SOEP Service Activities and User Support Features

(A) “Standard Service”

Data Service
- Conceptualizing and implementing main survey and pretests
- Processing and editing data; cross-sectional and longitudinal consistency checks
- Producing a bilingual label system (German, English)
- Production of user-friendly variables and datasets supporting longitudinal research
  - Basic “biography files”
  - Files with data on minors
  - Pointer variables linking data on different individuals (child-parents; partner-partner)
  - Comprehensive generation of annual incomes, including microsimulation of taxes and SSC
  - Geo-coded information (poster “Regional and Spatial Information in SOEP”)
- Data distribution (in original on DVD) to licensed SOEP Data users (poster “SOEP Data User Contracts”)
- National / EU version (100%)
- 95% Scientific Use Version outside EEA
- Files with data on minors
- Basic “biography files”
- Time-consistent status variables
- Generated variables
- Derived datasets
- Weighting and imputation
- Pretests
- Maintaining an updated list on data quality issues and bug fixes

Metadata / Documentation (Online & DVD)
- SOEPInfo: a web-based information system (frequencies, item-correspondence, topics, programming tools, link to survey instruments)
- Questionnaires (in original layout - German and English)
- Fieldwork reports (TNS Infratest)
- Extensive documentation
  - Desktop Companion (DTC) – The SOEP User’s Guide
  - Generated variables
  - Derived datasets
  - Weighting and imputation
  - Pretests
- International data infrastructure
  - Production of cross-nationally harmonized data
  - Cross-National Equivalent File (CNEF 1984+)
  - Luxembourg Income Study (LIS 1984+)
  - European Community Household Panel (ECHP 1984-2001)

User Support Instruments
- SOEPonline <soepmail@diw.de>
- Individual user support by phone and e-mail
- SOEPListservs DIW Berlin and Cornell University, Ithaca/NY (USA)
- SOEPIII: a searchable database containing bibliographic references to more than 5,000 SOEP-based publications
- SOEPnewsletter: a quarterly newsletter with information on SOEP and related projects (poster “SOEPNewsletter”)
- Mentoring and support for visiting researchers (using sensitive geo-coded data at DIW Berlin)
- Annual introductory workshop for new German users
- Biannual introductory workshop for new international users (at Cornell University, Ithaca NY/USA)

(B) Recent and Future Innovations

Data Service
- Generating more user-friendly variables (e.g., labor market experience)
- Generating more harmonized variables for cross-nationally comparative research (e.g., ISCED, CASMIN, NUTS, ISCO, NACE, Canberra Group)
- Providing more quality assurance in longitudinally harmonized data (e.g., health information on height, weight, BMI)
- Producing a “long format” database, thus simplifying panel research (poster “Restructuring the SOEP Database – Perspectives and Outcomes”)
- Improving imputation techniques (multiple imputations of the “household income screener” and individual and household wealth data)
- Extending the production of “biography files” to better capture the complete life course (e.g., BIOAGE 01/03/06/17, BIOTWIN, BIOBRTHM)
- Extending pointer system: relatives outside the household (genetically sensitive pointers)
- Geocoded information (poster “Regional and Spatial Information in SOEP”)
- Linking to socio-economic “microm” data (neighborhood indicators)

Metadata / Documentation
- Fieldwork reports in English language
- Documentation of various scales being used in the SOEP according to the electronic Compendium of Social Science Items and Scales (Skalenhandbuch)
- Quality reports & survey methodology papers on ... non-response and attrition
- Interviewer effects (poster “The Impact of Interviewers’ Personality on Measurement Error”)
- Measurement issues around income and wealth
- Providing more paradata (e.g., information on the data collection process within CAPI)

International data infrastructure
- Incorporation of cross-nationally harmonized SOEP data on wealth into the Luxembourg Wealth Study (LWS)

User Support Instruments
- SOEPMonitor: improvements in the documentation of results (as a benchmark for the results users receive)
- SOEPpromo: a system that allows remote access to sensitive geo-coded data at county level (poster “Data Access”)
- SOEPgeo: supporting the link of detailed spatial information to SOEP data at block level (to be analyzed on DIW premises only (poster “Data Access”)

In-house Service Innovations
- Providing academic advice to other longitudinal studies and laboratory studies (e.g., COGITO (poster “The Berlin Aging Studies”), Early Childhood Intervention Study)
- SOEP as reference data or control sample for more specialized samples

(C) Networking Among Users

- SOEPConference: Bi-Annual International SOEP User Conference
- SOEPnewsletter: relaunch of layout and contents (poster “SOEPNewsletter”)
- Bi-annual User Survey: We moved from a paper-and-pencil to a web-based survey using a professional software solution (SPSS)
- Promotion of SOEP by running own SOEP information booths at major conferences in all relevant disciplines (economics, sociology, psychology)
- SOEPawards for best presentations (at SOEP user conferences) and best publications
- SOEPpapers on Multidisciplinary Panel Data Research: Working paper series launched in 2007 as a pre-publication platform for SOEP users (poster “Multidisciplinary Discussion Papers with SOEP data”)

- SOEPcampus: major improvements of teaching about the structure of SOEP data and longitudinal analyses (poster “SOEPcampus”)
- In the planning stage: Production of public-use Campus Files, thus enhancing the use of SOEP data for teaching purposes

(D) Capacity Building

References

Selected Publications to raise awareness of SOEP (incl. CNEF):
- Kohler, Ulrich and Kreuter, Frauke (2005): Data Analysis Using Stata [using SOEP data], Stata Press.