

EDITORIAL

South Eastern European Journal of Public Health: A new international online journal

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The South Eastern European Journal of Public Health (SEEJPH) is an online, open-access, international, peer-reviewed journal, published by Jacobs Company in Germany (1). Starting from 2014, the journal will initially release two issues per year, at the end of June and the end of December, although articles will be immediately published online following acceptance – a unique advantage of open-access journals, whose relevance within the corpus of scientific literature has been growing in recent years.

SEEJPH follows the achievements of the Forum for Public Health in South Eastern Europe, funded by the German Stability Pact during the first decade of this century (2).

SEEJPH covers all areas of health sciences, although its main focus is public health. The journal particularly encourages submissions from scientists and researchers from Eastern European transitional countries in order to promote their research work and increase their scientific visibility in Europe and beyond.

The need for scientific journals such as SEEJPH springs from the peculiar geopolitical history of the region. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the disintegration of the communist regimes in most of Southeastern Europe hastened the collapse—or at least enormous challenges—in the economies of the region. Subsequently, a market-oriented economic system emerged involving major social, cultural, and economic reforms, with similar changes observed in all former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The rapid transition from state-enforced collectivism towards a market-oriented system brought with it increasing poverty levels, high unemployment rates, financial downturn, and massive emigration. The situation was further aggravated by the devastating ethnic wars which involved most of the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

Today, life expectancy in the transition countries is still significantly lower than in Western Europe (3), with most of the east-west gap explained by the higher death rates from cardiovascular diseases and injuries in Eastern European populations (4-6). The particularly high levels of smoking, alcohol consumption, unhealthy dietary habits including low intake of fresh fruits and vegetables (3,6,7), and adverse socioeconomic and psychosocial conditions (8,9) have been persuasively linked with an excess risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions (4,7).

Nonetheless, the health effects of such rapid transition, especially in the distinctive context of countries of the Western Balkans, have not been sufficiently investigated. To date, ongoing research on the deleterious health effects of transition is scant and has not received sufficient attention in the international literature. There is an evident need to promote scientific publications pertinent to researchers from transitional countries in Europe, to promote the development of a field we will refer to as “*Health Transition Research*”.

SEEJPH aims to fill this void by offering a unique opportunity for the exchange of scientific information, active and rapid communication between researchers and scientists, and dissemination of findings from research conducted in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. We look forward to fostering the advance of scientific knowledge in the region, in the hope that a solid and context-specific evidence base for public health will lay the foundation for more effective health policies to serve Eastern European populations.

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