

December 3, 2010

Statement of the German Data Forum (RatSWD) on the Funding Model of the Federal Statistical Office and the State Statistical Agencies

The German Data Forum (RatSWD) welcomes the long-term establishment of the Research Data Centers (RDCs) of the Federal and State Statistical Offices as a significant improvement of access to statistical data.

The German Data Forum, however, regrets that half of the underlying funding model is envisaged to be financed via collected fees. The provision of statistical data is a prime task of official statistical agencies and is thus a crucial component of the imperative for open data access. The German Data Forum fears that the funding model may have prohibitive effects on data access and hold adverse consequences for empirical social and economic research. In particular, according to the view of the German Data Forum, the funding model does not give sufficient consideration to panel research and large cross-sectional studies. The German Data Forum also fears that this funding arrangement may set an undesirable precedent for the funding of other public Research Data Centers. For this reason, the German Data Forum asks the responsible departments to consider the above raised concerns during implementation of the funding model, before its planned evaluation in 2 years.

The German Data Forum firmly believes that any long-term establishment of the Research Data Centers of the Federal and State Statistical Offices requires financing from budget funds. Accordingly, support for better access to research data for scientists and researchers should come from the science and research budget. The revenues of the Research Data Centers can only complement financing from the Federal Budget to a minor extent.