RatSWD.
German Data Forum

Research Data Infrastructure accredited by the RatSWD

Social, behavioural, and economic research often requires access to sensitive microdata on individuals, households, or businesses. To satisfy the demands of data producers, data users, and data protection, the German Data Forum (RatSWD) - as one of many tasks - accredits research data centres (RDCs). Consequently, a network of 31 German RDCs has developed since the early 2000s.

The RDCs provide researchers with user-oriented, cost-efficient access to a wide range of data. Since 2009, the RDCs have been organised in the FDI Committee to coordinate the research data infrastructure. This bottom-up coordination fosters efficient governance as well as securing the quality of the research data infrastructure through monitoring procedures.

Available data

RDCs provide data from the following areas of research:

- Social Data
- Behavioural Data
- Economic Data
- Qualitative Data
- Education Data
- Other Data
- Health Data

Research Data Centres in 2018

(Most RDCs keep their German acronym FDZ)

FDZ BA at IAB*
FDZ-Land*
fdz.DZHW*

FDZ BA at IAB*
FDZ-Land*
FDZ pairfam*

FDZ-BO*

FDZ Ruhr at RWI*
RDC Wissenschaftsstatistik*

FDZ BA at IAB*
FDZ-Land*

RDC ALLBUS*
RDC Elections*
RDC International Survey Programmes*
RDC PIAAC*
FDZ pairfam*
FDZ BZgA

BIBB-FDZ*
FDZ-Bund*
FDZ IZA, IDSC*

FDZ-Land*

RDSC Bundesbank*
FDZ-Bund*
FDZ-Land*
FDZ Bildung

FDZ PsychData at ZPID

FDZ-Bund*
FDZ-Land*

FDZ-Land*

FDZ BA at IAB*
RDC GML*
ZEW-FDZ*
FDZ-AGD

FDZ-RV*

FDZ-Land*

FDZ-Land*

FDZ-Land*

FDZ-Land*

FDZ BA at IAB*
FDZ-Bund*
FDZ-DZA*
FDZ-Land*
RDC RKI*
FDZ-RV*
RDC SOEP*
FDZ IQB

RDC-IWH*
FDZ-Land*

FDZ-Land*

FDZ BA at IAB*
FDZ-Land*

FDZ pairfam*

FDZ pairfam*

FDZ-Land*

RDC-LIfBi*

FDZ BA at IAB*

EBDC*
FDZ-Land*
FDZ pairfam*
RDC SOEP*
FDZ-DJI
FDZ SHARE

Kiel
Schwerin
Hamburg
Bremen
Hannover
Berlin
Bielefeld
Essen
Düsseldorf
Köln
Bonn
Bad Ems
Frankfurt
Wiesbaden
Halle
Kamenz
Dresden
Erfurt
Jena
Chemnitz
Trier
Saarbrücken
Mannheim
Würzburg
Bamberg
Fürth
Nürnberg
Stuttgart
München

Key figures of the accredited RDCs in 2016

26,281 Data users

352 New datasets
out of 3,214 available datasets

1,833 Publications
based on the available data

73,332 Downloads
of openly available datasets

225.7 Full-time staff

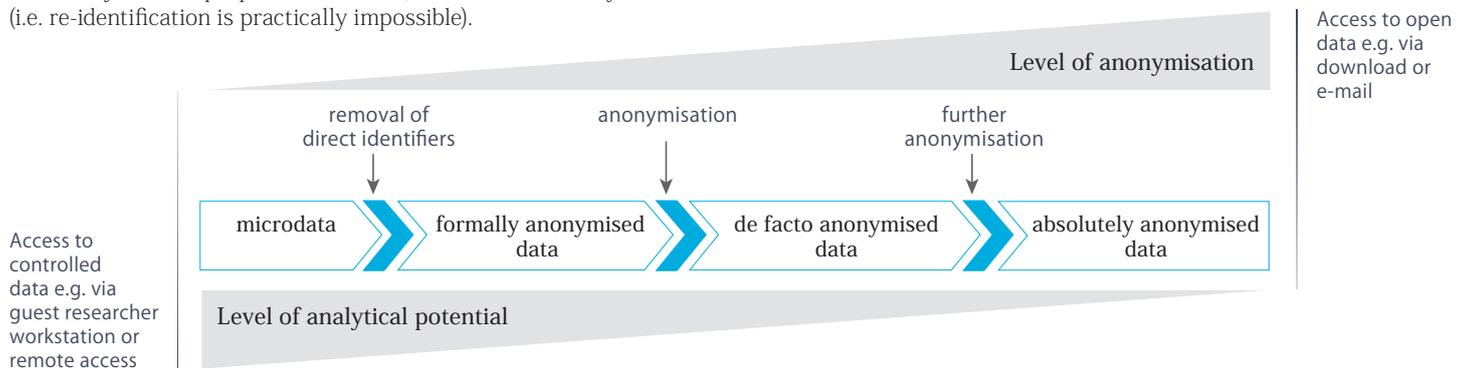* RDCs with guest researcher workstations

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Anonymisation concepts and data access

Data protection and the preservation of the analytical potential of the data need to be put in balance. Therefore, the RDCs pursue a variety of approaches regarding data anonymisation and data access.

Anonymisation measures range from formal anonymisation (i.e. deletion of direct identifiers such as names and addresses) to de facto anonymisation (i.e. individual information can be re-attributed only with disproportionate effort) and absolute anonymisation (i.e. re-identification is practically impossible).

Depending on the sensitivity of the data, the RDCs provide a wide range of access paths to their datasets. For less sensitive data, a large majority of RDCs provide off-site use through download or mail. For weakly anonymised data, many RDCs offer guest researcher workstations for on-site data access. Several RDCs also offer (controlled) remote access.

Level of anonymisation

Access to open data e.g. via download or e-mail

| removal of direct identifiers | anonymisation | further anonymisation |

| microdata | formally anonymised data | de facto anonymised data | absolutely anonymised data |

Access to controlled data e.g. via guest researcher workstation or remote access

Level of analytical potential

Source: RDCs of the Federal Statistical Office and the Statistical Offices of the Länder   © RatSWD 2018

Bottom-up governance to secure the quality of the research data infrastructure

The **German Data Forum (RatSWD)** is an advisory board made up of elected representatives from the data-using scientific community in the social sciences and appointed representatives of major German data producers. The **FDI Committee** consists of representatives from all **accredited research data centres (RDCs).** It complements the German Data Forum's strategic focus with a focus on day-to-day challenges and quality assurance.

Accreditation

The German Data Forum (RatSWD) has developed standards and criteria for the accreditation of RDCs. Fully operational RDCs need to meet three mandatory criteria (in addition to further information criteria):
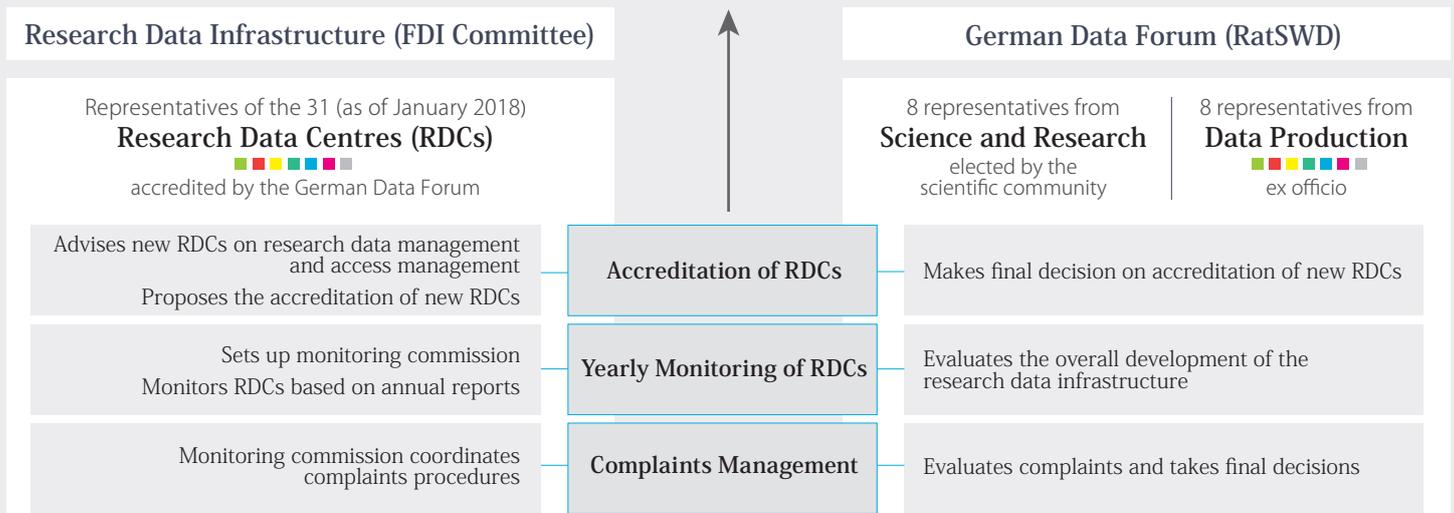
- provide at least one data access path
- provide sufficient data documentation
- ensure the long-term availability of the data

Monitoring and Complaints Management

The FDI Committee elects a monitoring commission which manages:

- the annual monitoring of all accredited RDCs
- complaints from the research community about data access policies in RDCs

**The cooperation between the FDI Committee and the RatSWD:
Developing and optimising the research data infrastructure**

| Research Data Infrastructure (FDI Committee) | | German Data Forum (RatSWD) | |

| Representatives of the 31 (as of January 2018) **Research Data Centres (RDCs)** accredited by the German Data Forum | | 8 representatives from **Science and Research** elected by the scientific community | 8 representatives from **Data Production** ex officio |

Advises new RDCs on research data management and access management Proposes the accreditation of new RDCs	**Accreditation of RDCs**	Makes final decision on accreditation of new RDCs
Sets up monitoring commission Monitors RDCs based on annual reports	**Yearly Monitoring of RDCs**	Evaluates the overall development of the research data infrastructure
Monitoring commission coordinates complaints procedures	**Complaints Management**	Evaluates complaints and takes final decisions

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