

Economic and Social Research Council

Social and Economic data: International Developments




Presentation to the 5th Konferenz für Sozial und
Wirtschaftsdaten, Wiesbaden , 13th-14th January 2011



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Structure of the presentation


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- A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the slide, composed of several colored segments: orange, yellow, light green, light blue, and dark blue.
- Why do we need international collaboration for the development of data for research in the social and economic sciences?
 - What do we have at present?
 - What do we need for the future?
 - New mechanisms to help identify data needs
 - Strengthening infrastructure to facilitate data discovery and sharing
 - Network building to promote collaboration
 - International agreement between data providers and funding agencies.
 - What do we need to do to meet these requirements?.

Why do we need to share data on an international basis?

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- A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the slide, composed of several colored segments: orange, yellow, light green, light blue, and dark blue.
- The major global research challenges we face need social science inputs as much as they need scientific input from other disciplines:
 - Environmental challenges
 - Communicable and non-communicable diseases
 - Healthy and sustainable lifestyles
 - Migration as a response to threats and opportunities
 - Education and child development – learning from each other
 - Economic stability, trade dependencies
 - Understanding conflict, securing societies
 - Data needs vary and include cross-sectional survey data, census data, longitudinal studies, administrative data

What do we have at present?


Examples of resources available for international research in the social sciences

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- Census data resources ([IPUMSi](#))
 - Consortium of European Social Survey Data Archives ([CESSDA](#))
 - Household surveys ([Demographic Health Surveys](#), [International Household Survey Network](#))
 - Health-related population studies (e.g. cohort studies on a regional basis in India and links to other cohort studies – [EUcoNet](#))
 - Access to International Data Banks (e.g. [ESDS International](#) for ‘Young Lives’, European Social Survey, International Social Survey programme, World Bank data, ILO data, etc.)

What do we need – identifying data requirements

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- In 2004, US NSF and UK ESRC commissioned a study to find ways to promote international collaboration in the social sciences.
 - A conference was held in Beijing in 2006 – *the Foundation Conference of the International Data Forum*.
 - A working group met twice to progress the recommendations from the IDF conference report (produced in 2008).
 - UK ESRC put proposal to OECD Global Science Forum in 2009.
 - An OECD Expert Group now established to examine data requirements and propose new mechanisms for improving data discovery and access – reporting in late 2011, early 2012.

Objectives of the OECD Expert Group

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- To review and advise on those major data series which ideally would be available for research from every country, or initially at least from OECD countries and made available for comparative research;
 - To review the potential availability for research over the next decade or longer of new forms of data and how access to these for scientific and policy research can be established;
 - To review new developments in technology and methodology for access to and digging into data in all its new forms and to consider related ethical issues.

Expert Group Membership by Country



- USA
- Belgium
- France
- Denmark
- Finland
- Germany
- India
- Netherlands
- Norway
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- OECD
- European Commission

Strengthening infrastructure

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- New national longitudinal studies ([Understanding Society](#), possible new birth cohort in UK, French birth cohort, NEPS)
 - New access arrangements and related services ([SDS](#) and [ADLS](#) in UK; Research Data Centres in Germany and Canada)
 - National Centre for Research Methods ([NCRM](#))
 - Working with the European Commission and European institutions ([ESFRI](#))
 - Supporting existing efforts to establish global infrastructure -
UK Data Forum and German Data Forum collaborating to create the International Forum for Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences (IFRISS).


Building networks – some examples

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- Various regional and global initiatives with partner organisations (Medical Research Council, Wellcome Trust in UK, NIH and NSF in US, DFG in Germany, *etc.*)
 - 'Pathfinder' projects (Brazil, India now in place; China and South Africa following in 2011)
 - ESRC's new International network


International agreement between data providers and funding agencies

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- New multi-country research initiatives designed to explore the research potential of new forms of data (e.g. [Digging into Data](#))
 - '[Foggy Bottom Agreement](#)' on sharing public health data
 - US National Science Foundation and Eurohorcs Initiative to help scientists gain appropriate accreditation for data development work

What do we need to do to improve data access and sharing on an international basis?

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- Improving data discovery and a more systematic and coordinated approach to the production and distribution of metadata (esp. for classifications) – the lead taken by CESSDA will be important here.
 - Better access to microdata records on a more up-to-date basis.
 - Some way to share sensitive micro data records (e.g. from administrative sources or for data which are potentially disclosive) and to facilitate data linkage between sources.
 - Reducing the costs of data sharing at the point of data discovery.
 - Mechanisms to promote access to new forms of data.

Contact Information

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- A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the slide, composed of several colored segments: orange, yellow, light green, light blue, and dark blue.
- Peter Elias, ESRC Strategic Advisor for Data Resources, p.elias@warwick.ac.uk, +44-2476523286