

Guest Editors' Introduction

Slovak Economic Association (SEA) is a voluntary scientific and professional association of economists established to develop and popularise economics supporting basic and applied research. Among its goals, SEA supports economic education in Slovakia, emphasizing the education of young talents. The annual conference of the Slovak Economic Association in 2020 was organized online in collaboration with the University of Economics in Bratislava. Despite a different format due to COVID-19 restrictions, the conference has welcomed 39 presented papers written by 87 authors and co-authors representing around 40 various organizations from 16 different countries. Three conference papers have been submitted for this special issue of the Czech Journal of Economics and Finance.

Matej Boór from the University of Economics in Bratislava has submitted the paper “Ricardians in the European Union: The role of fiscal rules.” On a sample of 28 EU countries, using data from 1995 to 2020, he analyzed the impact of government debt on household consumption behavior. The main result is that government debt harms household expenditure growth and dampens their growth rate. After the 2009 crisis, household expenditures are negatively correlated with government debt in the EU countries. In the Eurozone, household expenditures continue to grow despite the rise in government debt, albeit at a slower pace than in the pre-crisis period. The paper concludes with policy implications and suggests that fiscal policy will not mitigate cyclical fluctuations in the national economy, as it cannot increase aggregate demand by increasing debt-financed public expenditure.

The second paper is authored by Pauline Fiedler, Fabian Reck, and Jarko Fidrmuc from Zeppelin University in Friedrichshafen. The paper titled “Automation, Digitalization, and Income Inequality in Europe” analyses the impact of industrial robots and investments in computing equipment and digital technologies on different indicators of income distributions. Covering the period from 2004 to 2017 and data selected from West European economies, they empirically show the relationship between the underlying dynamics of technological advances and inequality. Their results suggest that robot density is positively associated with income inequality, while no robust evidence exists for digitalization.

On a similar topic, Martin Lábaj and Matej Vitáloš, both from the University of Economics in Bratislava, contribute to this special issue with a paper “Automation and Labor Demand: The Role of Different Types of Robotic Applications.” Their sample consists of 10 European countries and the United States and covers the period of 1997-2016. Several insights into the role played by different types of industrial robots are provided in this paper, differentiating by their application: (1) handling operations and machine tending, (2) welding and soldering, (3) dispensing, (4) processing, and (5) assembling. The main finding suggests a negative and significant correlation between displacement and industrial robots installed for welding and soldering, as well as dispensing. These effects are different from the displacement effects of ICT – IT density is also negatively correlated with displacement.

Editors of the Special Issue

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