

Cooperation between statistical offices and social science data archives



The purpose

- extending the cooperation in the FP7 international project Data Without Boundaries (DwB) to the national level, supporting national and transnational access to official statistics (OS) data
- adding value to official statistics microdata and metadata
- distributing microdata, which could be used for advanced statistical analysis the moment a researcher walks into an on-site laboratory or connects to a remote access facility
- distributing structured metadata for associated microdata
- providing an overview of available official statistics microdata, both survey and register datasets
- promoting official statistics microdata use for scientific research purposes
- identifying and addressing researchers'/OS microdata users' needs

The issues

- limited human resources to support researchers' work
- limited financial resources, both to support the cooperation and to provide required hardware and software of good quality in an on-site laboratory/remote access facility
- not understanding the importance of secondary use of official statistics microdata by some NSI employees
- data protection concerns, complex procedures which take time and make work burdensome
- metadata standards (not) used – DDI vs. SDMX vs. METIS, metadata not being structured, but available in separate documents, applications, systems
- preservation of microdata, no microdata documentation systems available at statistical offices

The solutions and the accomplishments

- social science data archives can provide help by adding value to data with their expertise and experience in the field – metadata and microdata have been prepared
- CESSDA members have more experience with metadata standards – some useful information and tips have been shared with both the metadata and the microdata documentation system working groups at the NSI to help develop systems which would enable (semi)automatic metadata harvesting
- joining communication channels and using new ways of reaching target groups resulted in promotional activities being more effective – from redesigning websites and combining mailing lists of researchers to organizing training courses for official statistics microdata users
- a survey among researchers and a common effort to collect additional funds to support the cooperation are planned