



HAL
open science

A tool for economists to make the search for conferences and special issues more efficient and transparent

Jean-Charles Bricongne, Diyar Can, Marwan Mena, Guillaume de Rouville, Janna Bengouirah, Ismaël Fall

► To cite this version:

Jean-Charles Bricongne, Diyar Can, Marwan Mena, Guillaume de Rouville, Janna Bengouirah, et al.. A tool for economists to make the search for conferences and special issues more efficient and transparent. 2025. <hal-05263015>

HAL Id: hal-05263015

<https://hal.science/hal-05263015v1>

Preprint submitted on 16 Sep 2025

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



HAL Authorization

Document de Recherche du Laboratoire d'Économie d'Orléans

*Working Paper Series, Economic Research Department of the University of Orléans, University Of Tours
and University Clermont-Auvergne, France*

DR LEO 2025-18



A tool for economists to make the search for conferences and special issues more efficient and transparent

Jean-Charles Bricongne, Diyar Can, Marwan Mena, Guillaume de Rouville, Janna Bengouirah and Ismaël Fall

MISE EN LIGNE / ONLINE | 16/09/2025



Laboratoire d'Économie d'Orléans
Collegium DEG
Rue de Blois - BP 26739
45067 ORLÉANS Cedex 2

TÉL | (33) (0)2 38 41 70 37
MAIL | leo@univ-orleans.fr
www.leo-univ-orleans.fr

ConfWatcher

**A tool for economists to make the search for
conferences and special issues more efficient and
transparent**

Jean-Charles Bricongne* Diyar Can† Marwan Menaâ‡ Guillaume de
Rouville§ Janna Bengouirah¶ Ismaël Fall||

Monday 25th August, 2025

Abstract

Each year, hundreds of economics conferences, workshops, and seminars take place around the world. For researchers, timely access to clear information—especially regarding calls for papers and special issues—is essential to target the right venues and improve their chances of publication. Organizers also benefit from reaching the right contributors to maintain the quality and relevance of their events. **ConfWatcher** is a tool designed specifically for economists to meet this need. It combines web scraping, text analysis and generative artificial intelligence via large language models (LLMs) to automatically identify and monitor relevant academic events. The platform focuses on high-quality conferences organized by central banks, international organizations, journals, research centers, and professional associations. With its simple and user-friendly interface, **ConfWatcher** helps economists stay informed, plan submissions more strategically, and connect with the most valuable opportunities in their field.

JEL Codes: A1

Keywords: Conferences, Workshops, Seminars, Publications, Call for paper, Special issue, Presentation, Submission

*Banque de France, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, LEO (Laboratory of Economics of Orléans)

†Previously Université Paris Dauphine-PSL

‡Banque de France, Université Paris Dauphine-PSL, LEDa (Laboratory of Economics of Dauphine)

§Previously École 42 Lyon Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

¶Université Paris Dauphine-PSL

||Télécom Nancy

Acknowledgments

The **ConfWatcher** tool was developed from an original idea by Jean-Charles Bricongne. The development was initiated by Diyar Can. Marwan Menaâ and Guillaume de Rouville played a key role in refining the methodology, introducing major improvements, and pushing the project significantly forward through their work on implementation and deployment. Janna Bengouirah and Ismaël Fall contributed to the initial stages of the project.

They have been recruited with challenges posted on the [B2Ideas](#) platform. This tool enables to connect professionals and students through challenges, on the basis on anonymous contributions to fight against discriminations and increase the employability of students. This platform has a general interest purpose and has been awarded the “Trophées Solidaires” by the Banque de France Foundation in 2021 and has been posted in 2022 on the front page of the website “[ljeune1solution](#)” with the support of the Cabinet of the French Ministry of Labour.

We thank Christian Zimmermann, Sune Karlsson, Thomas Krichel and other members of the RePEc network for their remarks and encouragements. We also thank the participants who made remarks to the AFSE (Association Française de Sciences Economiques) Congress in Sciences Po Paris, to the Vivatech event and heads of research members of Eurozone central banks, in particular Luc Laeven (ECB) and Olivier de Bandt (Banque de France).

Introduction & Literature Review

The market for conferences in economics is large, but with partial information.

The market for conferences has a limited number of suppliers on the one hand, and many economists on the other hand have the potential to submit one or several papers. Conference can be with general or more specialized topics, and it is quite common to have several organizers, whether institutions like central banks, international organizations, research agencies, ministries (usually Treasuries or assimilated), think tanks, or universities/schools and journals.

Conferences may also propose some special issues, in order to publish in a journal associated to the event. These special issues are of particular interest as they usually propose to publish in a field that is well defined in advance, which increases the likelihood for an economist of matching between the theme of his/her article and the (special) issue of the Journal, and with shorter time constraints.

Beyond special issues, presenting a paper in a high-quality conference has some implications for future outcomes for publication. Indeed, as shown by [Gorodnichenko et al. \(2021\)](#) who examine the contribution of conference presentation to publishing outlook, conference presentations are positively related to the likelihood of publishing in high-quality journals. Evidence for the effectiveness of conferences in promoting academic impact is confirmed by [de Leon and McQuillin \(2020\)](#), who exploit the cancellation-due to Hurricane Isaac-of the 2012 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting.

Every year, hundreds of high-quality events are organized in economics. The quality of an event, whether it is called a conference, a workshop or a seminar can be assessed through the ranking of the institution (for example in the RePEc classification: [Economic Institution Rankings — IDEAS/RePEc](#)) and/or of the participants, whether keynote speakers,

discussants, or economists who present the papers (see the ranking of economists: [Economist Rankings — IDEAS/RePEc](#)).

The location of the conference also plays a key role, as underlined by [Günther et al. \(2017\)](#), who find that “the location of the presentation is at least as important for the number of academics attending a talk as the combined effect of the person presenting and the paper presented”.

Location is also identified as a key element for the choice of a conference, in the specific field of labour economics, coming second after the keynote speakers, as found by [Borghans et al. \(2010\)](#). The aim of this paper is to identify the preferences of participants with respect to conference characteristics. Based on a sample of European labour economists, preferences are measured asking to participants to choose between hypothetical European Association of Labour Economists (EALE) conferences.

In spite of existing websites (for example [EconBiz](#) or [INOMICS](#)) that propose lists of conferences, these remain limited because in most cases, the organizers of the event need to register it on corresponding websites, which is not systematically done since it is costly for organizers. Besides, there is not a single website with a leading position that would centralize all the information. Hence, economists who search for a conference in their domain need to pay some variable costs to get the information in real time. This represents, in aggregate terms, important losses either because of the investment in time to get the accurate information or due to lost opportunities when a missed conference happened to have high potential for an economist in terms of visibility or publication opportunities (either because the conference was associated to a special issue, or because a potential future referee was present).

Methodology

Architecture and Technical Framework

ConfWatcher employs a multi-layered architecture that combines automated data acquisition, intelligent processing, and user-centered design to address the fragmentation challenge in economics conference search. The system architecture integrates web scraping technologies, natural language processing techniques, and large language models to create a comprehensive and continuously updated conference database.

The platform addresses the fundamental challenge facing economists who must search across numerous institutional websites to search relevant conferences. While conference organizers continue to post their events on their respective institutional websites as standard practice, this information remains scattered across the academic landscape. **ConfWatcher** solves this fragmentation by automatically searching and aggregating conference information from multiple sources, providing economists with a centralized platform where they can efficiently search for relevant academic events without having to visit numerous individual institutional websites.

Data Acquisition and Processing Pipeline

Web Scraping Implementation

The data acquisition layer utilizes targeted web scraping techniques to systematically extract conference information from predefined institutional websites and conference platforms. The scraping infrastructure employs HTML and CSS selector-based extraction methods to identify and retrieve structured information including conference titles, dates, submission deadlines, venue details, and event descriptions.

The system maintains a curated list of source websites encompassing major economic research institutions, professional associations, and academic conference platforms (see [Appendix A](#)). Webmasters and/or Heads of Research of the corresponding websites have been contacted, when possible, to confirm their agreement to be covered by the **ConfWatcher** tool. This approach ensures comprehensive coverage while maintaining data quality through source validation. The scraping framework is designed with adaptive parsing capabilities to accommodate variations in website structures and formatting across different institutional platforms.

Natural Language Processing and Data Enrichment

Raw extracted data undergoes systematic analysis through natural language processing techniques to standardize format, extract metadata, and identify relevant thematic content. The text analysis pipeline incorporates keyword detection algorithms to complement conference information.

Large language model integration, specifically utilizing the Mistral API, enables automated extraction and inference of missing conference attributes from available textual descriptions. This approach significantly reduces manual curation requirements while maintaining data completeness and accuracy. The LLM component performs intelligent gap-filling for incomplete records, standardizes date formats, and extracts implicit information such as target audiences and submission requirements.

Search Infrastructure and User Interface

The processed conference data is indexed using ElasticSearch like technology, providing rapid full-text search capabilities and advanced filtering options. The search engine supports complex queries including temporal filtering and special issue constraint to facilitate precise

conference search.

The frontend interface prioritizes user experience through intuitive search functionality and responsive design. The platform incorporates multiple search modalities including keyword-based queries or filter combinations. Results are presented with comprehensive metadata including submission deadlines, conference dates, and direct links to official conference pages.

System Maintenance and Quality Assurance

Automated Update Cycle

ConfWatcher implements a four-day update cycle to maintain the timeliness of conference listings and submission deadlines. The automated refresh process re-scrapes monitored sources, identifies new conference announcements, and updates existing records with revised information. This frequency balances data freshness requirements with computational resource optimization.

Quality Control Mechanisms and Acknowledged Limitations

While the system incorporates duplicate detection algorithms to identify and merge redundant conference listings that may appear across multiple institutional websites, complete elimination of duplicates cannot be guaranteed. The automated nature of data acquisition from diverse sources with varying structures and formats means that identical conferences may occasionally appear multiple times in search results when published across different institutional platforms.

Similarly, the platform cannot guarantee absolute accuracy or completeness of conference information. Data reliability depends on the accuracy of information provided by source websites, which may contain outdated details, incorrect dates, or incomplete submission requirements. Web scraping inherently introduces potential for data inconsistencies due to

variations in website structures, formatting changes, and timing discrepancies between source updates and system crawling cycles.

The methodology acknowledges these inherent limitations in automated web scraping approaches while emphasizing that the comprehensive coverage achieved through this method provides significant value despite these minor caveats. The platform addresses these limitations through community feedback mechanisms, continuous expansion of monitored sources, and regular validation processes, though users should verify critical information directly with conference organizers when making submission decisions.

Scalability and Extensibility

The architecture supports dynamic expansion of monitored sources through user recommendations and systematic identification of additional relevant platforms. The modular design enables cost-effective scaling, with fixed infrastructure costs for core functionality and marginal costs for additional source integration.

The system's design philosophy emphasizes automation to minimize manual intervention requirements while maintaining flexibility for customization and enhancement. This approach ensures sustainable operation while providing value to both conference organizers and research community members seeking relevant academic events.

The complete platform is accessible at <https://confwatcher.b2ideas.eu/> (see [Appendix B](#) for practical usage guidelines), with technical support and source suggestions available through info@b2ideas.com.

Conclusion

Using a combination of web scraping, text analysis, and generative artificial intelligence, **ConfWatcher** provides a centralized platform for searching major economics conferences through keyword-based search functionality. This approach benefits both researchers seeking venues to present their work and conference organizers who gain access to more numerous and higher-quality submissions, thereby improving the matching process between research output and appropriate academic venues.

The platform's utility is demonstrated through several indicators of adoption and institutional support. ConfWatcher has received endorsement from RePEc and support from Heads of Research within the Eurosystem. Furthermore, within two months of launch, the platform has attracted more than 1,800 unique users, indicating significant demand for centralized conference search engine tools within the economics research community.

Beyond potential enhancements to the current economics focus, **ConfWatcher**'s methodology presents opportunities for expansion into adjacent academic disciplines. The technical framework could be adapted to cover other research areas such as data science or medical research, leveraging the same automated search and aggregation principles to serve broader academic communities.

References

- Borghans, L., Romans, M., and Sauermann, J. (2010). What makes a good conference? analysing the preferences of labour economists. *Labour Economics*, 17(5): 868–874. European Association of Labour Economists 21st annual conference, Tallinn, Estonia, 10-12 September 2009.
- de Leon, F. L. L. and McQuillin, B. (2020). The role of conferences on the pathway to academic impact. *Journal of Human Resources*, 55(1): 164–193.
- Gorodnichenko, Y., Pham, T., and Talavera, O. (2021). Conference presentations and academic publishing. *Economic Modelling*, 95: 228–254.
- Günther, I., Grosse, M., and Klasen, S. (2017). How to attract an audience at a conference: Paper, person or place? *German Economic Review*, 18(4): 468–491.

Appendix A

Choice and list (by alphabetical order)¹ of the institutions covered by ConfWatcher

Given the importance of comprehensive coverage, institutions have been selected systematically:

- Central banks: most important central banks in the world have been covered, including regional Feds that propose a significant enough number of events, the BIS (Bank for International Settlements) and the ECB/most important members of the Eurosystem.
- International organizations such as World Bank or IMF have been included.
- Think tanks: to capture as much as possible the most influential think tanks in economics, the list from RePEc available on the following link: [Economics rankings: Think Tanks — IDEAS/RePEc \(top 25% think tanks\)](#) has been used. It appears that most of them do not issue conferences with call for papers or, if they do so, they usually organize them jointly with other institutions that are captured. NBER, IZA, CPER, Ifo, Bruegel and CEPR have been included.
- Academic Journals/ Universities: rankings available in REPEC ([Economic Institution Rankings — IDEAS/RePEc, top 10% Economic Institutions](#)) and in the French CNRS ([Categorization of Journals in Economics and Management](#)), which stopped in 2020, but this ranking still contains most important journals, since journals created in the meantime are not likely to have enough weight.

¹ The list will expand over time, depending partly on user proposals for additional sources.

The initial list of Institutions covered by **ConfWatcher** is as follows:

- Academy of Management
- AFSE
- Asian Development Bank
- Banca d'Italia
- Banco de España
- Banque de France
- Bank of Canada
- Bank of England
- Bank of Japan
- BIS
- Bank of Slovenia
- Bruegel
- Bundesbank
- Central Bank of Ireland
- CEPII
- CEPR
- CESifo
- FRB Cleveland
- Czech National Bank
- De Nederlandsche Bank
- French Treasury
- EconBiz
- Econometric Society
- ECB
- EEA
- Emerald Publishing
- FRB San Francisco
- BOJ IMES
- ifo Institute
- IZA
- IMF
- Inomics
- INFORMS
- JIE
- FRB Minneapolis
- NBER
- National Bank of Belgium
- National Bank of Poland
- NY Fed
- Norges Bank
- RES
- RBA
- RePEc
- Sveriges Riksbank
- Swiss National Bank
- World Bank

Appendix B

Practical Usage Guide for ConfWatcher

Overview

ConfWatcher provides economists with a centralized platform to efficiently search relevant academic conferences across the economics discipline. This guide outlines the practical steps for maximizing the effectiveness of conference searches and optimizing research outcomes through strategic use of the platform's features.

The screenshot shows the ConfWatcher homepage. At the top left is the logo "ConfWatcher". At the top right are navigation links: "Search Conferences", "About", "Institutions", and "B2Ideas". The main heading is "ConfWatcher" in blue, followed by the tagline "Search for conferences across major economic and financial institutions worldwide*". Below this is a search form with the following elements:

- A search input field with the placeholder text "subject, institution...".
- A "Submission deadline" section with "From" and "To" date pickers.
- A "Conference dates" section with "From" and "To" date pickers.
- A checkbox labeled "Special Issue".
- A blue "Search Conferences" button.

At the bottom of the page, there are two columns of text:

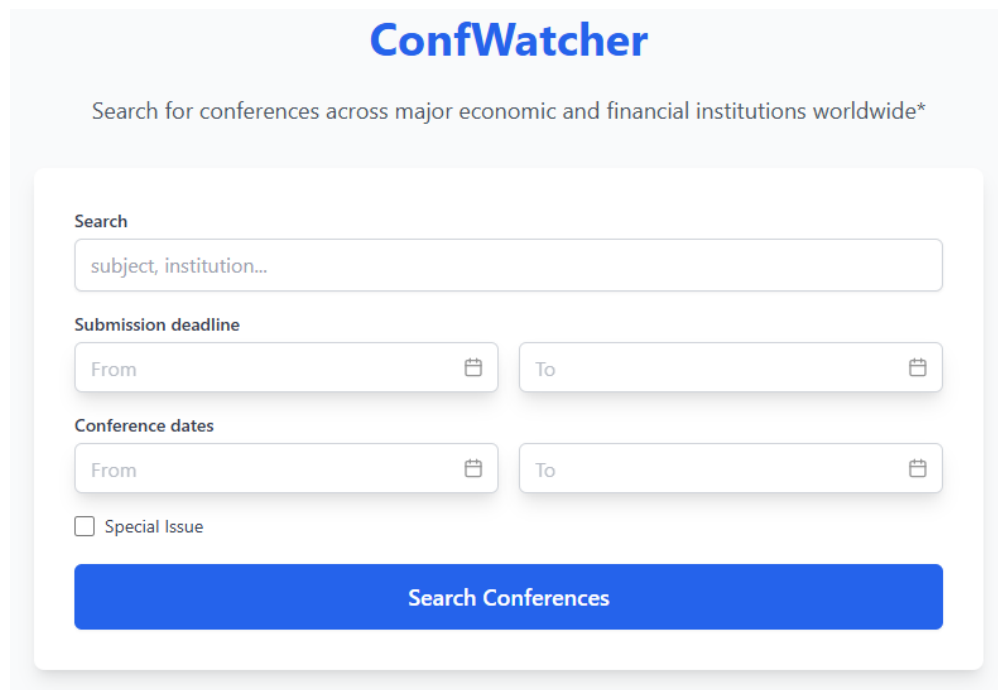
- ACKNOWLEDGMENT**: ConfWatcher has been developed thanks to the non-profit association Business to Ideas and the website www.b2ideas.eu. B2Ideas enables professionals to post challenges across various domains for students participating anonymously...
- MAIN CONTRIBUTORS**:
 - JB** Jean-Charles Bricongne, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne
 - MM** Marwan Mena, Université Paris Dauphine-PSL
 - DC** Diyar Can, Université Paris Dauphine-PSL
 - GR** Guillaume de Rouville, USA

A small disclaimer at the very bottom reads: "Disclaimer: *This tool is made public to help economists find conferences and aid organizers in receiving submissions. While we strive for completeness, we cannot guarantee exhaustiveness or error-free results."

Figure 1: ConfWatcher Homepage

Basic Search Functionality

Upon accessing the **ConfWatcher** homepage, users encounter a streamlined search interface designed for immediate usability. The primary search field accepts keyword queries related to research areas, conference topics, or specific economic subdisciplines. Users should enter terms that accurately reflect their research interests, such as "monetary policy", "behavioral economics", or "econometrics".



The image shows the ConfWatcher search engine interface. At the top, the logo "ConfWatcher" is displayed in blue. Below the logo, a subtitle reads "Search for conferences across major economic and financial institutions worldwide*". The main search area is a white box containing several input fields: a "Search" field with the placeholder text "subject, institution...", a "Submission deadline" section with "From" and "To" date pickers, a "Conference dates" section with "From" and "To" date pickers, and a checkbox labeled "Special Issue". At the bottom of the search area is a prominent blue button labeled "Search Conferences".

Figure 2: ConfWatcher Search Engine

The search algorithm processes these inputs against conference titles, descriptions, and indexed metadata to return relevant results. Initial searches may yield broad result sets, which users can subsequently refine through additional filtering mechanisms.

Advanced Filtering Options

ConfWatcher incorporates multiple filtering parameters to enable precise conference search. The temporal filtering system allows users to specify date ranges for both conference dates and submission deadlines, ensuring that search results align with their research timeline.

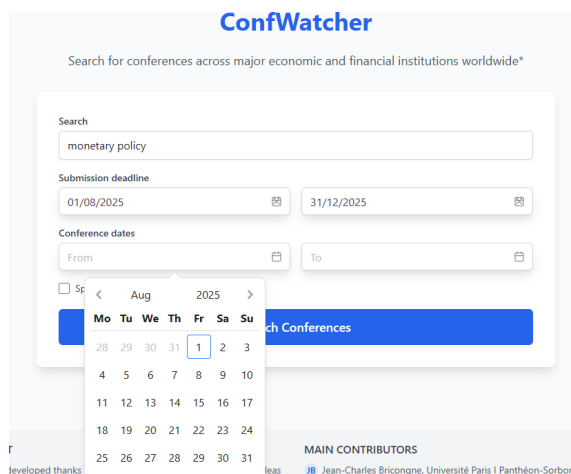


Figure 3: ConfWatcher Date Selection

Additionally, a special issue checkbox enables users to identify conferences that specifically invite submissions for journal special issues or themed publications. Users should combine multiple filters to achieve targeted results aligned with their research timeline.

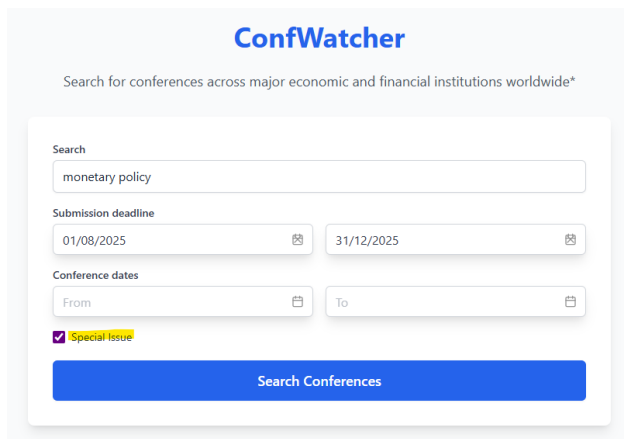


Figure 4: ConfWatcher Special Issue Checkbox

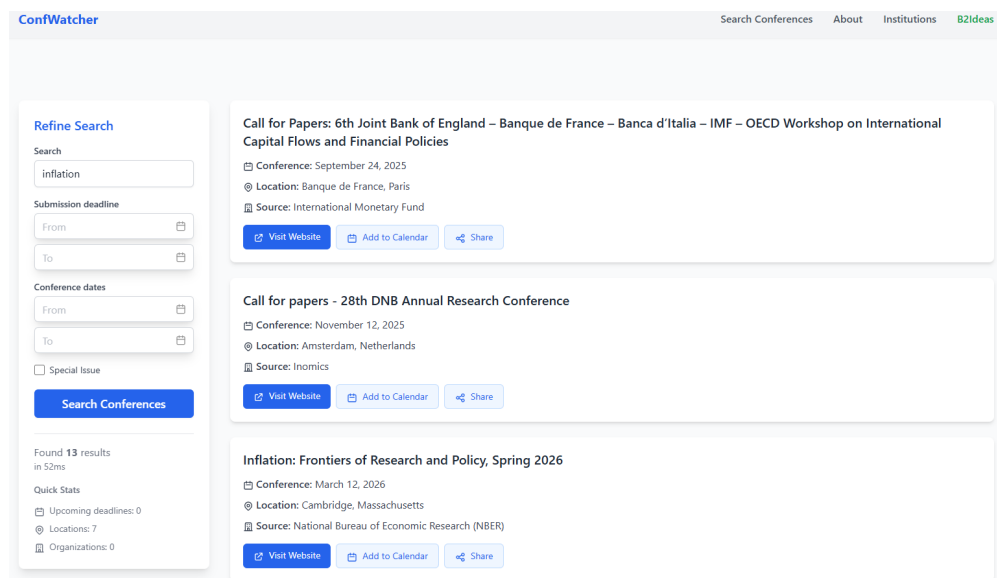
Optimizing Search Strategy

When initial searches return excessive results, users should progressively add filtering criteria to refine the result set. Beginning with temporal constraints often provides the most immediate improvement in result relevance, as researchers typically operate within specific submission and conference attendance windows.

Conversely, when searches yield insufficient results, users should consider expanding keyword selection to include synonymous terms or related concepts within their research area. Economics research often employs varied terminology across different schools of thought and geographic regions, making comprehensive keyword coverage essential for thorough conference search.

Managing Search Results

ConfWatcher presents search results with comprehensive metadata including conference dates, submission deadlines, location information, and direct links to official conference websites. When users identify conferences of interest, they can visit the official website, add the event to their calendar, and share conference information with colleagues using the action buttons located below each conference listing.



The screenshot displays the ConfWatcher interface. On the left, a 'Refine Search' sidebar contains a search input field with 'inflation', a 'Submission deadline' section with 'From' and 'To' date pickers, and a 'Conference dates' section with 'From' and 'To' date pickers and a 'Special Issue' checkbox. A 'Search Conferences' button is at the bottom of the sidebar. Below the sidebar, it shows 'Found 13 results in 52ms' and 'Quick Stats' including 'Upcoming deadlines: 0', 'Locations: 7', and 'Organizations: 0'. The main content area lists three search results, each with a title, date, location, source, and three action buttons: 'Visit Website', 'Add to Calendar', and 'Share'.

| Conference Title | Conference Date | Location | Source |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Call for Papers: 6th Joint Bank of England – Banque de France – Banca d'Italia – IMF – OECD Workshop on International Capital Flows and Financial Policies | September 24, 2025 | Banque de France, Paris | International Monetary Fund |
| Call for papers - 28th DNB Annual Research Conference | November 12, 2025 | Amsterdam, Netherlands | Inomics |
| Inflation: Frontiers of Research and Policy, Spring 2026 | March 12, 2026 | Cambridge, Massachusetts | National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) |

Figure 5: ConfWatcher Search Results

Researchers should note that information is subject to change, and verification through official conference websites remains essential to access detailed calls for papers, presentation formats, and registration requirements.

Troubleshooting and Support

When searches fail to yield expected results, users should first verify keyword spelling and consider alternative terminology for their research area. Economic concepts often have multiple accepted terms, and comprehensive searches may require iteration across different keyword combinations.

Technical difficulties or questions regarding platform functionality can be directed to the support team through info@b2ideas.com.

Maximizing Platform Value

Regular use of **ConfWatcher** throughout the research cycle ensures comprehensive awareness of relevant conference opportunities. Researchers should consider conducting periodic searches as their research evolves, as new conferences may emerge or existing conferences may expand their scope to include previously excluded topics.

The platform's four-day update cycle means that new conference announcements appear regularly, making frequent searches advantageous for researchers seeking the most current opportunities.

Users are encouraged to provide feedback regarding missing conferences or relevant websites that could enhance platform coverage. Such contributions benefit the entire economics research community by expanding the comprehensiveness of available conference information.