

“From Indicators to Counterfactuals”
Summer School on Quantitative Methods for Evaluating the Impact of Structural Funds
Organized by Progetto Valutazione in Pracatinat – Torino – Italy
1-12 September 2010

Premise

The Barca report on the future of cohesion policy calls for the widespread use of counterfactual evaluation in order to better understand the impact of Structural Funds. The DG-Regio of the European Commission devoted ample space to impact evaluation methods during the Structural Funds conference held in Warsaw in 2009.

It is apparent that a shift toward a more common use of impact evaluation methods will take place during the current and even more in the next programming period. One of the factors influencing the speed of change is the scarcity of trained evaluators and civil servants who can apply these methods. One danger is the rapid adoption of these techniques, as soon as they become fashionable, on the part of those who do not have a solid grasp of their limitations, in addition to their potential.

A unique training opportunity

Progetto Valutazione is organizing a summer school devoted entirely to quantitative methods for impact evaluation. The school is targeted both to practicing evaluators and to the staff in the managing authorities who decide to launch impact evaluations, design terms of reference and manage the studies.

The school, that will last 11 days, of which 10 full days will be devoted to lectures and group work, will be held in a resort on the mountain range just outside of Torino, the area that hosted the 2006 Winter Olympics. Director of the school is Professor Alberto Martini, who has been an advocate of a sensible use of impact evaluation methods for many years. Under contract with DG-Regio, last year he completed the new sections on Counterfactual Impact Evaluation for the EVALSED Guide¹. He was one of the invited speakers at the Structural Funds conference in Warsaw at the end of 2009.

The program

The school will open the evening of September 1st, with a general presentation and active discussion among participants on the several meanings of evaluation. The next three days will be devoted to the fundamental logic of impact evaluation, so that the participants share the same language and basic concepts, as well as becoming aware of some of the widely held fallacies in this field. After a day of rest on Sunday September 5th, a 5-day stretch will follow of full immersion instruction in state-of-the-art counterfactual methods. Topics covered will be regression, propensity score matching, discontinuity designs, interrupted time series, instrumental variables, as well as beneficiary surveys. Lectures will be held by recognized experts in the field, who have ample experience with teaching these topics to international audiences. Group work will be led by Progetto Valutazione staff. The practical cases discussed in the group work sessions will refer to Structural Funds policies and programmes.

The last day, September 11th, will sum up what has been learned and it will feature a round table discussion on the applicability of counterfactual methods to Structural Funds. The participants at the round table will include Fabrizio Barca, Veronica Gaffey, Daniel Mouque, Kai Strzyzynski, Alberto Martini and Ugo Trivellato.

Applications and fees

Applicants should come from a EU country or from the Western Balkans, should provide strong evidence of involvement with Structural Funds evaluation, should possess a good command of English and basic knowledge of statistics.

Application forms along with logistic details will be downloadable from www.prova.org from March 15, 2010. Applications must be received by *May 25* and admissions will be decided by June 15. Admitted participants should pay the all-inclusive fee of €1300 by *July 15* by wire transfer. Details will be provided. The fee includes full lodging and meals, transportation from and to Torino, teaching materials, as well as instruction itself. The maximum number of participants admitted will be 40. Spouses and children can come along, but they pay separately.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/sourcebooks/method_techniques