

Conference Review

“Economic Policy in the European Union Member Countries”

Marek Vokoun

Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice

The International Scientific Conference Economic Policy in the European Union Member Countries (HPVEU) took place in a small town named Kopřivnice in the Czech Republic between 8th – 10th November 2017. Since 1997, the annual conference has been aimed at the dissemination of ideas, research, and various approaches to the economic policy. The Department of National Economy, the Faculty of Economics, and the VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava, celebrated 40 years since their establishment (1977-2007) and held this conference in cooperation with the Department of Economics and Public Administration, the School of Business Administration in Karviná, the Silesian University.

The members of the International Conference Committee started the conference with a welcome speech. The session was led by Zdeněk Zmeškal (Dean, Faculty of Economics, VŠB-TU Ostrava), Pavel Tuleja (Rector, Silesian University), Daniel Stavárek (Dean, School of Business Administration in Karviná, Silesian University), Jiří Balcar (Head of Department of National Economy, Faculty of Economics, VŠB -TU Ostrava), Chair of the conference Scientific Board Jaromír Gottvald (Vice-rector, VŠB - TU Ostrava), and under the auspices of Marian Lebieczik (Vice-dean, School of Business Administration in Karviná, Silesian University) and financial support of the Moravian-Silesian region.

The plenary session chaired Mariola Pytliková (Faculty of Economics, VŠB-TU Ostrava); two keynote speakers gave their presentations. Filip Pertold (IDEA and Cerge-EI) discussed gender inequalities and women labor market participation. John Earle (George Mason University, Schar School of Policy and Government) spoke about productivity dispersion.

Dr. Pertold explained that there is a promising trend and that the gender gap has been narrowing in the last years. The usual regressions in all kind of studies suggest a significant gap between males and females in European countries. He warned about the

issues with regressions design. There are many control variables; the historical context should be studied as well. Women study more often and longer in European countries. He presented several results and research ideas. One of the research questions is the lack of women in the boards of companies. The share of female board members in publicly listed companies is around 20 percent worldwide. Current studies of occupational choice of women are aimed at convex jobs. The more hours a week you work the more you get paid. In other words, there is an increasing reward; the less you work the more you are penalized. We also deal with overrepresentation (around 60 %) of women in public sector jobs. After the 1st child, more women pursue public jobs. Their earnings decrease and working time goes down as well. Mothers have higher prevalence of flexible jobs, which are not often found in the private sector (convex jobs).

Current women studies deal with gender norms. They are quite strong for unpaid work (for example: work at home and care for family members). Migrants are entering labor markets and lowering wages of all the employees. Migrants are mostly taking professions usually (in a higher share) occupied by women. There are also certain norms that are shaping labor markets. For example, wives earn less than husbands and do more unpaid work. The problem is that regardless of the wage or relative income to their husband, women still carry out more unpaid work. Pertold's work shows that this field of study is a very complex one and it is one of the most misinterpreted topics.

Prof. Earle dealt with the factors, which can explain differences in productivity dispersion. The traditional views suggest the roles of technology, endowments, institutions, and culture. He also analyzed the factors that prevent equalization. The reasons can be idiosyncratic such as taxes and subsidies. Some authors suggest that reforms can reduce the dispersion of productivity in industry. The evidence is however different. The deregulation in the US telecommunication equipment manufacturing suggests no equalization of the standard deviation of Multifactor productivity (MFP). In transitional countries, reforms led to a higher dispersion in comparison to the US economy. The discussion focused on the issue of dispersion measurement and how to develop a sound thesis. Further models should be based on different factors as well (cost of entry, cost of investment, restructuring activities etc.).

The next day, a lot of presenters dealt with labor market policy issues, such as population ageing and labor migration, monetary policies, and regional development policies. The third keynote speaker Roberta Rabelotti (Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Pavia) initiated a discussion about multinational companies. This topic is well known to Czech academia because the Czech economy is under a heavy influence of multinational corporations. The research is aimed at factors of green field investment and control foreign investments of multinationals. The effects of multinational presence and location factors can be measured, and a complex approach is needed. Research in this area is lacking quality data and preparing a credible and representative research sample is a work intensive process.

This conference was important for economic policy makers as well as for academia because it showed new methods and new ways how to develop credible data sources. The work of researchers was criticized a lot and they received a necessary feedback. From my experience, this conference's value added was in a friendly atmosphere and criticism which was both substantial and constructive. In this framework, it is more likely that the criticism is accepted and new research introduced.

Contact address of the author:

Ing. Marek Vokoun, Ph.D., Faculty of Corporate Strategy, Institute of Technology and Business, Okružní 517/10, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic, e-mail: marek.vokoun@mail.vstecb.cz

VOKOUN, M., 2017. Conference Review: "Economic Policy in the European Union Member Countries". *Littera Scripta* [online]. České Budějovice: Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, **10**(2), 185-187 [accessed: 2017-12-15]. ISSN 1805-9112. Available at: http://journals.vstecb.cz/category/littera-scripta/10-rocnik-2017/2_2017/.