

International Mobility of Researchers, Mobility and Scientific Productivity

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Abstract

In this paper, we present a robust econometric analysis of the causal impact of public financing to research by exploiting a feature of an important national policy in Switzerland that creates the conditions for a local random experiment. We analyze the impact of mobility research grants distributed to researchers during the period 2003–2009 by the Swiss National Science Foundation, which is the major institution promoting the public financing of research in Switzerland. The presence of a sharp discontinuity in the assignment of the rankings allows using a quasi-experimental method deriving from a regression discontinuity design approach. The main assumption of our empirical exercise is that in our ranking the best control group for the applicants just above the cut-off point is represented by the applicants ranked just below the cut-off point (the applicants that are not treated). This enables us to identify the causal effect of the international mobility grants on researchers' performances. Specifically, we evaluate whether researchers who received a grant are more productive (i.e. have more publications and citations after the grant provision) and are more likely to become professors than researchers who did not received a grant. Because we focus our analysis on the individuals ranked around the cut-off point of the ranking, our parameter of interest is a local average treatment effect that reflects the impact of the SNSF international mobility grant on this subgroup of researchers.