

Social Research Call

Title:
Effective Subsidies for Employment Creation



Acronym: ESEC

Project leader: Caterina Calsamiglia Costa

Host organisation: Barcelona Supercomputing Center

Main purpose of the project: Governments invest billions of euros every year through industrial and place-based subsidies, yet little is known about which policy designs are most effective. This project aims to create the first comprehensive map of subsidy policies in Spain by extracting information directly from the legal texts that regulate them. It will then study how different policy design features relate to employment outcomes and identify which characteristics make subsidies more effective.

Design/methodology/approach: The project combines artificial intelligence, computational law, and economics. Machine learning techniques will extract and structure subsidy design features from legal documents published by different levels of government. These data will be combined with administrative firm- and worker-level datasets to analyse the relationship between policy design and employment. Where possible, institutional variation across territories and over time will be used to estimate causal effects.

Potential results: The project will generate the first high-resolution database of industrial and place-based subsidy design in Spain. It will provide new evidence on which design features are associated with better employment outcomes and identify the conditions under which subsidies are most effective. The resulting data infrastructure and analytical tools can later be extended to other countries and policy domains.

Social relevance of the research: The project will help public administrations design more coherent and effective subsidy policies by identifying redundancies, inconsistencies, and gaps across different levels of government. It will also support institutions responsible for managing legal information and make complex subsidy regulations more accessible to firms and citizens, improving transparency, policy reach, and take-up among eligible beneficiaries.

Originality/value of the project: ESEC is the first comprehensive empirical study to reconstruct subsidy policy design directly from full legal texts and link these design features to economic outcomes. By combining computational law, artificial intelligence, and causal policy evaluation, it creates a new framework for understanding policy design. Beyond evaluating existing programs, the project establishes an evidence infrastructure for continuous policy learning that can inform the design of future public policies.