

■ BOOK REVIEW

Konrad Lachmayer

Nóra Chronowski, Tímea Drinóczi and Tamara Takács (eds.), *Governmental Systems of Central and Eastern European States*, Oficyna – Wolters Kluwer Polska 2011, ISBN 978-83-264-0209-8, 845 pp.

Twenty years after the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, *Chronowski, Drinóczi* and *Takács* edited an interesting book on Eastern European Constitutionalism. The book is an important contribution to the developments of constitutional law in Europe and is part of a bigger, EU funded project on "Teaching European Constitutionality".

The editors succeeded in bringing together papers from different regions in Eastern Europe. The collection starts with the Governmental System of the European Union, which shows the relevance of the EU in the last decade in Eastern Europe. The book includes all 10 Eastern European EU member states: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Contributions on Russia and the Ukraine extend the book's coverage further to the east and the contributions on Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia further to the south. Thus, the perspective of Central, Eastern and South-East Europe is extensively covered.

The authors of the book primarily have a legal and academic background. However, some authors are practitioners, like a supreme court judge of Estonia or a constitutional court judge of Bulgaria. The authors are experts of the legal systems, which they analyse.

The book follows a country report structure, which tries to standardize the structure of each chapter. As the title of the book already indicates, the collection is focused on the governmental elements of the analysed states. Most chapters thus include information on basic constitutional principles (such as sovereignty, rule of law or democracy), the governmental system (including constitution-making competences, legislation and governmental activities) and safeguards regarding the constitution (especially constitutional courts).

The editors of the book have chosen a classical approach to discuss constitutional developments in Central and Eastern Europe. One might miss human rights issues, but the focus lies on the organizational concept of the states. The beginning of the book with an EU perspective seems convincing. The EU chapter concludes with relations of the Union with non-EU members in Central and Eastern Europe (pp. 71-73). The further chapters consider the relevance of EU law in the national constitutional concept (e.g. regarding Hungary pp. 329-331). Even in the chapters of non-EU countries, questions of European integration are raised (see e.g. regarding Croatia pp. 145-148 or the Ukraine pp. 774-777).

The book does not end with a specific comparative conclusion on trends and developments in the relevant countries. It might reflect the opinion of the editors

that the different countries shall be understood in their own specific context. The contextual information at the beginning of each chapter gives a short overview of the historical and political situation of the country. Further information on the context, however, would have improved the understanding of the particular situation of each constitutional system.

The dynamics of Central and Eastern European constitutional law can be seen with regard to the chapter on Hungary. The chapter analyses the Hungarian constitution from 1989/1990. The new Hungarian basic law, which will enter into force in 2012, will open a new chapter of Hungarian constitutional law and will end the area of Hungarian constitutionalism of the last 20 years. These developments are not considered yet, but show the importance of a regular edition of this book.

In conclusion, the book "Governmental Systems of Central and Eastern European States" is a remarkable collection. The wide range of involved countries enables the reader to look beyond borders and into the constitutional world of Central and Eastern Europe. It helps the comparatist to discover another (young) European tradition of constitutional law.

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