Evaluation that matters.
Ways to improve public policies.

XII International Evaluation Conference
Wrocław, 21-22 June 2017

European Funds

DOLNY ŚLĄSK

The National Centre for Research and Development

PARP

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

European Union
European Structural and Investment Funds

CAUSAL EFFECTS EVALUATION – METHODOLOGICAL CASE STUDIES

RAFAŁ TRZCIŃSKI
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND STATISTICAL EDUCATION
CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE OF POLAND

Wrocław, 21 June 2017

XII International Evaluation Conference

Main scope of the panel

1) Case studies of the causal effect evaluations.
2) Approaches and techniques.
3) Challenges for the future.

Key questions

1) Which approaches, methods and analytical techniques work well in evaluation of the causal effects of public interventions?
2) What are their limitations and what issues should be addressed while using a variety of research methods and techniques, aimed at estimation of the causal effect of the support?
3) What are the expected, further developments in the field of estimation of causal effects – are there any new promising approaches or methods?

CHASING CAUSAL EFFECTS

RAFAŁ TRZCIŃSKI
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND STATISTICAL EDUCATION
CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE OF POLAND

Wrocław, 21 June 2017

XII International Evaluation Conference

A few important achievements in the field of causal effects evaluation

- **Awareness of the cause and effect problem**
  - We ask the right questions.
  - We look for counterfactuals and we try to estimate impacts.
- **Growing capacity of the evaluation system**
  - A number of people working in public administration, science and consultancy sector finally speaks „the same language”.
- **The use of different approaches and methods <u>in practice</u>:**
  - We actually conduct impact evaluations (plenty of them), not only talk about them.
  - We use more and more sophisticated analytical tools to estimate causal effects.

A few important achievements in the field of causal effects evaluation

- **Access to the quality data**
  - We use a public statistics and administrative data in impact evaluations.
  - There is a great willingness to cooperate.
- **Institutionalization of the causal effect evaluations regarding the EU and state aid programs**
  - Regulations at the EU and the national level.
  - Actual implementation of the requirements in the evaluation plans.
- **Continuous, dynamic development of approaches and analytical methods.**

Are We There Yet?

Some of the challenges…

- **Causal effects and the black box trap**
  - We know if the intervention works but how to explain it?
  - Limited use of the theory-based approach.
  - Limited utility of the sole impact evaluation results for the public policy decisions.
- **Quality of the impact evaluations**
  - Not all of the impact evaluations actually measure impact.
  - We need to follow to a greater extent scientific standards (make the process of analysis more explicit and transparent).
  - Meta evaluation process (evaluation of the evaluation) or a peer review system is needed.
- **Access to a new/old public data sources**
  - Social security data, fiscal data, other public records etc.
  - Confidentiality issues will be always a problem.
  - Capacity building proces in institutions not involved in the evaluation system directly is needed.