

In this Issue

In the fourth issue of Warsaw Forum of Economic Sociology, we would like to focus mainly on the steel industry in Poland. The sector appears a very interesting case of an industry impacted heavily by globalisation. Furthermore, economic restructuring (which is a noteworthy manifestation of the latest industrial shift in the modern economy) also left a deep mark on the face of the sector. Social implications of those processes have been enormous. In Poland, social dialogue seems to have played a crucial role in ensuring that restructuring of the sector proceeded relatively smoothly and no major conflicts erupted in course of its implementation. However, with global economic crisis underway, dark clouds have been gathering over the sector in Poland in recent years. Production capacity is to be reduced, and the multi-employer collective agreement for the steel industry has been revoked. Still, sectoral social dialogue continues.

This issue includes seven papers. Four of them deal with the theme of Polish steel industry and its restructuring.

Vera Trappmann delivers an account of her field research in the Polish steel-mills in the 1990s and 2000s. The author observes that while steel restructuring is usually described as a success, there is a darker side of this process and its consequences, especially at the level of individual biographies of redundant workers. She highlights the downside of the sectoral approach which prevailed in restructuring, at the expense of a regional one.

Sławomir Adamczyk and Barbara Surdykowska ask whether and how trade unions might help boost the competitiveness of the European steel industry. The authors focus on the role of social dialogue in developing qualifications and competencies of workers. The case of the Polish steel sector is given particular attention. The authors notice that successful restructuring in the sector was accompanied by a crisis in sectoral social dialogue.

Rafał Towalski analyzes the impact social dialogue has had on restructuring process in Polish steel. The author compares the course and results of restructuring in Poland and the United Kingdom and concludes that the absence of strong union resistance in Poland, compared with the powerful resistance offered by unions in the UK, may be explained by active sectoral social dialogue in Poland, which was missing in the UK.

Leszek Gilejko, too, concentrates on the role of social dialogue in facilitating social peace during the process of industrial restructuring in the steel sector in Poland in the late 1990s and 2000s. The author maintains that social dialogue at the sectoral level was a major force behind the eventual success of restructuring.

Steel is not the sole topic of this issue. Three other pieces deal with themes ranging from tripartism in Poland, through EU structural funds, to professional sport.

Jerzy Hausner provides readers with reminiscences on a very interesting recent period in Polish social dialogue, from 2001 to 2005. During this time the author was one of the major actors in those events, serving as Minister of Labour and Deputy Prime Minister, as well as head of the Tripartite Commission for Social and Economic Affairs.

Agnieszka Kłós offers a comprehensive study of the system of funding the operational programmes in Poland based on the financial frameworks of the European Union for 2000–2006 and 2007–2013. While the membership of Poland in the European Union is an opportunity for gaining additional funds, the absorption of those funds brings about substantial costs. The relevant solutions adopted in Poland affect two basic macroeconomic parameters: public debt and budget deficit.

Łukasz Skrok, meanwhile, challenges the popular view that football players' wages are excessive. The author argues that only a narrow elite achieves enormously high earnings in this particular sport, and even though astronomical incomes of football stars may be seen as outrageous, they are still legitimate, as professional football plays a prominent role in the entertainment industry, generating substantial revenues.

Finally, we continue with our review section. This time Adam Mrozowicki brings the book *Gra o jutro usług publicznych w Polsce* (*The Game for the Future of Public Services in Poland*) edited by Wiesława Kozek to the attention of our readers.

Following the focus on Poland in the current issue, our next one will turn comparative and international, with articles on varieties of capitalism not only from Europe but also other parts of the world.