

# Tasks and Structures of the German Data Forum (RatSWD)

(Last updated on April, 29<sup>th</sup> 2011)

The German Data Forum (RatSWD) is an independent body of empirical researchers from universities, colleges and other institutions of independent scientific research, as well as representatives of important data producers. It was established by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in 2004. The goal of the RatSWD is to sustainably improve the research data infrastructure underlying empirical research and contribute to its competitive ability on an international level. An evaluation carried out by the German Council of Science and Humanities showed that the RatSWD has succeeded in opening up and improving access to existing data and in creating an increased synergy between science and data producers.

The RatSWD has established itself as an institution of exchange and of mediation between the interests of science and data producers and therefore an important platform for communication and coordination. With regard to standardization and quality control of data and the further development of research data centers and data service centers, the RatSWD plays an important role in the social, economic and behavioral sciences by performing an advisory function, initiating new developments and securing quality.

Core tasks of the RatSWD are the following:

- Making recommendations on how to further secure and improve data access, especially by means of establishing, standardizing and continually evaluating research data centers and data service centers,
- Making recommendations on how to improve the use of data by means of providing adequate documentation and scientific and statistical data (research data portals, metadata),
- Consulting of scientific institutions and organizations on how to incorporate infrastructure data into teaching and research,
- Making recommendations on research subjects and tasks, which pertain to the conceptual development of a data infrastructure on the national, European and international level,
- Making recommendations on how to make the production and provision of data, relevant to social research, more efficient,
- Consulting the Federal Ministry and the corresponding *Länder* governments on the further development of a science-based data infrastructure,
- Consulting public (and private) data producers,
- Consulting data producers on the validation of scientific research institutions (certification) that are not institutionally part of independent scientific research,
- Preparation and realization of the Conference for Social and Economic Data (*Konferenz für Wirtschafts- und Sozialdaten* , KSWD)

In all of its work, the RatSWD pays regard to current discussions that promote sustainable development, as well as the equal social participation of women and men.

Usually, the RatSWD convenes the aforementioned Conference for Social and Economic Data once every three years. The conference is open to all interested researchers from science and statistics. This open invitation, accompanied by a call for papers, is to be appropriately advertised, particularly by the relevant professional institutions.

The conference is a platform for discussion of scientific subjects pertaining to the empirical social, behavioral and economic sciences, as well as process-produced and survey-based data production. The scientific discourse arising from these fields is at the core of the conference.

The election of the appointed candidates representing the empirical social, behavioral and economic sciences in the RatSWD is also held at this conference. The invitation to the conference should point out both the election and the requirements to gain an active or passive right to vote.

The RatSWD consists of 16 members. Eight members are representatives of the empirical social, behavioral and economic sciences. Eight members come from the following fields of data production:

- One member from the Federal Statistical Office,
- One member from a (State) Statistical Office of the *Länder*,
- One member from the IAB Institute for Employment Research or the German Federal Employment Agency
- One member from an institution from the German social security system
- One member from the area of official health data
- One member from the area of official financial data
- One member from the area of science-based data production

The proposals for the appointment of members from data production are made by the respective institutions in accordance with the requirements of the Law for the

Composition of Federal Committees (*Bundesgremienbesetzungsgesetz*, BGremBG,) and on request of the Federal Ministry responsible for research.

The proposal for appointment of representatives from the empirical social, behavioral and economic sciences is made on the basis of an election held at the Conference for Social and Economic Data.

The members of the RatSWD are then appointed by the Federal Ministry responsible for research in accordance with the other Federal Ministries.

The RatSWD can bring in guests or assign external expert reports. Up to two elected representatives from the Standing Committee Research Data Infrastructure have a permanent right to attend. Two representatives of the Federal Government, as well as two representatives of the *Länder* have a right to attend and are entitled to bring forward motions. Further, the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, DFG) has a permanent right to attend.

The RatSWD elects a chair and a vice chair from his ranks for an office period of three years.

The RatSWD has a quorum when at least half of its members, whether from data production or science, are present. The RatSWD makes decisions based on a majority of those present. In the case of a voting tie, the chair has the obligation to render a decision.

The chair represents the RatSWD, presides over the meetings and the Conference for Social and Economic Data. Management and the proceedings of the business office are subject to the chair's supervision.

The RatSWD has a business office funded by the Federal Ministry responsible for research.

The business office prepares meetings of the RatSWD in accordance with the chair, organizes the Conference for Social and Economic Data and gives the RatSWD scientific and administrative support in pursuing its work.

The RatSWD pursues its work on the grounds of rules of procedure determined by the Federal Ministry responsible for research. These rules of procedure govern operations, tasks and competencies of the chair and the business office. The rules of procedure can be changed with a two-third majority of the members of the RatSWD and the consent of the Federal Ministry responsible for research.