 30, 2016, as a part of the proceedings of the Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress, a panel discussion devoted to the OECD and its role in the region was held (for more details see Visvizi, pp. 229-233, in this volume). Finally, as a part of the policy-briefs' series – *COMMENTARY IESW* – that the IESW publishes regularly and distributes to the public administration, academia, and other professionals, a short series of policy-briefs devoted to the OECD was published. At the end of the year, an edited collection of these policy-briefs, in Polish and in English, will be available online on the IESW website. It will also be distributed electronically to universities, high schools, and other institutions interested in employing these materials for teaching and learning purposes.

This Special Issue would not have been possible without a wonderful group of people that were involved with this project at different stages of its implementation. The Editor would like to extend a warm “thank you” to Mr. Maciej Fałkowski, Deputy Director in the Economic Cooperation Department, MFA, and his team for the opportunity to get involved in this project and for the support they offered. In a similar manner, the Editor would like to thank Professor Mirosław Filipowicz, the Director of the IESW, not only for creating a truly enabling work environment but also for his support throughout the span of the project.

Special thanks are extended to the former and current Polish Ambassadors to the OECD, HE Dr. Jakub Wiśniewski and HE Prof. Aleksander Surdej, respectively. Both accepted our invitation to the expert seminar held on the occasion of the presentation of the OECD Economic Survey of Poland 2016 in March 2016. Both Ambassadors also kindly agreed to share with us their thoughts and observations on Poland and the OECD on the eve of the 20th anniversary of Poland's membership in that organization (see Surdej, pp. 13-15, and Wiśniewski, pp. 17-20, in this volume).

The Editor would also like to thank the authors, who responded to the open-call for papers distributed via social media, kept the tight deadlines and worked patiently on the Editor's editorial sugges-

tions and the reviewers' recommendations. The Editor is indebted to all reviewers who agreed to provide their feedback on the papers included in this volume, frequently working under time-pressure. Finally, the Editor would like to thank to Dr. Justyna Laszuk and Mr. Dariusz Mongiałło of the MFA for their kind assistance as well as to Mrs. Aleksandra Zińczuk and Mrs. Agnieszka Zajdel for their assistance and support.

The Editor

Anna Visvizi

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