
The 2008 Annual Meeting of the European Public Choice Society

Friedrich Schiller University, Max Planck Institute of Economics, Jena

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As the successor to the genuinely global 2007 World Meeting of the Public Choice Societies in Amsterdam, this year's annual event of the European Public Choice Society (EPCS) was less monumental and more of a family-style affair, presenting approximately 200 recent papers in the fields of public choice, and political economy. Returning to Germany after four years (the 2004 meeting took place in Berlin), it was only natural that German and Swiss scholars dominated fellows from other European countries. Yet participants also included economists and political scientists from the USA, Canada, and Japan, and overall about 20 countries.

In the scenic university city of Jena, the event began with a keynote lecture by Friedrich Schneider (University of Linz), named "The devil is in the shadow: Do institutions affect income and/or productivity or only official income and official productivity?." Schneider presented the results of a joint paper with Axel Dreher (KOH Zurich), and Pierre-Guillaume Mon (University of Brussels). The paper argues that once the official output is corrected for the shadow economy, the relationship between institutions and output becomes weaker. With the corrected figures, factor-endowments may be sufficient to explain the cross-country differences in output per worker.

In eight parallel sessions of eight slots, one could investigate classic topics of voting, the European Union, and corruption, but also the upswing of behavioural and

experimental public choice, and the ever-stronger interest in the political economy of growth. Moreover, some hot issues of contemporary economics and politics such as terrorism, climate protection, and credit markets, also secured special sessions.

As usual, a very stimulating part of the meetings were the plenary discussions, organised in an interactive manner. The panel on "The Future of Monetary Policy in an Enlarged European Union," chaired by Jacob de Haan (University of Groningen), offered policy-oriented and often uncompromising speeches on inflation targeting, and ECB decision-making by Sylvester Eijffinger (Tilburg), Manfred J. M. Neumann (University of Bonn), and Pierre Siklos (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada). In another panel on "Globalisation and under-development in the 21st Century: Challenges for the public choice community," one witnessed an engaging debate between Roger Congleton (George Mason University), Philipp Harms (RWTH Aachen University), and Vani K. Borooah (University of Ulster), under the chairmanship of the ruling EPCS President, Lars P. Feld (University of Heidelberg). The social program also deserves a final mention: it comprised of an excursion to Weimar (on the UNESCO World Heritage List) and the Buchenwald Memorial, plus a traditionally enjoyable conference dinner.

More details are available on the conference website: <http://conventus.de/epcs/>

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