ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT

The research fellow will support the activities of the Department of Economics-UNIBO Unit of the European Cohort Development Project (ECDP).

ECDP is a 18 months project – starting in January 2018- financed by the European Commission’s within the INFRADEV research programme ‘Horizon2020’, involving a consortium of leading researchers and policy makers across Europe. The aim of the European Cohort Development Project (ECDP) is to create a specification and business case for a European Research Infrastructure that will provide, over the next 25 years, comparative longitudinal survey data on children and young people’s well-being. The infrastructure developed by ECDP will subsequently coordinate the first Europe wide cohort survey, named EuroCohort.

Children’s well-being is fundamental to society as a whole. Promoting children’s well-being is not only vital in order for children to have a good childhood, but also as a firm basis for their future well-being as adults. How children experience critical points of development affects their quality of life, their productivity, welfare dependency and the transmission of their later life outcomes to their own children. A failure to ensure high level of well-being for children carries costs because lower well-being is correlated with poor social and economic outcomes and mental health. Currently there is no readily available robust data to assess the child well-being situation across Europe or in comparison to the rest of the world. Existing data, which have their own limitations, indicate that European nations vary widely in terms of child well-being but there is no comparative data showing the circumstances of how children develop into adults.

A comparative longitudinal survey of child well-being in Europe offers policy-makers at a European and Member State level a number of new possibilities for policy formulation. Longitudinal well-being surveys can help us understand transitions in children and young peoples’ lives (for instance the step from education to the labour market), shocks and traumas (breaking up of the family unit) as well as turning points that might contribute to the understanding of well-being. These transitions are inherently longitudinal processes and so longitudinal data are necessary to analyse and understand such life course developments. Only this type of data is able to inform policies aimed to improve child well-being over time and answer questions about the impact of policy interventions on children and young people’s outcomes.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The Department of Economics-UNIBO Unit of ECDP will mainly contribute to the Work Package 3 of the ECDP project, titled “Business case: costs, cost-benefit analysis and case studies”. This work package provides information that allows EuroCohort to be fully costed and subsequently uses these data to inform a cost-benefit analysis which will contribute to making the business case to policy makers and national funding bodies. To support the business case a series of case studies will be developed to show the importance of collecting longitudinal survey data in the policy making process.
In particular, the winning candidate for this research fellow position will develop, under the supervision of Prof. Chiara Monfardini, a series of case studies involving empirical analysis of existing longitudinal surveys. These will serve as illustrative examples that demonstrate the ways in which analysis of a specific social problem using longitudinal data has resulted in an understanding how to make significant improvements to both individuals and society in general.

These case studies will inevitably identify the extent to which early experiences and conditions are linked with later outcomes. Of particular importance is to be able to show where statistical/econometric findings assist the policy process. These case studies will be drawn from countries that already have an established tradition of investing in longitudinal surveys and will include countries both in the European Union and from the rest of the world.

The illustrative case studies will come from a range of sectors and they will involve the following activities:

- The derivation of new empirical evidence based on existing longitudinal surveys
- The analysis of the existing empirical evidence: the specification of the longitudinal survey that generated the evidence and key research reports that resulted from the survey
- The study of the routes to knowledge mobilisation: how was evidence from the survey ‘mobilised’ or ‘valorised’ within a policy context
- The preparation of non-academic material to promote wider understanding of the impact of longitudinal studies.