Editorial

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On the 24th and 25th of September 2016, Portsmouth Business School (University of Portsmouth, UK) together with the Center for Research in Contemporary Finance (Fordham University, USA) organised an International Conference on Banking and Finance. The program included 186 presentations and benefited from the plenary speeches of Professor Ruediger Fahlenbrach (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland) and Professor Thierry Foucault (HEC Paris, France and CEPR).

The organising committee of the conference in cooperation with the editors of *International Journal of Banking*, *Accounting and Finance*, after employing a rigorous, double-blinded review process, decided to include few of the most topical studies presented at the conference in a special issue of the journal. In particular, the special issue comprises three topical studies relating accordingly to:

1 the oil futures market

2 monetary policy impact in the eurozone

3 hedging in emerging European stock markets.

We briefly discuss these studies below.

Filippidis, Kizys, Filis and Floros consider two main benchmarks of crude oil (i.e., WTI and Brent) and purport to investigate factors that determine the WTI/Brent futures price differential. Their approach predicates on the argument that futures prices incorporate more information compared to spot prices. Deviating from the customary analysis in the field – that concentrates on factors such as macroeconomic indicators or oil market fundamentals – this study evaluates a comprehensive set of drivers of the WTI/Brent futures price differential that originate in both the crude oil market and the oil futures market. The study further provides interesting insights with regard to the *globalisation-regionalisation hypothesis* between WTI and Brent in the oil futures market.

Vortelinos and Gkillas using both an event study and regression analysis investigate the impact of monetary policy decision making by the ECB on stock indices of EU28 countries. In particular, they consider 394 policy interventions and their corresponding dates. Most importantly, they classify these interventions in order to identify the type of events with the greatest influence on the stock market. In this regard, they consider four categories; namely, financial sector (FSE), financial stability (FST), monetary policy (MP) and money market (MM) events. On a final note, the authors consider in their analysis different phases of the European debt crisis, in the interests of robustness.

Choudhry, Hasan and Zhang assess the forecasting performance of seven different GARCH model specifications in connection with the evolution of dynamic hedge ratios, considering various European stock futures markets. Investigating ways to forecast hedge ratios is important for attaining a better understanding of issues such as trading in the futures market, index arbitrage, as well as, optimal trading strategies formulation. The forecast accuracy of the relevant models is evaluated by generating out-of-sample forecasts of the returns of the portfolios implied by the previously forecasted hedge ratios. In addition, the comparison of the various specifications is achieved by the application of the model confidence set (MCS) and the modified Diebold-Mariano test.

In closing, we would like to thank the editors of *IJBAAF*, Professor Molyneux, Professor Pasiouras and Professor Resti for giving us the opportunity to edit this volume. We would also like to extend our appreciation to both the reviewers and the authors of the papers that were submitted to the *IJBAAF* in consideration for inclusion in this special issue. In addition, we would also like to thank all conference participants for their valuable and insightful comments and their overall contribution to the success of the event. We hope that you enjoy reading the selected papers.