



SPECIAL SESSION PROPOSAL

Counterfactual methods for regional policy evaluation

59th ERSA Congress, “Cities, regions and digital transformations: opportunities, risks and challenges”
27-33 August 2019, Lyon, France

The EC increasingly demands that the Member States investigate the net effect of their programmes using counterfactual methods. This applies also to regional economic and social programmes, which rely often on structural funds and are regarded as important device for territorial development and welfare. Although these methods are the most credible way to establish causality between an observed outcome and the intervention, it must be acknowledged that counterfactual methods suffer from some limitations, both in their applicability and in the credibility of the results they generate. For example, in quasi-experimental settings, critical issues include the identification of proper comparison groups, strategies for tackling selection bias and the reorganization of administrative databases into micro-data suited for impact evaluation. In addition, as public programs are more complex than those assessed in standard evaluation settings, there is a need to conceive suitable and affordable evaluation designs. Here, avenues of research include (but are not limited to) treatment effects in the presence of social interactions, second-order and general equilibrium effects, responses to alternative incentives different treatment intensities or treatment sequences.

Following the very good achievement of previous ERSA conferences, this session is devoted to counterfactual impact evaluation. In fact, theoretical approaches to CIE can be highly enriched by discussion and by feedbacks from empirical research.

The main aim of this session is to discuss about various methodological aspects and their implications, particularly concerning: strategies and methodologies for comparison group selection, for addressing selection bias, for evaluating programmes in particularly complex settings, alternative estimates and validation, computational topics related to data sources and data management suited for evaluation problems, etc. Theoretical, methodological and applied papers are welcome.

Since the session aims at highlighting the interface between methodology and empirical results, we invite authors to address the following points:

- ✓ Motivation of methodological choices and related advantages
- ✓ Shortcomings in practical applications and possible solutions
- ✓ Methodological lessons from results

This special session has been held for 5 consecutive years, from ERSA St. Petersburg 2014 onwards. It has obtained constant success over the years, attracting a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 15 presentations; most presenters bring quality papers and participate in multiple years. The theme of this special session has been selected by former ERSA president Jouke van Dijk and by current president André Torre to serve as the academic contribution of our Association to the European Week of Regions and Cities 2017