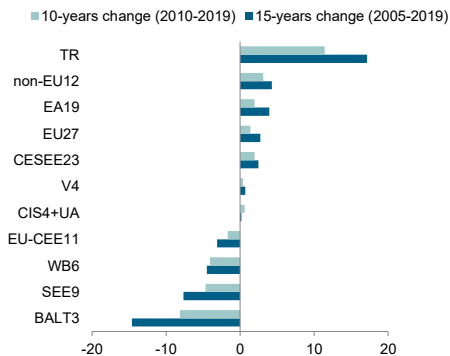


Preface

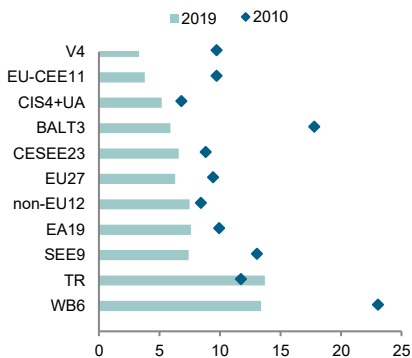
EVEN BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF COVID-19, ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE CESEE ECONOMIES STARTED TO LEVEL OFF. The growth rate of real GDP declined from an average of almost 4% in 2018 to close to 3% in 2019. Over the same period, due to the favourable economic dynamics in recent years and supported by demographic decline, average unemployment rates dropped in all the 23 countries of Central, East and Southeast Europe (CESEE23) covered by wiiw, with the exceptions of Lithuania, Moldova and Turkey. Many economies, particularly the Visegrád countries and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, were approaching full employment in 2019. Also, over the last decade current account balances have improved substantially. The related stock of gross external debt as a share of GDP has declined in most parts of the region. Thus, the pandemic of 2020 has hit fairly robust economies in CESEE. Moreover, because of less exposure to the potential fallout of the lockdowns due to a significantly smaller share of services in the economy, the East of the continent is expected to experience less of an economic collapse than the West. Nevertheless, average real GDP growth in CESEE is forecasted by wiiw to decline by more than 5% in 2020, the steepest recession in the region since the transition crisis in the early 1990s.

FOR ALMOST 50 YEARS THE VIENNA INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC STUDIES (wiiw) HAS ISSUED REGULAR STATISTICAL PUBLICATIONS ON CESEE, with special attention given to comparability, quality control and documentation of the data. The current issue represents the twenty-sixth volume in the annual wiiw Handbook of Statistics series. For those who want to analyse, for instance, the CESEE convergence path, the Handbook offers a wide variety of key variables such as indicators of industrial development, information on average wages by activities, income relative to the EU average and economic growth dynamics. A detailed collection of structural economic data is a unique feature of this publication. Another specific characteristic is that it contains statistics for “peripheral” European countries which are neglected in international databases more often than not. Overall the reader will find here a rare comprehensive and up-to-date English-language collection of cross-country comparable statistical information on recent economic developments in the EU Member States from Central and East Europe and the key emerging markets of East and Southeast Europe.

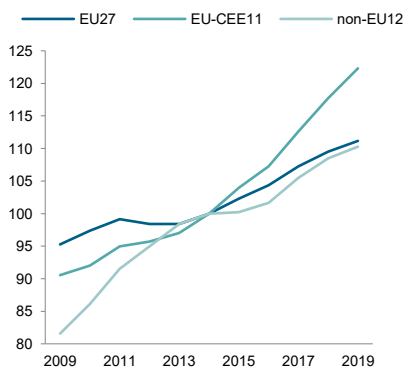
Population, change in %



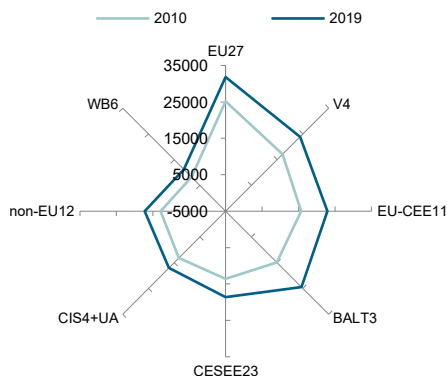
Unemployment rate (LFS), in %



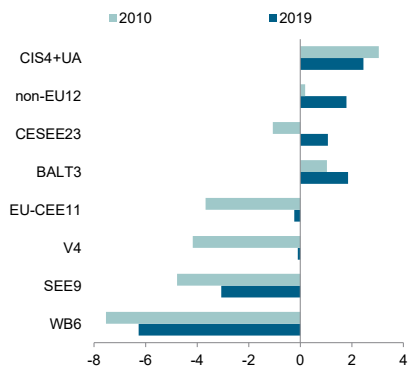
Gross domestic product, 2014=100



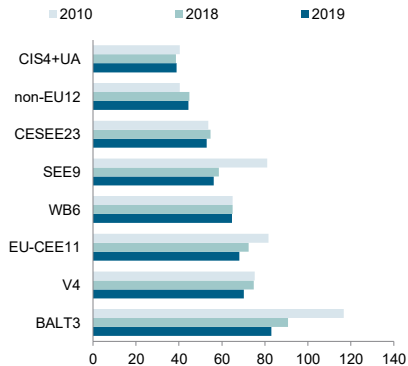
GDP per capita in EUR at PPP



Current account in % of GDP



Gross external debt, in % of GDP



Source: wiw Annual Database incorporating national and Eurostat statistics.

The individual time series, tables and maps in this Handbook have been directly extracted and processed from the wiiw Databases which are maintained and regularly updated by wiiw. The Handbook has been designed and edited by the wiiw statistics department.

The tables and maps in the Handbook reflect information and updates of the wiiw Databases as of the beginning of November 2020.

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Editor's note:

It is with extreme sadness that we have to inform you that the former Deputy Director of wiiw, Peter Havlik, died on December 2nd 2020. Peter Havlik joined wiiw in 1982 as a researcher in East-West economic relations. During his long career at wiiw, his research focused on the economy of Russia, EU-Russian relations, European integration and competitiveness. Throughout his time at the institute, he was a strong supporter and promoter of wiiw's comprehensive statistical activities and databases. Until 2013 he acted as a co-editor of wiiw's Handbook of Statistics.

We also want to inform you that on April 16, we lost our dear colleague and friend Goran Paunovic, who was responsible for layout and technical production of the wiiw Handbook of Statistics for decades. Goran joined wiiw in 1997 as IT assistant and took over software engineering and website development in 2005. With great dedication and commitment, he supported the statistics department in all matters in order to improve work processes and efficiency. Following a short but serious illness, Goran merely became 41 years old.

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