

Dear Reader!

The publication of this issue of our journal marks the 200th anniversary of István Széchenyi's first speech in Hungarian at the upper house of the Diet of Pozsony, which marked the beginning of the Reform Era. Three weeks later, in his speech to the lower house, he offered the annual income from his estates to establish a scientific society, which would later become the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, an institution that has remained the foremost guardian of our national identity ever since.

One of the authors of our first study is a regular member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The study presents the development, interpretation, and criticism of the concept of utility – the degree of satisfaction provided by products or services that serve our needs – from the normative foundations of utilitarianism and neoclassical economic views, through the theory of marginal utility and the rational choice model, to behavioral economics, which takes into account people's cognitive limitations, decision-making biases and errors, as well as the context of decision-making situations, the measurement of which is relevant not only from a theoretical but also from a practical point of view.

Our second study analyzes inflation trends and causes over the past eight years using an ARDL model and Toda–Yamamoto causality test in Uzbekistan, which has been independent since August 31, 1991 and is Central Asia's most populous country with 35 million inhabitants. Despite the central bank's efforts to achieve price stability through restrictive monetary and exchange rate policies, inflation is currently running at 8.7% per annum instead of the target of 5% due to non-monetary and external factors (producer prices, world market commodity prices). In the author's opinion, effective management of inflation and the reduction of cost-side inflation require a reduction in state dominance and trade barriers, structural reforms of the economy, and increased competition in key sectors.

Our third study contains a comparative analysis of the Hungarian BUX index, which has a higher risk level (i.e., greater dispersion, wider interquartile range, more significant variance), but a more favorable risk-return combination than the Romanian BET index, which offers more stable performance in the period 2021–2025. The authors point out the clear differences between the two markets, the complexity of portfolio management, the need to understand their specific characteristics, and how investors can effectively align their risk exposure with their return targets through the conscious application of sophisticated portfolio optimization techniques. They advise investors to carefully consider market developments and the macroeconomic environment when investing in Hungarian equities.

Our fourth study analyzes the role of sustainability reports and report certifications in the context of companies' environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) performance, taking into account twenty years of practice by Czech, Austrian, Hungarian, German, Polish, and Luxembourg companies. Kaplan-Meier survival analysis of the maturity of assurance provision shows that large companies typically introduce external assurance engagements after approximately

three years of reporting. The author highlights the practical implications for companies preparing ESRS reports providing assurance for the first time and discusses limitations related to sample composition and regional scope, concluding that that assurance statements in sustainability reports do not necessarily increase corporate transparency, accountability, credibility, and accuracy, and there is concern that the new Omnibus Regulation may have an even more adverse impact on reporting obligations and assurance requirements.

Our fifth case study analyzes the impact of institutional quality management and self-assessment models on public sector performance, based on a survey conducted by the Central Bank of Kenya. Self-assessment models embedded in organizational culture and supported by management can contribute significantly to improving service delivery and aligning strategic goals. The results show that although many quality management practices lead to performance improvements, the only statistically significant predictor is management commitment.

Our sixth study uses keyword text analysis to examine how often and in what types of cases the courts of the Eastern European countries that joined the European Union in 2004 sought guidance from the Court of Justice of the European Union for preliminary rulings on financial law issues. The frequency depends primarily on the preparedness and openness of judges, the existence of an advisory network, and the degree of activism expected from the judicial system. The author's research has refuted the formal logical conclusion that a country with a smaller judicial system refers fewer cases to the CJEU than a larger one. For example, in terms of the number of questions per 100,000 inhabitants, Hungary is ahead of Poland in terms of referrals. With regard to the types of cases, the issues of value added tax, tax exemptions and tax allowances, and the clarification of basic concepts cause the most professional problems in Poland, while the Baltic countries are more active in customs matters. According to the CJEU, tax neutrality is part of the mechanism of VAT, therefore neither the right to correct invoices nor the right to deduct tax can be restricted, and in the event of VAT fraud, the tax authority must prove that the taxpayer has abused their right to deduct tax. Judges must regularly interpret CJEU decisions and follow not only questions raised by their own country, but also proceedings initiated by judges in other countries.

The interviewee in the current issue of our magazine is Éva Palócz, independent macroeconomic analyst, CEO of Kopint-Tárki Economic Research Institute Ltd. and vice-president of the Hungarian Economic Association. She graduated from the Karl Marx University of Economics in 1974, where she obtained her university doctorate in 1981 and her PhD in 1992 with a dissertation entitled „International Trade in Services”. In the 1990s, she worked at the ÁV Rt., the IFO economic research institute in Munich, the Budapest Bank, the National Bank of Hungary, and the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. She teaches fiscal policy in the policy course of the MA program in political science at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Eötvös Loránd University. Her analyses, forecasts, critiques of fiscal and monetary policy, and the results of her economic structural research have always generated great interest, debate, and excitement among economists in Hungary and abroad.

To illustrate this, it suffices to consider the following three issues she has raised: the development of children's independence and thinking is being pushed into the background in the Hungarian education system; overpricing and corruption have an extremely demoralizing effect; the Hungarian economy has been at a low point for three years, but a downgrade must be avoided because it would freeze growth for many years.

We report on the International Management Teachers Academy training course organized by the Central and East European Management Development Association in Bled from June 15 to 21, 2025, which prepared participants for the use of modern, student-centered, and experience-based teaching methods.

Finally, in our book review, we recommend the book "The Economics of Regional Integration" edited by Gyula Sándor Nagy to the attention of the esteemed Reader, which deals with the factors influencing the issue of regional integration, its successes, failures and its impact on the socio-economic development of individual countries. A useful and innovative work that not only offers theoretical frameworks for examining integration, but also strives for practical applicability with a new, comparative methodological approach. The book reflects on global economic restructuring, and also provides practical guidance for decision-makers, researchers and experts dealing with regional integration. ■

János Lukács
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