

ECA RESEARCH NOTES

Office of the Chief Economist

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

2020 ECA Academy Winning Research
May 2021



Hi Everyone,

This month, with the Spring Meetings behind us, we continued to disseminate the messages of our Spring Update on Data, Digitalization, and Governance. Our World Bank Governance practice colleagues hosted an event with their internal and external partners from across the region, where we discussed the operational implications of the study. If you missed it, you can watch the recording.

This month we also held the ECA Academy event, where the authors of the winning papers presented their research. ECA Academy is an annual research competition, where we identify some of the most interesting and policy-relevant research for our region.

In the operations part of the Bank, many of us engage in analytical activities as part of our daily work, but it is generally difficult to spend the extra time and energy to put this research in the form of a working paper and publish it. However, I think it is important that we make this extra effort because publications can have a lasting impact on development thinking. This is also how we learn from each other and keep analytical skills from eroding. So, the ECA Academy is not only to identify rigorous, policy-relevant research for our region but also to incentivize more of this work by communicating that it is really appreciated.

This year we had around thirty very good submissions and after two rounds of review, the review panel and I were able to identify three winning papers. This year's winning teams were very collaborative in that they brought together authors from the academia, and from research and operational parts of the Bank, with some authors based in the countries. Please join me in congratulating all the authors. You can read each of the winning papers below and watch the recording of their presentations. And thank you all for submitting your papers to the Academy and making it difficult for us to pick the winners. We will begin accepting next year's submissions this August, so keep up the good work.

Happy Reading!

Asli



2020 ECA Academy event - Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and winning authors

[Event Recording](#)

FEATURE STORY



Clockwise from upper left corner: Roby Senderowitsch, Asli Demirgüç-Kunt, Daniel Boyce, Helen Köpman

Data, Digitalization and Governance – Key Tools for a Resilient Recovery in ECA

Digital technology and the data revolution offer the potential to increase efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, and citizen trust, directly impacting the quality of government. At the recent Governance Global Practice BBL, we discussed the potential role of data and digitalization in improving governance in Europe and Central Asia and policy recommendations.

[Event Materials](#)



[Children on the Move: Progressive Redistribution of Humanitarian Cash Transfers among Refugees](#)

Berk Özler, Development Research Group, World Bank

Çiğdem Çelik, Poverty and Equity Global Practice, World Bank

Scott Cunningham, Baylor University

P. Facundo Cuevas, Poverty and Equity Global Practice, World Bank

Luca Parisotto, Development Research Group, World Bank

This paper evaluates the impact of the Emergency Social Safety Net in Turkey, the largest cash transfer program for international refugees in the world. The research provides the evidence that the program quickly caused substantial changes in household size and composition, with a net movement of primarily school-age children from larger ineligible households to smaller eligible ones. However, the program benefits went beyond the beneficiaries to the entire refugee population and overall sharp decline in inequality was observed.



[Invitations, Incentives, and Conditions: A Randomized Evaluation of Demand-Side Interventions for Health Screenings in Armenia](#)

Damien de Walque, Development Research Group, World Bank

Adanna Chukwuma, Health, Nutrition & Population Global Practice, World Bank

Nono Ayivi-Guedehoussou, Office of the Chief Economist, Africa region, World Bank

Marianna Koshkaryana, Health, Nutrition & Population Global Practice, World Bank

More than 15 million people between ages 30 and 69 years die annually around the world from noncommunicable disease (NCD). In Armenia, NCDs now account for 93 percent of deaths. This study investigates the impact of four financial and informational interventions on health screening for diabetes and hypertension among Armenian adults ages 35-68 who had not been tested in the last 12 months. The highest intervention impact - uptake of screening increased by 31.2 percentage points - was seen among recipients who received a conditional cash transfer in the form of a pharmacy voucher.



[Political Dividends of Digital Participatory Governance: Evidence from Moscow Pothole Management](#)

Nisan Gorgulu, Office of the Infrastructure Chief Economist, World Bank

Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, Russia Institute, Kings College London

Jevgenijs Steinbuks, Development Research Group, World Bank

This study focuses on the potential linkage between road quality and electoral outcomes in Moscow mayoral elections in 2013 and 2018. It finds that the deployment of digital technology, as a tool to allow citizens to report pothole complaints, results in an increased number of votes and a higher margin of victory for the incumbent. The authors highlight digital technologies' role as a tool to create participatory governance mechanisms and convey to the public an image of a transparent, responsive, and capable government.

BLOGS

e [Children on the move: the tale of a surprising spillover in humanitarian cash transfers to refugees](#)

Berk Özler & P. Facundo Cuevas, February 8, 2021

Evaluation of the impact of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Turkey, the largest cash transfer program for international refugees in the world, shows how program benefits were spread out throughout the refugee population. However, to strike the right balance between transfer size and coverage, key parameters in the design of any cash transfer program, policy makers should consider the possibility that refugee populations may respond to their eligibility status by altering their household structure and living arrangements.

[Read the blog »](#)

e [How can potholes empower? Lessons from Moscow](#)

Jevgenijs Steinbuks, Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, & Nisan Gorgulu, November 10, 2020

When do governments become more willing to serve the needs of their citizens better? What conditions and specific issue areas facilitate the governments' reliance on digital technologies to improve service delivery? Taking pothole

complaints in Russia's capital city, Moscow, as an example, the authors argue that governments can capitalize on digital technologies to select issue areas of high salience for voters, and demonstrate effective governance to reap political rewards.

[Read the blog »](#)

 **For COVID and Coverage: Financing Reforms are Critical for Better Health in Armenia**

Adanna Chukwuma, Estelle Gong, Emma Ghazaryan, & Hratchia Lylozian, September 24, 2020

The report, [Purchasing for Better Health in Armenia](#), highlights the need for independent, objective, and data-driven decision-making through the State Health Agency to improve quality and coverage, with external oversight mechanisms to promote accountability. Value-driven purchasing that leads to improved health outcomes can bolster the case for increased public health funding in Armenia.

[Read the blog »](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **June 16, 2021 at 10AM:** ECA Talk featuring **Ralph De Haas**, Director of Research at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), on "*Firm-level Barriers on the Path to Net Zero*"

Check [ECA Lectures](#) and [ECA Talks](#) to learn more about our past and future events.

The ECA Research Notes newsletter is produced by the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Chief Economist's Office. Please send comments, suggestions, and feedback to ECACEoffice@worldbank.org.

To learn more about us, click [here](#).

Read the ECA blog, [Eurasian Perspectives](#)

Follow us on [@WorldBankECA](#)  and [@ademirguckunt](#) 

[Unsubscribe from this list](#) | [Update Subscription Preferences](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)