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SPECIAL ISSUE

The papers in this special issue of XXXX were presented at the International Conference of International Business (ICIB) in Thessaloniki Greece 19-21 May, 2012.

The International Conference on International Business (ICIB) aims to bring together academics and practitioners in order to share ideas and methods for the exploration of foreign direct investment (FDI), the role of multinational corporations (MNCs) and the complexity of the globalized business environment.

ICIB focuses on – but is not limited to – empirical research in the following fields: Entrepreneurship and international business environment; European Union enlargement; Financial management; Global budgetary crisis management by the European Union institutions; Globalization, MNCs, competitiveness and development; International political economy and business; e-business; Sustainable business; Social entrepreneurship; Labour economics and industrial relations; MNCs and political strategies; Mergers & Acquisitions; Impact and determinants of FDI; FDI and European economic integration; FDI, trade and regional integration; FDI and transition; Tourism-enterprise and industry, Shadow economy and corruption.

This special issue incorporates a selected set of papers presented at the conference that deal with banking, non-banking financial institutions, securitization, FDI and economic development.

The first paper by Abdulmonem Alzalabani and Reji D. Nair with the title “Financial Recession, Credit Crunch and Islamic Banks: A Case Study of Al Rajhi Bank in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” discusses how Islamic Banks are able to withstand the severity of financial recession, with special emphasis on Al Rajhi Bank in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The financial recession has impacted on all financial institutions in the world, but its severity has been mild for Islamic Banks. The paper concludes that the quest for a financial system based on moral values

rather than greed and fear, is bound to be enhanced as a result of the global financial crisis.

The second paper by Adrian Costea with the title “Performance benchmarking of non-banking financial institutions by means of Self-Organising Map algorithm” constructs a benchmarking model in the form of a two-dimensional self-organising map (SOM), to compare the performance of non-banking financial institutions (NFIs) in Romania. The paper builds maps that facilitate the visualization of SOM results and select the best map in terms of quantisation error and ease of readability. The best map is used to analyze the companies over time, by studying the cluster where each company was positioned for each period. The paper concludes that there are benefits in using SOM for interpreting large and complex financial data by identifying and visualizing clusters.

The third paper by Elena Makrevska with the title “The new improved process of securitization” suggests that the global financial crisis changed the international rules, and so should the rules change for the securitization market. While securitization brought many advantages for the banks initially, nevertheless as it became more widespread it also grew more complex and opaque. Securitization has to be re-regulated with several structural changes in order to reestablish the confidence of the investors.

The fourth paper by Christina Sakali with the title “Determinants of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bulgaria: An econometric analysis using panel data” analyses the determinants of FDI in Bulgaria, using panel data and an extended time-span, from the late-1990s until the late-2000s. The goal is to explore FDI motivations during the most important phase of the Bulgarian transition, until recently. Results indicate that FDI in Bulgaria has been motivated by both market and efficiency reasons, as well as the high quality of the Bulgarian workforce. The progress in transition reforms and integration into the European Union, have also provided an important stimulus for the establishment of FDI in Bulgaria.

In the last paper by Nikos Astroulakis “Ethics and International Development: The Development Ethics Paradigm”, the author argues that development ethics and its subject matter which is international development, may be accurately interpreted within a political economy context. Development ethics came at the stage in the middle of 20th century by Louis Joseph Lebrét and became widely known by his student Denis Goulet. In contrast to economic positivism, for development ethicists the issue of international development is viewed not as growth in a narrow sense of material expansion of wellbeing but as the qualitative enrichment of human beings in all relevant aspects of human life.

All papers passed a double-blind referee process supervised by the Guest Editors subject to the final approval of the XXX Editor. The ICIB organizers would like to thank the Editor of the XXX journal for providing this exciting opportunity to the presenters of the conference. We would also like to thank the numerous reviewers while maintaining their anonymity out of respect for their difficult and sensitive decisions. Lastly, we thank the authors of the published papers in considering the special issue as an outlet of their high quality research.

May your reading be pleasurable, informative and, why not, even disturbing.

Aristidis Bitzenis
John Marangos