

Dear Reader,

The last JEEMS issue of this year underlines the importance of networks, formal as well as informal, for the functioning of management action within the emerging East European capitalism.

In the first article on “Supply Chain Quality and Its Managerial Challenges – Insights from Ukrainian Agri-Food Business” the authors, *Jon H. Hanf* and *Taras Gagalyuk*, analyse the effects of the East-European business environment on quality management. Referring to the example of Ukrainian agri-food business, they show the positive influence of supply chain networks, mainly established by foreign enterprises as focal actors on the development of quality management activities in Ukrainian firms. At the same time domestic infrastructural and institutional conditions seem to hamper further developments. Here, the authors also point to the promotion of trustful relationships with local partners as crucial for minimising environmental risks, and a substantial feedback to newly introduced business models. The research is based on fifteen in-depth expert interviews that reveals the infancy of chain (quality) management in transition economies.

As we know from the literature on entrepreneurial activities, supportive networks play an important role in this field too. Network activities of entrepreneurs or potential founders of businesses are based on the respective mental orientations of the actors. *Andrej Bertonec* and *Darko Kovač* investigate gender differences in entrepreneurial orientations of managers in the post-transition economy of Slovenia. Based on questionnaire research with one hundred and eighty-three Slovene top and middle managers, they found no gender differences in a number of variables like risk-taking, innovation, or planning and the following procedures. However, the authors could show some gender differences with respect to perceived components of entrepreneurial competencies, like analyzing, justifying, or with respect to craftsmanship. They attribute the difference to gender occupational concentration and assume a socially conditioned and firmly anchored selection of women in positions of middle management. in Slovenia.

The third article deals with networks too, although its focus shifts to stakeholder networks of foreign investors in Russia. The empirical study by *Dirk Holtbrügge* and *Jonas F. Puck* is based on in-depth interviews with the representatives of 3 German firms and 16 socio-political interest groups in autumn 2006. The authors analyse the stakeholder networks between German investors in Russia and their socio-political interest groups, that have been established and used to obtain important information, to accelerate administrative decision-making and to reduce political risks. The results reveal that the development of stakeholder relations is important for the success of foreign companies in Russia. Networks seem to differ in size, intensity, density

and centrality, depending on the industry and the particular socio-political issues these companies are confronted with. As found in all three cases, firms use direct relations to particular stakeholders to influence others to whom no or only weak direct contacts exist. Beyond simple dyadic relations, adequate networks are described as an important factor of success in the transitional environment.

The research note on political risks for foreign firms in Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine by *Kari Liuhto*, *Marika Heikkilä* and *Eini Laaksonen* analyses some different aspects of the political situation of Western CIS countries from a foreign firm's point of view. They point especially to Russia's increasing economic nationalism, to the political instability and unpredictability of future business conditions in Ukraine, to the centralization of authority over economic policy with the risk of arbitrary action from political authorities in Belarus, and to the uncertain future development in Moldavia based on problems with mutual cooperation of the parties in the parliament, as well as the overall economically and politically problematic situation of the country.

Once more, this final piece of research work makes clear, that networks and networking seems to be an important and decisive strategy for the activity within CEE economic, political and social environments. I hope you will enjoy exploring their advantages and disadvantages.

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