



STOCKHOLM NETWORK

The leading pan-European think tank and market-oriented network

**NEW PUBLICATION: The State of the Union
The progress of market-oriented reform in the EU**

By Susie Squire (ed) et al.

The Stockholm Network is delighted to enclose a copy of its latest report, *The State of the Union*. Created to track market-oriented reforms across the EU member states, it provides a general overview of Europe's economic progress combined with national chapters on individual countries.

Since the Stockholm Network was formed in 1997, its purpose has been to identify and highlight policies which stimulate economic growth and pro-market reforms at the pan-European level. First produced in 2005, its *State of the Union* report provides a comparative overview of progress towards these goals both on a national level and on a pan-European scale, acting as a concise and easy reference guide for policymakers and reformers. Contributors include leading policy experts and think tank directors drawn from the member think tanks of the Stockholm Network, as well as from our own in-house research team.

With the global economy looking rockier than it has for some time, the moment is ripe to look afresh at how the European Union and its member states can weather the economic storms which may lie ahead.

The report does not present a unified picture, however, both because reforms are progressing at variable speeds and because the authors write in regard to their national political contexts. Some writers zoom in on a particular area of public policy – such as healthcare or taxation - in order to illustrate the overall successes and failures of reform in their country. Others take a broader view and follow domestic political developments which may have hindered economic progress – in Belgium, for example, where the country was left without a government for several months, or in Romania, where high-level corruption remains entrenched, despite EU accession.

Overall the message from this report is clear: that reform is progressing at a rapid rate in some parts of Europe, and that, where it takes place, the rewards of economic growth and improved public services are often reaped. However, the report also suggests that in some countries reform remains contentious and politically contested – whether it be France's pension reforms, Italy's labour market, Slovakia's healthcare system or continuing battles to establish democracy and political stability.

Europe is trying to keep pace with the economic and social challenges that globalisation brings. For now, however, the EU is still lagging behind the other major trading blocs in comparative terms. Indeed the Union's bill of health cannot be pronounced as totally glowing.

Whether you wish to drill down into what has been happening in a particular member state or get a flavour of the reform climate in the EU as a whole, *The State of the Union* aims to provide readers with a easily-digestible summary of the current state of Europe's economy and its inclination to welfare state reform and, perhaps more importantly, to offer some hints as to where it is heading.

To view the full publication online please visit:

http://www.stockholm-network.org/downloads/publications/SN_SOU3_web.pdf

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Notes to Editors: The Stockholm Network is the leading pan-European think tank. It offers a unique network of 130 + market-oriented think tanks across Europe providing access to the best European policy thinking.

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