

## Editorial

Globalisation has reached a mature stage. This is also indicated by the emergence of global crises (for example the Global Financial Crisis, the sovereign debt crises, the migrant and refugee crises) and global responses (such as changes of political direction in the USA, UK, the EU and BRIC nations, the Sustainable Development agenda of the UN). It is within this global context that systems, countries, nations, businesses and individuals compete, framed by the no longer questionable resource constrained environment. The study of competition in this globalised context is defined by the term international competitiveness.

Competitiveness is a portfolio of attributes of entities distinguishing themselves from others by means of their performance (Porter, 1985; Stojcic, 2012; Wach, 2014). Competitiveness is present at three different levels of economic aggregation: micro, mezzo and macro levels (Perényi, 2016). Firm (micro) level competitiveness is presented in the literature as competitive performance and potential; competitive advantage; and competitive strategies (Buckley, Pass, & Prescott, 1988). Industry and cluster (meso) level competitiveness is linked with structural, institutional and resource factors (Porter, 2003) with a spatial dimension (Stojcic, 2012). DiRienzo, Das, & Burbridge (2007) define country (macro) level competitiveness as a collection of hard and soft factors influencing a country's productivity, and consequentially its ability to grow over time. These levels of competitiveness are conceptually linked (Chikán, 2008), and are in constant interaction with each other (Cho & Moon, 2013).

This themed issue of EBER aimed to capture the interaction between these complementary levels of competitiveness, in an international context. The editors invited articles which address international competitiveness as a field of research, drivers of competitiveness in an international context, interaction between national, cluster and firm-level competitiveness, global and regional characteristics of competitive processes, and methods and experiences of governing competitiveness for businesses.

The *Thematic Articles* section includes six articles. The articles presented in this thematic issue can be grouped into three categories. First, articles specifically investigating the interaction between levels of competitiveness provide a holistic understanding of the concept of international competitiveness. These articles are followed by industry-specific firm-level studies which empirically explore some key drivers of competitiveness in traditional and service industries. The third group of articles is conceptual in nature, and opens up the discussion about the transformation of national level competitive environments by means of technology and connectedness. The special issue is concluded by an article which introduces the supra-national level into the discussion of international competitiveness.

Michał Zdziarski (University of Warsaw, Poland), Michael Troilo and J. Markham Collins (both from University of Tulsa, USA) in their contribution entitled *Competitiveness, Technology Licensing, and Ease of Paying Taxes: A 30-Country Study* evaluated links between actors at various levels of competitiveness. They provided robust insight into the impact of institutional environmental characteristics and the impact of regulatory policy on the innovative performance of firms, and through this repeatedly impact upon the competitiveness of the national economy.

Eleanor Doyle (University College Cork, Ireland) and Mauricio Perez-Alaniz (University of Limerick, Ireland) in their article titled *Sustainable Competitiveness: Essential Concepts for Addressing Measurement Challenges* provide recommendations as to the incorporation of sustainability into the macro level competitiveness indicator of the World Economic Forum, highlighting the contribution of micro and mezzo level actors to sustainable competitiveness.

Anirban Sarkar (The Centre of Excellence, Australia) and Áron Perényi (Swinburne University of Technology, Australia) in their articles titled *Education agents as competitiveness enhancers of Australian universities by internationalisation facilitation* present evidence from university internationalisation in Australia, demonstrating that networks are primary vehicles for businesses in competing internationally.

Bartosz Deszczyński, Krzysztof Fonfara and Adam Dymitrowski (all from Poznan University of Economics and Business, Poland) in their article entitled *The Role of Relationships in Initiating the Internationalisation Process in B2B Markets* provide evidence that networks and relationships drive firm level ability of internationalisation, and therefore substantiate the foundation of international competitiveness across cases from a variety of industries.

Chen Liu (Trinity West University, Canada) in her conceptual article entitled *International Competitiveness and the Fourth Industrial Revolution* reviews how the next wave of innovative upgrading of industrial systems will affect the competitiveness framework, within which firms compete. She also argues that the depth of involvement in industrial upgrading will impact productivity and prosperity at a national level.

Sang Chul Park (Korea Polytechnic University, South Korea) examines the international dimension of competitiveness through discussing the regional economic implications of global economic and power shifts in his article entitled *RCEP versus TPP with the Trump Administration in the USA and Implications for East Asian Economic Cooperation*. In his article, he projects enhanced regional cooperation in the Asia Pacific region, pushing the intense competition to the supra-national level, between global regions.

The articles presented in this thematic issue of EBER reflected upon key influences shaping international competitiveness at all three levels of aggregation. Key themes emerging from the articles include the importance of technology, networks, and institutional environment. An additional contribution of this special issue to the domain of international competitiveness is the potential consideration of the supra-national level of aggregation.

This thematic issue on International Competitiveness has proven to be truly international in terms of the scope of the papers and authors as well. Authors from the Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe. In terms of the types of research, articles using a selection of quantitative and qualitative methodologies have been presented, using primary or secondary data. The issue also attracted conceptual papers, which provide suggestions for further research. It is the guest editors' intention to continue building upon the stream of articles presented at the International Competitiveness Track of the

European Academy of Management (EURAM) annual conference, and to continue supporting further thematic issues focusing on international competitiveness, to provide an opportunity for research ideas and outputs to be shared.

The second section of this journal issue deals with different general topics of modern business studies. The *Other Articles* section includes four articles.

**Pablo Collazo Yelpo**  
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*Thematic Issue Editors*

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