

RIGID VERSUS FLEXIBLE RETIRING AGE: A SURVEY

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One of the most efficient tools for solving the pension problems of aging populations is to raise the average (effective) retiring age - raising the contribution rate or decreasing the replacement ratio is politically much more difficult and economically is unattractive. Apart from raising the minimum and full-benefit retiring ages, governments must strengthen the incentives through flexibility (or variability) in retirement age. This short survey presents the main results of 17 years of research, often conducted with co-authors. Here only two such questions are raised: (i) How should the government modify the system of notional defined contributions if the population is heterogenous in its life expectancy? (ii) Why is Female-40 unfair even to its beneficiaries?

THE CHANCES OF ENHANCING GROWTH RATE AND EMPLOYMENT

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The experience of recent decades raises serious doubts about the long-term sustainability of Hungary's successful growth phases. Have we overcome the bottlenecks that can dampen the pace of convergence in the long term? Analysis of Hungary's economy's structure and corporate development in the growth period of 2010-2015 indicates not yet. The domestic economy is still dominated by a production structure driven by investment of foreign capital, in which the growth of low value-added content and continually decreasing demand for labour make Hungary's performance depend solely on the interests of multinational companies. No internal development adjustment has yet begun towards reliance on knowledge-based and service activities, which could lead to a marked reduction in exposure to the fluctuations of world economic development. Such correction relies on starting some central developments, combined with development of an institutional system that can incubate satisfactorily the growth of suitable enterprises. The study considers the main deficiencies in this regard and the opportunities for improvement.

GLOBAL DRIVERS OF REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

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The number of regional trade agreements (RTAs) has been steadily increasing over past decades, while analysing the determinants behind the creation of such agreements is an understudied area in the literature. The article seeks to identify the factors behind regional trade agreements and behind the increasingly popular ones using a novel application of the gravity model. The database on which the calculations are based serves to analyse the data in 229 pairs of countries with a sample number of almost 50,000. The literature suggests a common past and geographical and cultural distance as the driving forces behind regional trade agreements, but this is only partially supported by our findings. These suggest the role of colonial relations in the formulation of RTAs. Language is found to be negatively related to RTAs, meaning that countries speaking different languages tend to create more trade. The relationship between distance and RTAs is found to be relatively straightforward, with greater distance suggesting less regional trade relations. Finally, geographical indication seems not to play a major role in creating regional trade agreements.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMMITMENT AS FACTORS IN THE LABOUR-MARKET CHANCES OF THOSE COMPLETING VOCATIONAL-SCHOOL COURSES

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In examining the effects of some factors on the labour-market opportunities for graduates from vocational schools, sample survey data collected in 2006–2012 and 2009–2012 was used to gauge short-term effects on employment of general knowledge, foreign-language knowledge, student engagement and occupational engagement. The results point to general knowledge and foreign-language knowledge as likely to benefit short-term employment chances. A positive effect was also found for student engagement and occupational engagement. The skilled workers tending to succeed on the labour market are ones able to adapt to changes in technology and work organization, through motivation, interest, and high-level key competences. So vocational schools should be training professionals involved in their occupation and possessing high-level general knowledge of use in further learning.