

Book Review

Maria João Rodrigues, ed. (2009)

Europe, Globalization and the Lisbon Agenda

Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

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The Lisbon Agenda represents Europe's most ambitious attempt to address the challenges of globalisation and to respond to these challenges in a distinctively European way. Despite this, the Lisbon Agenda has received limited attention amongst EU scholars and even less attention has been paid to its wide ranging interactions with the process of European integration. For this reason, this edited volume by Maria João Rodrigues is a welcome addition to the existing body of literature on the European Union (EU). The book focuses on the implementation of the Lisbon Agenda and its implications for European internal policies, for EU external actions and for the EU governance system.

The volume is organised in four distinctive parts, each one of them being introduced by a "key-issues" chapter followed by some "replies" prepared by renowned academics. Each part is closed by a concluding chapter presenting policy options for the future. The first part, entitled "Developing the Lisbon Agenda at the European level", focuses on some of the key priorities of the Lisbon strategy: knowledge and innovation, macroeconomic policies and social policies. Part two, "The European Lisbon Agenda and national diversity", provides an analysis on how the strategy has been translated into national reform programmes by the EU Member States. Part three, "The external dimension of the Lisbon agenda", deals with the implications of the Lisbon Agenda for EU external actions. Part four, "The Lisbon Agenda and the European governance", investigates the implications of the Agenda for the European governance system. The introduction to the volume offers a narrative history of the development of the Lisbon Agenda and its key-features, whilst the conclusion examines its future prospects.

All the four constituent parts are organised as independent sections. The lack of a central argument compromises the analytical coherence of the volume, as well as the readability of the whole. However, these weaknesses are compensated by the fact that the volume provides a uniquely broad and empirically nuanced account of the intellectual elaboration of the Lisbon Agenda prepared by renowned scholars, who have also been major sources of inspiration for the Lisbon Agenda. For this reason, *Europe, Globalization and the Lisbon Agenda* remains valuable reading.

In the reviewer's opinion, part three is the most original section of the volume. This is not so much for its analytical value, but rather for the fact that hardly any studies exist on the implications of the Lisbon Agenda for the EU's external actions. The section raises a number of questions – including which lesson could be drawn from the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy that could be used in the strategic dialogue between the EU and its partners within the framework of either strategic partnerships or partnerships for

cooperation and development. This could provide a valuable contribution to the current debates on the redefinition of the EU's external relations, notably in the framework of the Lisbon Treaty.

Taking stock of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, the concluding chapter by Rodrigues proposes a series of policy options to strengthen Europe's approach to globalisation and make the Lisbon Agenda priorities more relevant in today's world. These policy options include improving the implementation of the Agenda and horizontal coordination focusing on new issues (*e.g.* climate change, sustainable energy and environment, improving social policies etc.), but also developing the Agenda's implementation at the international level, as well as improving its governance system.

It remains to be seen whether EU decision-makers will be able to "renew" the Lisbon Agenda and implement the proactive approach that is suggested in this book by Rodrigues and others, especially in consideration of the new major challenges that Europe and the world are facing today. For this reason, the book, while useful for anyone who wants to read a general overview of the Lisbon Agenda and its political significance, is also highly recommended to policy-makers and practitioners interested in evaluating the achievements of the Agenda to date and analysing possible options for the future.
