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Working Paper

The recommendations of the commission to improve the informational infrastructure between the scientific community and official statistics (KVI) and their realization since 2001

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German Council for Social
and Economic Data (RatSWD)

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RatSWD

Working Paper Series

Working Paper

No. 145

The Recommendations of the Commission
to Improve the Informational Infrastructure
between the Scientific Community and
Official Statistics (KVI) and their Realization
since 2001

Gabriele Rolf-Engel

May 2010

Working Paper Series of the German Data Forum (RatSWD)

The *RatSWD Working Papers* series was launched at the end of 2007. Since 2009, the series has been publishing exclusively conceptual and historical works dealing with the organization of the German statistical infrastructure and research infrastructure in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. Papers that have appeared in the series deal primarily with the organization of Germany's official statistical system, government agency research, and academic research infrastructure, as well as directly with the work of the RatSWD. Papers addressing the aforementioned topics in other countries as well as supranational aspects are particularly welcome.

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In order to make the series more accessible to readers not fluent in German, the English section of the *RatSWD Working Papers* website presents only those papers published in English, while the German section lists the complete contents of all issues in the series in chronological order.

Starting in 2009, some of the empirical research papers that originally appeared in the *RatSWD Working Papers* series will be published in the series *RatSWD Research Notes*.

The views expressed in the *RatSWD Working Papers* are exclusively the opinions of their authors and not those of the RatSWD.

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Managing Director of the RatSWD (Denis Huschka)

The Recommendations of the Commission to Improve the Informational Infrastructure between the Scientific Community and Official Statistics (KVI) and their Realization since 2001

Gabriele Rolf-Engel

In 1999 the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) appointed a commission to examine the informational infrastructure in Germany and to make proposals for its improvement. The central objective was to improve the cooperation between the scientific community and official statistical agencies. The “Commission to Improve the Informational Infrastructure between the Scientific Community and Official Statistics” (KVI) presented its final report in 2001 (KVI 2001).

The Commission’s report consisted of:

- a stocktaking of deficits and data needs in different fields (e.g., population, employment, income and wealth data, etc.),
- an overview of the major data producers, data providers, and statistical databases (e.g., official statistics, social security statistics, government ministry data, administrative data, scientific data, private market data, and data from social research institutes and commercial providers) and the practice of providing access to anonymized microdata,
- an international comparison of the best statistics and best practices of statistical analysis, and
- recommendations on improving the performance of the informational infrastructure for empirical economic and social research in Germany.


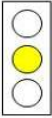

The Commission developed 36 recommendations on:



- improving cooperation between the scientific community and official statistical agencies,
- expanding participation of the scientific community in developing survey and data processing programs (by official statistical agencies as well as by ministries and non-statistical institutions conducting surveys),
- priorities for continuing and developing important statistics,
- supporting research on data collection, processing, and archiving,
- higher education and training,
- data access, especially access to microdata,

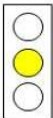
- confidentiality of research data, and
- implementation and funding.


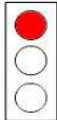

The following synopsis gives an overview of the Commission's recommendations. The second column lists the objectives of the recommendations, some of which are formulated explicitly in the Commission's report, and some of which I have deduced from the proposed solutions listed in the third column. The traffic signals in the fourth column illustrate the extent to which results of the recommended action are already evident: green indicates that the objectives have been fully achieved; yellow indicates that work is still in progress; and red indicates that there remains significant further work to be done. Since these conclusions may be in dispute, the fifth column provides additional explanatory comments.


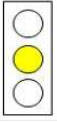


Synopsis: Recommendations of the Commission

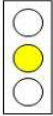
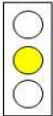


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|---|-------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | Task completed or on schedule |  | Room for improvement |  | Project structure not yet visible |
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| Recommendation | | | Status | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| No. | Objective | Solution | Traffic signal | Comment |
| <i>Improved cooperation between science and statistics is necessary for data users and data producers</i> | | | | |
| 1 | To improve cooperation between the scientific community and official statistical agencies based on the traditional model of a division of labor | Adopt and enforce institutional regulations |  | Several important activities have been carried out, especially the establishment of the German Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD), which offers a platform for dialog between data providers and data users (see recommendation 2) and the Conference for Social and Economic Data (KSWD), which takes place every two years. |
| 2 | To assess and to improve the informational infrastructure based on input from data producers and | Establish a Council for Social and Economic Data, whose main functions are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assessing and improving the data infrastructure and |  | <p><i>Measures</i></p> <p>In 2004 the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) set up the RatSWD. This Council includes empirical researchers from universities, colleges, and other independent research institutions as well as data producers and representatives of service centers.</p> <p>The predecessor of the RatSWD, the Founding Committee of the Council for Social and Economic Data (GA), was founded in 2001.</p> |


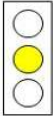

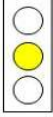
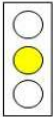
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| | <p>data users</p> <p>To develop a platform for structured dialog between data producers and data users</p> | <p>advising the federal and state governments on programs of science-based statistics and their funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ promoting social and economic reporting ▪ recommending the establishment of research data centers and data service centers and evaluating their activities ▪ suggesting how project funds should be allocated <p>These tasks need coordinators in the group of data producers, in the group of data users, and between the two groups.</p> | | <p>The GA and the RatSWD have undertaken a great number of activities to improve the research data infrastructure in Germany (Rolf/Zwick/Wagner 2008; Solga/Wagner 2007), particularly by offering a platform for dialog between data providers and data users and by advising Germany's federal and state governments on the establishment of research data centers and data service centers and by evaluating their work. Additionally, the GA and the RatSWD have contributed to improving the research data infrastructure by assessing projects in terms of data access and methodological developments in the social and economic sciences.</p> <p>In its first few years of work, the RatSWD's activities have focused on improving data access for empirical research. Now, the need to improve survey development and processing programs has moved to the forefront of the RatSWD's agenda.</p> <p><i>To be done:</i> Ensure permanent funding for the RatSWD, which has funding from the BMBF for an initial period.</p> <p>The German Council of Science and Humanities (<i>Wissenschaftsrat</i>) has evaluated the RatSWD positively and recommends its permanent funding (Wissenschaftsrat 2009 a).</p> |
| <p><i>Participation by the scientific community in developing survey and processing programs</i></p> | | | | |
| 3 | <p>To involve the scientific community both in improving the survey and processing programs of</p> | <p>Adopt institutional regulations</p> <p>Improve coordination in the scientific community (in discussions of the German Council for Social and Economic</p> |  | <p>Official statistical agencies are open to advice, but the scientific community has still not made sufficient use of this opportunity.</p> <p><i>Measures</i> Appointment of the Census Commission (<i>Zensuskommission</i>), a scientific commission that advises the federal government and official statistical agencies on preparing, processing, and analyzing the 2011 census.</p> |

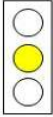
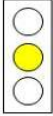
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| | the official statistical agencies and in special hearings by German parliament on this subject | Data in cooperation with the relevant scientific associations) | | <p>Nomination of the Census Commission's members on recommendation from the RatSWD</p> <p>No institutional regulations are in place, but a number of joint activities are underway, such as a series of workshops "Dialog von Wissenschaft und amtlicher Statistik" dealing with the 2011 register-based census, household surveys, and globalization.</p> <p><i>To be done:</i></p> <p>Fostering dialog in the social, economic, and behavioral sciences and mobilizing the respective scientific associations to improve their informational infrastructure.</p> <p>Holding regular hearings with the scientific community as part of the legislative process.</p> |
| 4 | To make survey and processing programs of the official statistical agencies more flexible | Reduce strict legal regulations and expand the scope for statistical offices and their advisory bodies to shape survey programs |  | <p>Not yet visible</p> <p>The Statistical Advisory Committee (<i>Statistischer Beirat</i>), an organization of the users, respondents, and producers of federal statistics, has called for more flexibility in designing the statistical system (Statistisches Bundesamt 2003).</p> |
| 5 | To expand the influence of the scientific community in proposing modifications of official statistical programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broaden the definition of the Statistical Advisory Committee's tasks (including medium-term program planning) ▪ Achieve fuller representation of the scientific community in the Statistical Advisory Committee (increase the number of representatives of empirical social and economic research) |   | <p>Not yet visible</p> <p>The Statistical Advisory Committee has recommended medium-term program planning (Statistisches Bundesamt 2003).</p> <p>The scientific community has attained greater influence on the Statistical Advisory Committee through an additional representative of empirical social and economic research appointed by the RatSWD.</p> |

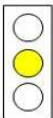

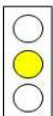
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold mandatory hearings as part of the legislative process on official statistics |  | Not yet visible |
| 6 | To increase the influence of the scientific community on surveys conducted by ministries and non-statistical authorities (e.g., <i>Deutsche Bundesbank</i> , Federal Employment Agency, and the social security institutions) | Provide structured opportunities for scientific advice |  | As of yet there exist no structured no opportunities for science to exert greater influence over official surveys, but informal steps have been taken, for example, by including scientific advisory councils in survey planning. |
| <i>Priorities in continuing and developing important statistics</i> | | | | |
| 7 | To continue collecting important official statistics | Conduct a population census |  | Census 2011 is on schedule: http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Navigation/Zensus/Zensus,templateId=renderPrint.psml__nnn=true |
| 8 | To enhance and to develop important official statistics | Further develop the German Microcensus by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introducing a rotating panel developing an access panel presenting exact |  | The Microcensuses are available as scientific use files. The joint project "Preparation and Provision of the Microcensus as a Panel Sample" has been carried out with participation of the German Federal Statistical Office, the research data centers of the German Federal Statistical Office and the Statistical Offices of the German <i>Länder</i> , the Freie Universität Berlin, and the Center for Survey Research and Methodology (ZUMA) funded by the BMBF and the German Research Foundation (DFG). Today, the 1996-1999 Microcensus panel and the 2001-2004 Microcensus panel are available for research as scientific use files. |

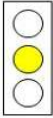

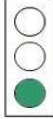

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| | | <p>data on gross earned income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing scientific use files | | <p>Research and Methodology (ZUMA) funded by the BMBF and the German Research Foundation (DFG). Today, the 1996-1999 Microcensus panel and the 2001-2004 Microcensus panel are available for research as scientific use files.</p> <p>As of yet, exact data on gross earned income are available.</p> |
| 9 | To enhance and develop important official statistics | <p>Improve the sample survey of income and expenditure (EVS) by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing the time intervals between the sample surveys introducing a rotating panel presenting detailed wealth data |  | <p>The proposed measures have not been implemented so far. This must be seen within the overall context of household surveys: a discussion is underway between the scientific community and official statistical agencies concerning new concepts of household surveys (both in Germany and abroad). A workshop, entitled “<i>Dialog von Wissenschaft und amtlicher Statistik zum Erhebungsprogramm der amtlichen Haushaltsstichproben in Deutschland,</i>” has been organized by the RatSWD and ZUMA: http://www.ratswd.de/ver/mannheimWS.php</p> |
| 10 | To bridge serious gaps in business sector statistics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop statistics on the service economy Achieve better statistical coverage of business modifications |  | <p>The research potential of firm data has been improved through data matching (see recommendation 27).</p> |
| 11 | To maintain and develop important science-based statistics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure permanent institutionalization and funding of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) Extend the sample |  | <p>Since 2003 the SOEP has been receiving ongoing funding through the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) by Germany’s federal and state governments.</p> <p>Several additional subsamples have expanded the possibilities for studying small societal groups.</p> <p>The SOEP has proposed to considerably enlarge the sample. The German Council of Science and Humanities approves of this proposal (Wissenschaftsrat 2009 b).</p> |
| 12 | To continue important science-based statistics | <p>Continuing the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> German General Social Survey (ALLBUS) International Social Survey Programme |  | <p>The ALLBUS and the ISSP are conducted regularly: the ALLBUS is a continuous biennial survey, the ISSP a continuous annual program.</p> <p>Welfare Surveys were conducted from 1978 to 1998. Since 2002, the European Social Survey (ESS) has taken place every two years.</p> |





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| | | (ISSP) and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welfare Surveys (<i>Wohlfahrtssurveys</i>) | | |
| 13 | To provide stronger support for cohort studies such as longitudinal studies of human development | Continue existing cohort studies and generate new cohort studies that cover early childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood |  | Existing cohort studies are continuing, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the SOEP, an annual survey conducted since 1984 (see recommendation 11), and the IAB Establishment Panel, an annual survey conducted since 1993. Examples of new panel studies are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the project “Educational processes, competence development and selection decisions in pre- and primary school age” (BiKS), which is funded by the German Research Foundation, the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), measuring competencies of children, adolescents, and adults over an extended period, which is funded by the BMBF, the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (PAIRFAM) funded by the German Research Foundation, and the Survey of Health, Ageing, and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). |
| <i>Supporting research on data collection, processing, and archiving</i> | | | | |
| 14 | To improve university-level teaching on the methodologies of empirical social and economic research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a special commission for the German Council of Science and Humanities on the current state of affairs in higher education and research regarding the methods of empirical social and economic research (or defining this area as a task of the High Commission on Empirical Economic Research) Establish professorships or |  | <p>In 2002, the German Council of Science and Humanities published the report “<i>Empfehlungen zur Stärkung wirtschaftswissenschaftlicher Forschung an den Hochschulen</i>” (Wissenschaftsrat 2002).</p> <p>The Priority Program of the German Research Foundation “Survey Methodology” has been launched: http://www.survey-methodology.de/de/projekte.html</p> <p>Examples of further activities enhancing higher education and research in methods of empirical social and economic research are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshops for young researchers dealing with technical and methodological problems with complex data sets provided by the RatSWD in conjunction with official statistics and non-university research institutes, and the “European Data Watch” section of <i>Schmollers Jahrbuch</i>, which offers descriptions and discussions of microdatabases that are of interest to empirical researchers: http://www.ratswd.de/publ/datawatch.php. |



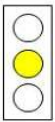
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| | | research centers at universities to focus on methodological problems of survey and official statistics | | |
| 15 | To support methodological research in official statistics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen the involvement of the scientific community in the further development of methodological instruments ▪ Include sustained methodological research in the tasks and budgets of official statistics ▪ Expand joint research projects by scientific and official statistical agencies |    | <p>See recommendation 14</p> <p>Efforts have been made to assign the task of “research” to official statistics in the BStatG (Hohmann 2007).</p> <p>Several joint research projects have been funded by the BMBF or the German Research Foundation (see recommendation 27 for an example).</p> |
| 16 | To ensure the long-term preservation of statistical data | Commission the German Council for Economic and Social Data to deal with the problem of archiving statistical data |  | <p>The problem of archiving primary research data is currently being debated. The issues being discussed include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Rundgespräch “Forschungsprimärdaten”</i> of the German Research Foundation, Bonn, January 2008 http://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/programme/lis/forschungsprimaerdaten_0108.pdf ▪ The Priority Initiative “Digital Information” of the Alliance of German Science Organizations, Berlin, June 2008 http://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/programme/lis/allianz_initiative_digital_information_en.pdf <p>There is consensus on not attempting to establish central rules for data archiving. Each discipline should develop its own individual solution to the problem.</p> |
| 17 | To promote the subject of Empirical Economic Research and to make it more visible | Recommend that the German Research Foundation establish the subject of Empirical Economic Research as a sub-discipline (or as an extension of the |  | <p>The recommendation listed in column 3 has not been taken up by the German Research Foundation or the respective scientific associations. But this does not mean that the German Research Foundation does not promote empirical economic research, as the Priority Program of the German Research Foundation “Flexibility in Heterogeneous Labor Markets” shows http://kooperationen.zew.de/en/dfgflex/home.html</p> |



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| | | sub-discipline statistics) | | |
| <i>Higher education and training</i> | | | | |
| 18 | <p>To improve education in areas such as statistics, econometrics, applied computer science, empirical methods, data collection, data editing, data protection, and data analysis</p> <p>To improve statistical knowledge transfer to students</p> | <p>Recommend that universities and faculties improve education for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ undergraduates (statistics, econometrics, and applied computer science by using realistic data sets) ▪ graduate studies (statistics, econometrics, data collection, data editing, data protection, and data analysis) ▪ post-graduate-programs (new empirical methods and more in-depth study of statistics and econometrics) <p>Increasing teaching posts on the staff of official statistical agencies</p> |  | <p>Curriculum development is difficult to assess because of changes in the German educational system (bachelor, master, doctorate).</p> <p>Positive development can be observed in the fields of post-graduate programs and teaching appointments to the staff of research data centers</p> <p>Measures improving the education for students and young researchers mostly taken by non-university stakeholders include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supply of Campus-Files (free public use files for teaching purposes) ▪ “European Data Watch” section of <i>Schmollers Jahrbuch</i>, presenting microdata bases (see recommendation 14) ▪ Expert report competitions for young researchers announced by the RatSWD ▪ Supplying a teaching module which focuses on data protection in the social sciences http://www.ratswd.de/publ/ratswd_dokumente.php ▪ Organizing young scholars’ workshops (see recommendation 20) |
| 19 | To make working in empirical social and economic research, statistics, and | <p>Recommend that universities and ministries of science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increase the number of professorships in empirical social and |  | In the social, educational, and behavioral sciences, an empirical focus seems to play a major role in professorship appointments. |

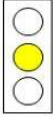

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| | econometrics more attractive | <p>economic research, statistics, and econometrics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ upgrade existing associate professorships to full professorships | | |
| 20 | To bring together universities, non-university research institutes, and official statistic agencies | Organize seminars, advanced training courses, and interdisciplinary summer schools in co-operation between universities, non-university research institutes, and official statistical agencies |  | Workshops on technical and methodological problems in dealing with complex data are being offered to young researchers by the RatSWD in conjunction with official statistical agencies, universities, and non-university research institutes. |
| <i>Economic aspects of data access</i> | | | | |
| 21 | To provide low-cost access to aggregated data of official statistics | Enable low-cost access to aggregated data of official statistics via Internet |  | Free or low-cost access to aggregated data is being provided by official statistical agencies via Internet. |
| 22 | To provide low-cost access to scientific use files and public use files | <p>Enable low-cost access to scientific use files and public use files</p> <p>Follow the example of the BMBF-funded pilot projects (providing flat-rate financing for the fixed costs of anonymization and covering the marginal costs of data delivery to the researcher)</p> |  | <p>Low-cost access to a large number of scientific use files for scientific purposes is available; CAMPUS files can be downloaded for free.</p> <p>Costs of combining several complex data sets or of analyzing panel data are rather high.</p> |

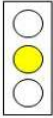
| Access to aggregated data | | | |
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| 23 | To promote convenient access to regionalized data via Internet | Set up a joint database system of official statistics that contains data from all federal statistical sources, broken down by region |  <p>Microdata: recommendation implemented as far as possible Macrodata: GENESIS-Online, room for improvement</p> |
| Microdata access and data protection | | | |
| 24 | To ensure respondents' trust in data protection and to enable unlimited re-analyses | Use of different ways of access to microdata sets depending on the kind of data |  <p>Various options of data access exist depending on the degree of anonymity of the data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ dissemination of public use files (absolutely anonymous microdata files) ▪ dissemination of scientific use files (factually anonymous microdata files) ▪ workplaces for guest researchers in the research data centers ▪ controlled remote data access |
| 25 | To guarantee confidentiality of data To ensure data protection and privacy | <p>Periodically revise the list of technical measures developed as part of the German Anonymization Project (University of Mannheim)</p> <p>Develop of a code of conduct describing the obligations of scientists and research institutions under data protection regulations. The code of conduct should be developed jointly by the disciplines concerned.</p> <p>Provide certification of institutions that would</p> |   <p>Work is underway in the field of anonymization and data protection, e.g., Wirth (2006) and several anonymization projects (see recommendation 27).</p> <p>Several discipline specific codes of conduct, but no common code of conduct (e.g., <i>Ethik-Kodex der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie (DGS) und des Berufsverbandes Deutscher Soziologen (BDS)</i>; <i>Erklärung für das Gebiet der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zum ICC/ESOMAR Internationalen Kodex für die Markt- und Sozialforschung</i> http://www.soziologie.de/index.php?id=19 http://www.adm-ev.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFS/Erklaerung_2008.pdf</p> <p>It has proven difficult to find a common solution for the research data centers (see recommendation 29)</p> |

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| | | benefit from the “ <i>Wissenschaftsprivileg</i> ” (§ 16 (6) BStatG) |  | because of different legal foundations (BStatG, SGB). <i>To be done:</i> Develop a list of criteria for identifying institutions with the task of independent scientific research under § 16 (6) BStatG |
| 26 | To improve access to confidential microdata | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance the development of scientific use files ▪ Provide scientific use files of older data to allow analysis of social change ▪ Provide similar files such as regional Microcensus files and Microcensus panel files |  | <p>Since their foundation, the first four research data centers (see recommendation 29) have provided a large number of scientific use files. For an overview, see: http://www.forschungsdatenzentrum.de/datenangebot.asp http://fdz.iab.de/de/FDZ_Overview_of_Data.aspx http://forschung.deutsche-rentenversicherung.de/ForschPortalWeb/contentAction.do?key=main_fdz_forschung</p> <p>The BMBF has financed the creation of scientific use files by other data producers, too, through pilot projects such as the SUF HIS-Absolventenpanel: http://www.his.de/abt2/ab22/archiv/abs12</p> |
| 27 | To permit access to business microdata | Develop anonymization strategies for data on businesses and local bodies (joint research project of the scientific and official statistical communities) |  | <p>A number of projects (finished, in progress, or planned) have been supported by the BMBF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Factual Anonymization of business microdata” (FAWE) ▪ “Anonymization of business panel data” (FAWE-Panel: <i>Anonymisierung wirtschaftsstatistischer Paneldaten</i>) <p>Combining data from different surveys (and from different data producers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Official Firm Data for Germany” (AFiD: <i>Amtliche Firmendaten für Deutschland</i>) ▪ “Combined Firm Data for Germany” (KombiFiD: <i>Kombinierte Firmendaten für Deutschland</i>) |
| 28 | To improve access to microdata and to learn how to analyze microdata | Develop public use files <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to train students, ▪ to meet commercial users’ needs, ▪ to enable foreign scholars to access German microdata |  | <p>Absolutely anonymous public use files are provided for teaching purposes (CAMPUS files). See: http://www.forschungsdatenzentrum.de/campus-file.asp</p> <p>An internationally integrated microdata-orientated infrastructure for census research has been established: “Integrated Public Use Microdata Series – International” (IPUMS-International). See: https://international.ipums.org/international/</p> |

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| 29 | To improve and facilitate access to microdata | Establish research data centers with controlled remote data access to enable use of microdata that is difficult to anonymize (i.e., when actual anonymization would impair the information in the data) and in the case of matching various data sets |  | <p><i>Measures</i></p> <p>Four research data centers have been established and evaluated by the RatSWD and its predecessor the GA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research Data Center of the German Federal Statistical Office ▪ Research Data Center of the Statistical Offices of the German <i>Länder</i> ▪ Research Data Center of the Federal Employment Agency at the Institute for Employment Research ▪ Research Data Center of the German Federal Pension Insurance <p>The research data centers offer different means of data access, including controlled remote access. For the data sets provided, see the relevant homepages (see recommendation 26).</p> <p>To ensure the quality of the research data centers, the RatSWD has developed a list of criteria to be met by research data centers. For example, research data centers should not evaluate the content of research projects applying for data access, and data producers should not maintain exclusive access to their data: http://www.ratswd.de/download/publikationen_rat/RatSWD_FDZKriterien.PDF</p> <p>Meanwhile, nine further research data centers have adopted these standards and further data centers are scheduled to do so: http://www.ratswd.de/eng/dat/fdz.html</p> <p><i>To be done:</i></p> <p>Funding of the Research Data Center of the Statistical Offices of the German <i>Länder</i> on a permanent basis</p> |
| 30 | To improve and facilitate access to microdata | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish workplaces for guest researchers in the research data centers ▪ Develop transparent procedures for the selection of guest researchers |  | Tasks completed. |
| <i>Using international microdata</i> | | | | |
| 31 | To improve the situation for research in economic and social | Here a great number of measures are necessary, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ developing and |  | <p>A network of centers is to be established in Europe that allows access to microdata. At the end of the process, Eurostat will aim to provide remote data access to the statistics community.</p> <p>Examples of international projects harmonizing data from different countries:</p> |

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| | sciences at the international level | <p>passing on Eurostat databases to the scientific community in the form of anonymized scientific use files</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ harmonizing data from different countries | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Integrated Public Use Microdata Series – International” (IPUMS-International)”; construction of an internationally integrated microdata-orientated infrastructure for census research https://international.ipums.org/international/ ▪ “Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE)”; cross-national panel database of microdata on health, socio-economic status, and social and family networks http://www.share-project.org/ <p>CESSDA: One of the objectives of the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) is to promote the integration of the European database. http://www.cessda.org/doc/cessdaconstitution20040402.pdf</p> <p>ESFRI: The objective of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) is to support a coherent approach to policy-making on research infrastructure in Europe. http://cordis.europa.eu/esfri/</p> <p>IDF: There is an initiative to establish an International Data Forum (IDF) to facilitate the production and dissemination of social and economic data at the international level. http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/IDF%20Conference%20report%202007_tcm6-21126.pdf</p> <p>Establishing a European Data Forum is in discussion.</p> |
| 32 | To support data exchange with research institutions in non-EU member states | Recommend that the federal government implement a “Safe Harbor” mechanism |  | Not yet visible, but progress has been made below the level of a law. |
| <i>Demand for services and service agency for microdata</i> | | | | |
| 33 | To enhance the efficiency of using microdata for research purposes | Maintain research service institutions in Germany in the future as part of the informational infrastructure |  | <p>Two data service centers have been established and evaluated by the RatSWD and its predecessor, the GA, to make data analysis more convenient. These are the:</p> <p>German Microdata Lab, which is part of the Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS), and the http://www.gesis.org/das-institut/wissenschaftliche-arbeitsbereiche/dauerbeobachtung-der-gesellschaft/german-microdata-lab/</p> |

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| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International Data Service Center at the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) http://www.iza.org/ <p>New developments to be mentioned here are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MISSY “Microdata Information System” http://www.gesis.org/en/services/data/official-microdata/microcensus/missy/ ▪ JoSuA “Job Submission Application” http://idsc.iza.org/metadata/ |
| <i>Data linkage</i> | | | | |
| 34 | To reduce the costs of data acquisition and the burden on respondents | Develop legal provisions on the possibility of precisely linking microdata for statistical purposes without the explicit consent of each respondent (matching only in completely shielded research and statistics areas) |  | <p>Not yet visible</p> <p>The project “Biographical data of selected social insurance agencies in Germany” (BASiD: <i>Biografiedaten ausgewählter Sozialversicherungsträger in Deutschland</i>) is in its early stages. The project’s aim is to construct a combined data set for research purposes based on data from the German Pension Insurance, the Federal Employment Agency, and the Institute for Employment Research.</p> <p>Other approaches (statistical matching) are under discussion or in use.</p> |
| <i>Confidentiality of research data</i> | | | | |
| 35 | To avoid trade-offs between the freedom of science and the need for data protection | Recommend that legislators introduce the principle of “research data confidentiality:” the scientist’s privilege to refuse testimony as a witness on research data and prohibition of seizure (<i>Zeugnisverweigerungsrecht und Beschlagnahmeverbot</i>) |  | Not yet visible |

| <i>Implementation and funding</i> | | | | |
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| 36 | To provide sufficient funds to implement the Commission's recommendations | Recommend that the institutions responsible for research and science funding sponsor the activities mentioned above |  | <p>The BMBF has offered financial support for many of the recommended activities for a starting phase (pilot project financing).</p> <p><i>To be done:</i> Permanent funding of the RatSWD and of the Research Data Center of the Statistical Offices of the German <i>Länder</i></p> |

As the traffic signals in the synopsis have shown, many of the Commission's recommendations have already been put into effect, some of the most important being:

- the establishment of the German Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD) and its predecessor the Founding Committee of the Council for Social and Economic Data (GA),
- the establishment and evaluation of several research data centers and data service centers that are working to improve access to microdata and facilitate data analysis,
- new means of data access. In addition to the distribution of scientific use files and public use files, controlled remote data access is provided. Furthermore, workplaces are being provided for guest researchers in the research data centers..
- improved cooperation and information exchange between the scientific community and official statistics through:
 - the RatSWD, as a platform for communication,
 - the biennial Conference for Social and Economic Data (KSWD),
 - dialog workshops in the fields of media data, crime statistics, household statistics, and globalization,
 - joint research projects on data access, statistical development, and methodological development,
 - the appointment of three working groups by the RatSWD dealing with crime statistics, new means of access to microdata for Germany, and preparation of a German National Death Index, and
 - the establishment of the Census Commission,
- access to anonymous firm data and opening up longitudinal microdata, and
- capacity-building (young scholar workshops, expert report competitions for young researchers, CAMPUS files using realistic data sets).

Nevertheless, there is still a substantial need for action, especially when implementing the Commission's recommendations, in terms of:

- legislative action,
- international activities,
- coordination within and between organizations on a voluntary basis and/or without sufficient budget (e.g., facilitating dialog within the scientific community).

Last but not least, continuous funding of the existing infrastructure remains a problem. This applies both to the permanent institutionalization of the RatSWD, which has been financed up to now as a pilot project of the BMBF, and to permanent funding for the Research Data Center of the Statistical Offices of the German *Länder*.

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