

Dear Readers,

This latest issue of *Argumenta Oeconomica Cracoviensia* confirms the broad range of subjects tackled in the journal, in which we publish articles from the fields of economics, management science, finance, and other sub-disciplines of economics. This broad profile creates publication opportunities for many authors working in these areas, which is reflected in the articles sent in to the editorial board.

The theory of optimal currency areas, upon which the Eurozone is founded, is still the subject of lively academic discussion around the world. Differing views on how the Eurozone operates are to be found among politicians, entrepreneurs, and ordinary people alike. In the case of the latter, there are growing fears about further enlargement of the Eurozone. This is understandable since, despite being in existence for almost fifteen years, the Eurozone remains a great social and economic experiment with visible effects that are both positive and negative. The deep financial crisis of 2008 has undoubtedly impacted on this state of affairs. The Eurozone was unprepared for such a shock, which caused difficulties for many of its participating countries. For these reasons, I confidently recommend the article that opens the present issue of the journal – “Towards an Integrative Currency Area” by Mieczysław Dobija – in which the author draws attention to what would be desirable changes in our approach to the Eurozone and the way it operates.

One of the important theoretical and empirical premises for establishing the Eurozone was to reduce the currency risk for entities using the single currency. Undoubtedly, this goal was achieved, but currency risk has not disappeared. Instead, it has been reduced to the relationship between the euro and other world currencies, especially the US dollar. In her article, “EUR / USD Intraday Volatility vs Trading Results and Market Efficiency”, Marta Anastazja Wiśniewska asks to what the extent the foreign exchange market is able to provide banks, financial institutions, businesses, etc. with reliable and effective information when making investment decisions. The analysis and empirical verification undertaken in the article is part of

the debate on the informational efficiency of financial markets, which has been ongoing for many years.

A great challenge, not just for countries of the Eurozone, but for all European Union countries, is fiscal policy. The idea behind the European Union is to extend the Eurozone to all countries that belong to the economic and monetary system. Regardless of whether and when this happens, EU countries are obliged to observe the Maastricht criteria on public deficit and debt. The main reason for imposing financial discipline is the fear that a Member State could pursue an irresponsible fiscal policy that could destabilise the economy and financial markets throughout the EU. For countries that already belong to the Eurozone, fiscal convergence criteria and the potential consequences for violating those criteria have been strengthened through the European Fiscal Compact ratified by the Eurozone countries in 2013. Practice shows that Eurozone countries, as well as other countries in the EU, are experiencing major difficulties in maintaining fiscal discipline while at the same time maintaining a safe level of public debt. This concerns not just the so-called PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain) but also other countries both within and without the Eurozone. Countries in breach of fiscal discipline are subject to the Excessive Deficit Procedure instigated by the European Commission, which severely restricts their freedom to pursue social and economic policy. Accordingly, we commend to readers the article by Anna Moździerz entitled “Fiscal Consolidation in Hungary in 2010–13”. Following the crisis, Hungary faced serious economic and fiscal problems, and the corrective action it took not only encountered difficulties but was widely criticised. The article also attempts to explain the political context in which various fiscal experiments in the country were carried out.

The rapidly developing Chinese economy is undeniably the economic and social phenomenon of recent decades. One of its manifestations is not only the massive scale of Chinese exports and the country’s high foreign trade surplus and huge foreign exchange reserves, but also the fact that the Chinese economy is seeking new avenues of growth. This is an important challenge given the slowdown in China’s economic growth in recent years. The capital China has accumulated is so big that it is looking for new sources of profit abroad. One area of economic expansion is Africa, where investors are trying to acquire, among others, the continent’s natural resources. Africa has become an arena of competition for countries that have traditionally had a presence here, such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, and China. It is important to answer the question what

benefits African countries have gained from foreign investment in general and from the recent expansion of Chinese investment in particular. This is a pertinent question given the danger that the economic gap between some poor African countries and rich countries will deepen still further. Based on the experience of Ghana, these issues are tackled by Joseph Yaw Abodakpi in his article, “Chinese Investment in Ghana”.

The impact of tourism on economic development, especially in the last few decades, is clear. For this reason, many countries want to create favourable conditions not just to develop domestic tourism but also to attract foreign visitors. For many less industrially developed countries, revenues from international tourism are an important item in the balance of payments. In the new geopolitical circumstances, i.e. since 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly-independent countries are looking to foreign tourism for development opportunities and are promoting their unique cultural and geographical assets. One such country is Georgia, which is the subject of Karolina Kotulewicz and Małgorzata Kozłowska’s article, “Tourism as the Priority for the Economic Development of Modern Georgia”.

The transformation of the political and economic system in Central and Eastern Europe was a huge challenge for the societies of those countries. In view of the civilizational and economic lag, a symptom of which was the woeful state of the economy (including Poland’s), it was obvious that meeting these challenges unilaterally would not be possible. Therefore, from the outset of the transition, foreign direct investment played an important role in developing the economy, changing its structure, and aiding the search for competitive advantage, etc. The extent to which these expectations were fulfilled in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is explained by Czesława Pilarska in her article, “The Importance of Inward Foreign Direct Investment during the Transformation Process in Poland with a Focus on American Investment”.

In this issue of the journal, as in earlier issues, there is an article devoted to human capital. The aspect discussed here is the quality of higher education in the European Union, which has sought to improve the effectiveness of education in general through the Bologna Process. An important aim of improving education at the tertiary level is also to bring courses of study more in line with the changing jobs market. Due to the great diversity of university education systems in different countries, one example of a measure aimed at improving the situation of higher education is the attempt to standardise the quality of education. Slovakian experience in this regard is described by Milota Vetráková and Katarína Holúbeková

in their article, “The Implementation of an Internal Education Quality Assurance System at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica”.

I would like to inform our readers that in this and in upcoming issues of the journal we will publishing academic reports about various international conferences and symposia. The current report concerns “Knowledge – Economy – Society”, the 7th International Scientific Conference of the Faculty of Management of Cracow University of Economics, which took place in Kraków in May 2015.

Whilst commending the present issue to our readers, I also invite you to submit original texts to the journal, inform us about important academic events, and send us reviews of outstanding books.

Prof. Stanisław Owsiak
Editor-in-chief