RatSWD.

German Data Forum

STRATEGIC AGENDA
2014 – 2017

INITIATE.
COMMUNICATE.
ESTABLISH.

THE GERMAN DATA FORUM.

When the German Data Forum was set up by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research ten years ago, the main focus was on facilitating an exchange between the research community and official statistics. At the time it was virtually impossible for scientists to gain access to data from official statistics for research purposes. Access to these data was possible only on an individual case-by-case basis and required some creativity. General access for the scientific community, however, was unimaginable.

Much has changed since then. The German Data Forum has successfully created and established an efficient research data infrastructure. The German Data Forum's internationally unique design, as a self-organized, independent scientific advisory council, and the wide range of disciplines it represents, have contributed considerably to its success. Today, researchers have at their disposal data from many different sources: nearly 30 research data centers have been accredited by the German Data Forum. They provide scientistswith a wide range of data in strict compliance with data protection regulation. This development benefits all sides: data producers can apply clear and transparent rules on data provision, data users can get access, policy makers and society at large benefit from newly generated empirical evidence and thereby improved policy advise.

Increasing digitalization and internationalization in the last ten years have changed the framework we operate in. The ongoing „big data" debate discusses how the unprecedented amounts of data that are not collected for research purposes (but, on the other hand, in real-time) could create added value for science and society. The planned European Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will generate and impose a legally binding framework for all EU member states; the German Data Forum is currently contributing to the ongoing international debate over the regulation's content.

The members of the German Data Forum in its 5th appointment period have discussed our strategic agenda in great detail. The result is the following catalogue of prioritized topics and issues which was jointly adopted by the German Data Forum. The aim of this rather ambitious agenda is to clarify what we have set out to do: to make the activities of the German Data Forum visible to the research community and everyone else involved in the development of research infrastructures as well as to explore synergies with new stakeholders such as the international Research Data Alliance and the German Council for Information Infrastructures (RfII, Rat für Informationsinfrastrukturen). We also owe this documentation of our planned activities to our voters: a great number of them – election turnout has been steadily increasing in recent years – have given us their trust. Based on this strategic agenda we hope to demonstrate that we take their concerns seriously and make every effort to reach our common goals.

Our Strategic Agenda underscores two relevant points:

First, there are still many areas where data access for researchers requires improvement and relevant data sources are unavailable. Examples include access to education data or administrative health data. We strive to improve the status quo in an ongoing dialogue with our stakeholders. Second, against the backdrop of increasing data availability, it is equally important to monitor and secure the quality of data as well as the quality of data access. We have already started to reevaluate our accreditation guidelines and to improve coordination between the data centers that are accredited by the German Data Forum.

Finally, I want to express my sincere gratitude to all those who are already supporting our strategic agenda, namely, all members of the German Data Forum and its subcommittees, i.e., the Standing Committee FDI and all members of the German Data Forum's working groups. Without these experts, who for the most part work in a voluntary capacity, it would not be possible to advance the issues and topics in our strategic agenda. I also thank the Federal Ministry for Education and Research for funding and support.

We will work hard to reach the German Data Forum's objectives in its fifth appointment period. I look forward to a constructive and productive exchange.

R. Riphahn

Regina T. Riphahn
(Chair of the German Data Forum)

THE GERMAN DATA FORUM

An efficient research and data infrastructure is a prerequisite for good science as well as for effective, evidence-based policy advice. In 2004, the German Data Forum (Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten, RatSWD) was established and convened for the first time. It advises the federal and state (Länder) governments on the development of a research data infrastructure for the social, behavioral, and economic sciences.

The German Data Forum's overarching goal is to improve access to high-quality data for scientific research. To this end, the German Data Forum mediates between the interests of researchers and the producers of data. It facilitates the strategic development of the German research landscape through nationwide coordination. It also plays a key role in initiating and establishing standards for the collection, storage, provision, and quality of research data.

The German Data Forum is designed as an independent council composed of elected empirical researchers from universities, research institutions, and other institutions of higher education as well as from representatives of important data producers. Every three years, the German Data Forum organizes the Conference for Social and Economic Data (KSWD) where the German Data Forum's future activities are discussed. The conference also hosts the election of the representatives of the social, behavioral, and economic sciences for the next appointment period.
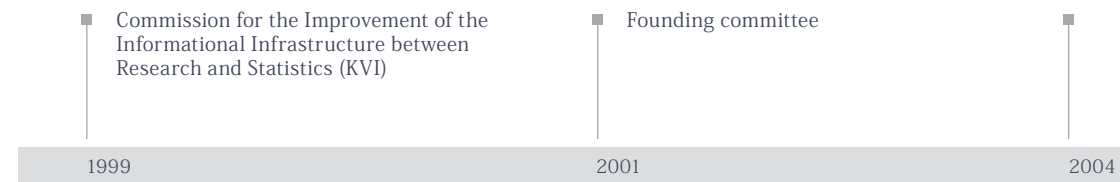
The German Data Forum coordinates its activities and science policy recommendations with a network of national and, increasingly, international stakeholders. Due to its comprehensive expertise in the field of the social, behavioral, and economic sciences in Germany, the German Data Forum is the first choice for launching international initiatives.

The German Data Forum is the umbrella organization for the network of decentralized, independent research data centers in Germany. The centers provide researchers with an extensive range of data and services for empirical research projects and are accredited according to strict criteria. To foster dialogue between the independent research data centers, each one delegates representatives to the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI). This pragmatic knowledge exchange shapes the strategic priorities of the German Data Forum. In addition, it secures high quality in advising, data access, and the further development of research infrastructures.

The German Data Forum responds to changing demands and developments in the empirical sciences and in the possibilities in data provision by setting up working groups on specific issues. These groups bring together the interdisciplinary competencies of experts, define key areas of activities in their reports, and issue statements and recommendations. This resulted in, for instance, a significant advancement of georeferenced data, and a concept for a better national census in Germany.

The German Data Forum is an important platform for communication and coordination and has become a pivotal institution in the German research landscape. This was confirmed by an evaluation of the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat) in 2009. According to the council, the German Data Forum has "by far exceeded the expectations and is well-positioned to continue to contribute significantly to the development of the research landscape."

■ Commission for the Improvement of the Informational Infrastructure between Research and Statistics (KVI)

■ Founding committee

■

| 1999 | 2001 | 2004 |

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE GERMAN DATA FORUM

The origins of the German Data Forum date back to 1998 when professors Richard Hauser, Gert G. Wagner, and Klaus F. Zimmermann published a memorandum titled "Conditions for the success of empirical economic research and research-based policy advice in economic and social policy". The report contained a detailed description of the problems that researchers faced when accessing statistical data and called attention to data protection issues. The memorandum sparked an intense debate resulting in the establishment of the "Commission to Improve the Information Infrastructure" (KVI) by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in 1999. The commission submitted an expert report on necessary measures to improve the research infrastructure for the empirical social and economic sciences ("Towards a better informational infrastructure" 2001). The founding committee of the German Data Forum was established in 2001.

The early years of the German Data Forum were shaped by the President of the Federal Statistical Office at the time, Johann Hahlen, as well as Hans-Jürgen Krupp and Karl Ulrich Mayer who – as vice-chairs of KVI and the founding committee (2001–2004) – took the first strategic steps on the path to improve research data infrastructures. In 2004 the first research data centers were established and the German Data Forum was appointed as an advisory committee to the federal government.

The first four appointment periods of the German Data Forum were shaped by diverse topics and challenges.

1st Appointment period

Chair:
Gert G. Wagner
Vice-Chair:
Heike Solga

2nd Appointment period

Chair:
Gert G. Wagner; Heike Solga (since 02/08)
Vice-Chair:
Heike Solga; Eckart Hohmann (since 02/08)

3rd Appointment period

Chair:
Gert G. Wagner
Vice-Chair:
Petra Stanat; Notburga Ott (since 12/09)

4th Appointment period

Chair:
Gert G. Wagner
Vice-Chair:
Notburga Ott

2004 — 2006 — 2008 — 2011 — 2014

Opening access to data

- Development of the research data infrastructure
- Improvement of access to education, health, firm, and financial market data
- New access to media data, crime statistics and judicial data to improve research opportunities
- Data on education across the life cycle

Securing the research data infrastructure

- Evaluation of the research data infrastructure
- Securing the permanent status of the German data infrastructure
- Optimization of existing crime statistics
- Assessment of the data infrastructure in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences

Unlocking the potential of research data

- Georeferenced data
- Recommendations on the establishment of a national mortality register in Germany
- Modes of future data access
- Scientific advisory of the 2011 Census
- Establishment of the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI)
- Evaluation of the German Data Forum by the German Council of Science and Humanities

Ensuring sustainability

- Representation of additional social sciences in the German Data Forum
- Long-term preservation of research data
- Archiving and data protection in qualitative social research
- Quality standards of survey instruments
- Search tools for finding data in the research data centers
- Development of the research data infrastructure on a European level

Working Groups

of the German Data Forum frequently publicize the results of their work:

■ Optimierung des bestehenden kriminalstatistischen Systems in Deutschland [Optimization of Existing Criminal Statistics in Germany]. Wolfgang Heinz et al., 2009.

■ Ein Nationales Mortalitätsregister für Deutschland. Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe und Stellungnahme des Rates für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten (Hrsg.) [A National Mortality Register for Germany. Working Group Report and Statement of the German Data Forum (ed.)], 2010.

■ Georeferenzierung von Daten – Situation und Zukunft der Geodatenlandschaft in Deutschland. Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten (Hrsg.) [Georeferencing Data – Current State and Future of the Geodata Landscape in Germany. German Data Forum (ed.)], 2012.

■ Datenschutzrechtliche Anforderungen bei der Generierung und Archivierung qualitativer Interviewdaten [The Data Protection Requirements of Generating and Archiving Quali- tative Interview Data]. Stefan Liebig et al., RatSWD Working Paper Series 238/2014.

Workshops and Conferences

often serve as the basis for publications that make the subject matter accessible to a wider audience:

■ Empfehlung des Rates für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten (RatSWD) zum Zugang der Wissenschaft zu den Daten des Zensus 2011. Stellungnahme des Rates für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten [Recommendations of the German Data Forum on Scientific Access to the 2011 Census Data. Statement of the German Data Forum], 2011.

■ Weiterentwicklung der amtlichen Haushaltsstatistiken [Future Development of Official Household Statistics]. Thomas Riede, Sabine Bechtold and Notburga Ott (eds.), 2013.

■ Forschungsinfrastrukturen für die qualitative Sozialforschung [Research Infrastructures for Qualitative Social Research]. Denis Huschka, Hubert Knoblauch, Claudia Oellers and Heike Solga (eds.), 2013.

Publications on Research Strategy

of the German Data Forum assess the current status and future potential of Germany's research data infrastructure:

■ Fortschritte der informationellen Infrastruktur in Deutschland [Advances in the Information Infrastructure in Germany]. Gabriele Rolf, Markus Zwick and Gert G. Wagner (eds.), 2008.

Available in English:

■ Building on Progress: Expanding the Research Infrastructure for the Social, Economic and Behavioral Sciences. German Data Forum (ed.), 2011.

■ Facing the Future: European Research Infrastructures for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Adrian Dusa, Dietrich Nelle, Günter Stock, and Gert G. Wagner (eds.), 2014.

For more information and publications, please visit:
www.ratswd.de/en/strategic_agenda/publications

Representatives of the empirical social, behavioral and economic sciences

Prof. Dr. Cordula Artelt
Professor of Educational Research at the University of Bamberg

Prof. Dr. Thomas K. Bauer
Professor of Economics at the Ruhr University Bochum, Vice President of the RWI Essen (Rheinisch-Westfälisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung)

Prof. Dr. Monika Jungbauer-Gans
Professor of Empirical Economic Sociology at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg

Prof. Dr. Kai Maaz
Professor of Education Systems and Society at Goethe University Frankfurt a.M. and director of the department for Educational Structure Governance at the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF)

Prof. Dr. Beatrice Rammstedt
Professor of Psychological Assessment, Survey Design and Methodology at the University of Mannheim and head of the division Survey Design and Methodology at GESIS

Prof. Regina T. Riphahn, Ph.D. *(Chair)*
Professor of Statistics and Empirical Economics at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg

Prof. Dr. Frank Michael Spinath
Professor of Individual Differences and Psychological Diagnostics at the Saarland University

Prof. Dr. Jörg Strübing
Professor of Sociology at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen

Representatives of data production

Stefan Bender, **Deutsche Bundesbank** (*Vice-Chair*)
Head of the Research Data and Service Center of the Deutsche Bundesbank

Prof. Dr. Manfred Ehling, **Federal Statistical Office**
Head of the Division Mathematical-Statistical Methods, Research Data Centre and Professor at the Business School of the University of Applied Sciences Fresenius, Idstein

Hans-Josef Fischer, **Statistical Offices of the Länder**
President of IT.NRW (Landesbetrieb Information und Technik Nordrhein-Westfalen)

Dr. Cornelia Lange, **Robert Koch-Institute**
Head of the division Surveys and European cooperation

Sabine Ohsmann, **German Federal Pension Insurance**
Department of Research and Development

David Schiller, **Federal Employment Agency**
Research Data Center of the Federal Employment Agency (BA) at the Institute for Employment Research (IAB)

Prof. Dr. Gert G. Wagner, **Socio-economic Panel**
Member of the Executive Board of the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin)

Dr. Heike Wirth, **GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences**
Research Department Monitoring Society and Social Change, German Microdata Lab (GML)

STRATEGIC AGENDA OF THE GERMAN DATA FORUM | 2014–2017

www.ratswd.de/en/strategic_agenda

5th Appointment period

Chair:
Regina T. Riphahn
Vice-Chair:
Stefan Bender

2014   2017

Permanent Tasks

- Monitoring of legal developments with regard to data provision on the national and international level

- Cooperation and coordination with national, European, and international stakeholders such as the German Council for Information Infrastructures (RfII, Rat für Informationsinfrastrukturen) and the Research Data Alliance (RDA)

- Follow up on past recommendations issued by the German Data Forum

- Regular assessment of new technological developments such as virtual research environments

- Organisation of special events: 10th anniversary celebration of the German Data Forum in 2015; 7th Conference for Social and Economic Data (KSWD) in 2017

1 Data Access

Access to official statistics (Funding and fee regulation)

The current fee regulation for accessing data from the National Statistical Office challenges data users and data providers. This issue is to be resolved jointly in cooperation with representatives of both sides.

Format: Create a working group; possibly host a workshop

Timeframe: Permanent task until a solution is found

Education data

Researchers from different disciplines have criticized the limits of access to education micro data. Related topics of discussion include the availability of datasets on pupils and the availability of federal state identifiers in datasets.

Format: Meetings with data producers; issue recommendation, if required

Timeframe: Beginning in spring 2015, completion by 2017

Access to administrative health data

Various institutions including the German Institute of Medical Documentation and Information (DIMDI), public health insurance providers, and the Federal Ministry of Health have comprehensive data from the health care system that are available to researchers at best with substantial restrictions. In compliance with data protection regulations, the German Data Forum seeks to make these sensitive data available to researchers, following the model of the German Pension Insurance and the Federal Employment Agency.

Format: Meet with representatives of the institutions and discuss the options, possibly host a workshop; implement data provision strategies. The German Data Forum will generate an "inventory" of the available data and formulate recommendations.

Timeframe: Beginning in spring 2015; completion by the end of 2016

Access to microdata from ministries and governmental departments

Many federal ministries have extensive administrative data as well as survey data that should be made available to researchers.

Format: Following initial assessment, preliminary talks about data access options, possibly workshops; implement data provision strategies. The German Data Forum will generate an "inventory" of the available data and formulate recommendations.

Timeframe: Preparations started in December 2014; completion by the end of 2016

2 Advancing the data infrastructure

Accreditation

The rules and criteria for the accreditation of research data centers (RDCs) will be discussed and revised in light of past experience, new developments, and a possible re-accreditation process in the near future.

Format: Joint working group of the German Data Forum and the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI) will prepare a report; German Data Forum will adopt procedural guidelines

Timeframe: Beginning in December 2014, preliminary report in April 2015, completion in spring 2016

Reporting system: RDCs and Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI)

Research data centers (RDCs) deliver annual key figures to the Standing Committee Research Data infrastructure (FDI) in their annual reports. These figures should be examined regarding their informative value. The aim is to gain reliable and long-term information on the RDCs' activities.

Format: Joint working group of the German Data Forum and the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI) will prepare a report; the German Data Forum will adopt procedural guidelines

Timeframe: Beginning in spring 2015; preliminary report December 2015; enactment in spring 2016

Evaluation and re-accreditation

To date the German Data Forum has continuously accredited additional research data centers (RDCs) without evaluating their relevance and impact. It should be examined how standards, evaluations, and guidelines for re-accreditation could benefit the German research data infrastructure. Criteria are to be developed and established.

Format: Joint working group of the German Data Forum and the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI) will prepare a report; the German Data Forum will adopt procedural guidelines

Timeframe: Beginning in spring 2015; preliminary report in summer 2015; enactment in spring 2016

Harmonization: web, documentation, output control

Many operative tasks are a challenge for all research data centers (RDCs). Their efficiency could be increased by harmonizing standards, work tasks, documentation and operational procedures to ensure data protection.

Format: Joint working group of the German Data Forum and the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI) will prepare a report; the German Data Forum will adopt procedural guidelines

Timeframe: Beginning in summer 2015; final report in spring 2016, enactment in summer 2016

Metastructures: Data access and RDC landscape

Main issues are the improvement of user support with regard to finding data, and the design of future structures of the research data infrastructure. Information services and ways to strengthen cooperation between research data centers ("RDC in RDC") will be re-examined.

Format: Joint working group of the German Data Forum and the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure (FDI) will prepare a report; German Data Forum will issue recommendations

Timeframe: Beginning December 2015; final report in summer 2016; completion in December 2016

3   Census 2021

In light of past experiences (national and international) and new methodological developments, the Census 2011 – especially the data collection process – will be subject to evaluation. The aim is to identify potential for improvement in order to support the legislative process and the preparation of the Census 2021.

Format: Working group, possibly international workshop

Timeframe: Beginning in early 2015; workshop at the end of 2015; completion mid-2016

4   Coordination of Panel Studies

Numerous panel studies are conducted in Germany. It is necessary to discuss the future landscape of panel data studies and the specific challenges concerning quality standards, methodological research on data linkage and German survey institutes. An "inventory" of existing panel studies focusing on status, funding, prospects, and sustainability will form the basis for this discussion.

Format: A working group will develop recommendations building on past assessments

Timeframe: Beginning mid-2015, completion by the end of 2016

5   Relevance of Big Data for scientific research

The German Data Forum seeks to contribute to the debate on big data. It will trace current developments and examine their significance for the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. Main topics of debate include the quality of big data, the relevance of big data for research, documentation of big data, and access to big data.

Format: Main subject of the anniversary celebration event in 2015; possibly international workshop

Timeframe: 2016/2017

6   Research ethics

The debate surrounding ethical considerations in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences in Germany with regard to data access, data provision, and data storage lags behind international standards and the standards of other disciplines. Also, it does not meet the demands of science and society. Pending tasks include the preparation of guidelines for ethics committees, and recommendations on standards for respondents' informed consent and data linkage.

Format: Working group will develop recommendations

Timeframe: Beginning in spring 2015;
            Completion by the end of 2015/beginning of 2016

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STRATEGIC AGENDA | 2014–2017
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