

Nuno Crato (Joint Research Centre of the European Commission)

Sven Langedijk (Joint Research Centre of the European Commission)

Better data for better evidence for better policies

Topic 4 – Getting the statistics out

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Introduction

In recent years thanks to better administrative records and to better digital resources, there has been a remarkable evolution in administrative data, both in scope and in reliability. Although this evolution encompasses essentially all countries and administrative systems, there are very diverse situations. There are examples of great advances that allow for a much better knowledge on social realities and there are examples of severe restrictions to data usage. Security, reliability, and confidentiality concerns are of course justifiable. But there are many methods of overcoming these concerns and still provide data access to researchers and public entities for specific purposes.

There are many examples in Europe and other continents of a much better knowledge of social reality through the access and study of administrative micro-data. In areas such as education, employment, social security, and others, the natural longitudinal structure of administrative data or the possibility of obtaining longitudinal descriptions by crossing different data bases, allows for a much better knowledge of the reality and, overall, to better study the impact of general changes and policies.

We will discuss the possibilities and challenges of obtaining and using micro-economic administrative data, describe some successful examples, and present the case for better monitoring of policy effects.

Conclusions

In an epoch of greater public accountability and of great public investments, the impact assessment of policies is crucial for increasing the success of public social expenditures. We need better data, for better evaluations, for better policies.