

*Comments on:*  
**R&D AND PRODUCTIVITY: THE ROLE OF PATENTS**

Jacques Mairesse and Pierre Mohnen

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The paper by Mairesse and Mohnen belongs to a stream of work that Jacques has been engaged in for some years now, with a series of collaborators. The distinctive characteristic of this research program is that they rely on the survey of innovation (first the French one only, now from several European countries). In spite of our reservations as economists to this kind of survey data, Mairesse and associates have gone a long way to make the data useful, and to incorporate it into our more usual frameworks of analysis. On the all there is no question that this is a very useful and important addition to data on R&D-innovation and the like. The present work goes further as said in that it includes data on several European countries (France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom), rather than just on France, thus allowing for country comparisons, and is such informative and useful. Here are some specific comments:

- The inclusion of multiple countries comes at a price: the data are self contained (i.e. just from the innovation questionnaire), and cannot be linked to other, outside data, that could shed much light on the research questions and on the survey itself.
- Given the interest in patents in this conference, the measure of patents used in the paper is very coarse (a dichotomy measure of whether patents were taken or not); in addition, it is not clear whether one is capturing patents as an indicator of innovation, or the protection afforded by patents.
- The authors had of course to make decisions about which variables are to be regarded as endogenous and which exogenous, and there is always room to quarrel about those decisions. I think though that the decision with respect to one particular variable ought to be revised, and that is “Information from patents”: it is hard to believe that this variable can be regarded as exogenous, given that firms search and consult previous patents only if they innovate or intend to innovate.
- I wish the authors would present also the results for the OLS, so that one could contrast them with the system of equations that they estimate, and thus infer about the extent of endogeneity, etc.