EDITORIAL: Challenging issues and fundamental concepts of corporate governance

Dear readers, it is a great pleasure to present the research papers published in the latest issue of the journal "Corporate Ownership and Control". The recent volume examines several relevant topics in the international framework such as the role of corporate governance in financial institutions both in Italy and in international contexts, the governance system in Italy, with a specific focus on the adoption of gender quotas and on risk disclosure. Two very interesting researches that highlight, respectively, the determinants of the voluntary disclosure and the importance of international accounting standards in South America, complete the issue.

In particular, *Lagasio* performs a systematic literature review of published papers on risk management, compensation and ownership structure of banks and runs a meta-analysis. She shows that bank performance are positively related to board ownership, CEO ownership and ownership concentration by the controlling shareholder, while State ownership leads to lower bank performance. *Kasraoui* and *Kalai* focus on a sample of Tunisian banks and analyze the characteristics of internal and external governance mechanisms that affect banking efficiency. The authors show how market competition has improved banking efficiency and information transparency. Consequently, all Tunisian banks allocate better both their financial resources and productivity. Similarly, *Wakaisuka-Isingoma* investigates the relationship between corporate governance and performance in a unique sample of 103 financial institutions in Uganda. The econometric results highlight the existence of a positive link between several governance proxies and performance. Moving on the analyses of Italian companies, *Dell'Atti, Sylos Labini* and *Di Biase* examine the board of directors in view of the changes introduced by Solvency II. The findings, obtained also through a survey, underline a satisfactory level of compliance of the board with respect to the requirements established by Solvency II. *Rizzato, Busso, Devalle* and *Zerbetto* build a Corporate Governance Index, by looking at 15 different items, for a sample of 159 listed companies and identity the determinant of the compliance of the corporate governance structure of Italian companies. The econometric results show a moderate level of compliance with the Italian and international corporate governance standards, with differences depending on the size of the company. *Netti* investigates the relationship between firm characteristics, such as size, industry, board of directors' independence, ownership structure and leverage, and risk disclosure in the Italian context. The results suggest that, in the Italian context, despite the recent interventions from the legislator to improve risk disclosure in corporate reporting, there is a remarkable difference between the disclosure provided by large and small sized companies. *Pastore* shows the effect of the gender quota Law on board of Italian listed companies. The author highlights, from a theoretical perspective, both the advantages and disadvantages related to the introduction of Golfo-Mosca law and suggests some future challenges for the governance of Italian companies. *Gros* and *Koch* construct a compliance score and a quality score in order to shed light on the determinants of the observed low levels of compliance and voluntary disclosure. The researchers reveal that firms determine their level of disclosure strategically and show that the association between disclosure determinants and disclosure behavior is influenced by the enforcement environment. *Villanueva García, Cordova Román* and *Cuenca Jiménez* study the application of International Financial reporting Standards on a sample of large Ecuadorian and Colombian companies. The results show a different impact between the two countries and display a greater impact only in the Colombian case. In the Ecuadorian case, although the country had made an effort to get closer to international standards with the NEC, they had remained at a distance.

The themes addressed in this issue highlight the continuing need for knowledge present in academic and non-academic research. Although some issues have been the subject of various in-depth analyzes over the years (for example: Alnodel, 2016; Berle & Means, 1932; Chidiac El Hajj, 2018; Heemskerk, 2013), the dynamic context in which firms operate requires continuous feedback.

In fact, if the role of the board of directors in influencing company performance in non-financial companies has been the subject of particular in-depth analysis (Rubino, Tenuta, & Cambrea, 2017; Minichilli, Zattoni & Zona, 2009; Di Pietra, Grambovas, Raonic & Riccaboni, 2008), the same cannot be said for studies that analyze the board in financial companies, such as banks and insurance companies. In addition, it is important to highlight there is a need to analyze companies managed by family businesses and the involvement of non-family members (Bartholomeusz & Tanewski, 2006, Gallucci, Santulli & Calabrò, 2015), as well as state-controlled companies and cooperative firms. Recently, some scholars have highlighted the role of political directors in the board and their ability to influence business performance (Pascual-Fuster & Crespí-Cladera, 2018; Hadani, Bonardi & Dahan, 2017), while other researchers have shifted their attention towards the analysis of independent directors, appointed by the various shareholders of the company, with company performances (Moscariello, Pizzo, Govorun & Kostyuk, 2018).

At the same time, now that it is quite clear that women have a fundamental role in the corporate board (Torchia, Calabrò & Huse, 2011) and after several years since the approval and entry into force of the law on quotas in Italy, but also in other parts of the world, it is necessary to shift the shot towards empirical analyzes that study the probable different impact that a female leadership can have on performance (Nekhili, Chakroun & Chtioui, 2018; Cambrea, Lussana, Quarato & Capello, 2017; Amore, Miller, Le Breton-Miller & Corbetta, 2017). Overall, corporate boards' issues is a wide topic analyzed in different aspects previously (see, for example: Akanmidu, 2017; Hermalin & Weisbach, 1988; Johnson, Daily & Ellstrand, 1996; Marchini, Medioli, Tibiletti & Triani, 2017; Miller & Triana, 2009; Torchia & Calabrò, 2016). This issue of the journal is composed of papers which also consider many other fundamental issues of corporate governance which have been described in a whole by other scholars (Apreda, 2006; Boubaker & Nguyen, 2014; Grove & Clouse, 2017; Huse, 2005; Kostyuk, Mozghovyi & Govorun, 2018; Meier & Meier, 2013; Nerantzidis, Filos & Lazarides, 2012; Wadesango, Tasa, Wadesango & Milondzo, 2016).

In conclusion, there is still a lot to study in order to identify the optimal configuration of a business board and the constantly evolving regulatory environment is the ideal opportunity to deepen the various changes that will follow in the following years. Therefore, new contributions on this issue are welcome to help all business stakeholders to better understand the companies with which they interact.

All our papers on this issue contribute to our knowledge on boards of directors and, more in general, on the company structure. We hope that you will enjoy reading this issue of our journal!

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