

C.1. Description for the general public

The Phenomenon of "The Return of State-owned Enterprises" in Contemporary Economy: Identification, Characteristics, and Consequences for the Economic Theory and for The Theory of Economic Policy

1. Research objective

Globalisation processes interrelated with thorough technological transformations have, in the last 15–20 years, brought about major changes in the functioning of the economy both on the global scale and at the level of respective economic systems. Among the major manifestations of those changes are the general strengthening of the extent and importance of the autonomous economic policy at the level of nation states and the increasing role of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the economy.

The main research objective of the project is to conduct an empirical and theoretical analysis of the phenomenon referred to in literature as the “return of state-owned enterprises”, or the increase in the extent and importance of state-owned enterprises, and of the wide use of the ownership function as an economic policy instrument in modern-day economies, as observed in the recent years.

2. Research carried out in the project

The empirical research will be applied to a group of ca. 25 purposefully selected economies of the world, representative for different types of economic systems. For each of them data will be collected and systematised on the SOEs extent and importance in the economy, on state’s corporate governance and ownership policy as well as on the property-rights-restricting government intervention. It will be a rule to acquire, for each economy studied, data from diverse sources (governmental documents, public statistics, reports by various organisations, company ranking lists, global company databases) and to cross-reference them.

As part of the synthesis, a multidimensional analysis of the data collected shall be carried out using statistical and econometric tools; a regression model will be developed and analysed, presenting interrelations between SOEs share and importance in respective economies as obtained in empirical research and the principal macroeconomic and institutional characteristics of those economies in the period 2008–2017.

Cluster analysis will be used to develop a typology of modern-day economies in terms of SOEs extent and importance.

3. Reasons for addressing the subject of the research

In contemporary mainstream economic theory, the existence of SOEs and treating the state ownership function as a specific economic policy tool is virtually not taken into account. The phenomenon of the return of SOEs, provided that empirical research confirms its presumed extent and significance, means a new quality in the functioning of modern-day economic systems, and seems so significant that, if overlooked by the economic science, an incomplete or even false description and understanding of modern-day economic systems will inevitably ensue. This state of affairs poses new challenges to the economic science, and creates important and valid research problems. The phenomenon analysed should be reflected in theoretical (macroeconomic and institutional) model perspectives which translate into applicative perspectives in the form of economic policy.

Most probably, the results of empirical research will show a significant global diversity of the extent and importance of the phenomenon of the return of state-owned enterprises. It can be expected that there exist economic systems where the extent and importance of SOEs are so high that both the cognitive and applicative perspective must not overlook this phenomenon. However, there probably also exist systems where SOEs and state ownership function play a minor role, so they can be ignored by macroeconomic modelling and economic policy.

Such research results would be of great significance to the economic theory and methodology. Indeed, they would challenge the principle of universality of a certain important group of economic laws and theorems in favour – perhaps – of context-based laws and theorems, which are true only with respect to a specific time and place.