



Stellungnahme zum Status und  
der zukünftigen Entwicklung  
des Sozio-oekonomischen Panels  
(SOEP), Berlin



**Wissenschaftspolitische Stellungnahme  
zum Status und der zukünftigen Entwicklung  
des Sozio-oekonomischen Panels (SOEP), Berlin**

<u>Inhalt</u>	<u>Seite</u>
Vorbemerkung .....	5
A. Kenngrößen.....	6
B. Aufgaben.....	7
C. Wissenschaftsbasierte Dienstleistungen und Forschung .....	8
D. Organisation und Ausstattung .....	11
E. Stellungnahme und Empfehlungen .....	13
Science-Policy Statement on the Status and Future Development of the Socio- Economic Panel (SOEP), Berlin.....	19
Attachment: Statement on the Status and Future Development of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), Berlin.....	35



## **Vorbemerkung**

Das Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) hat den Wissenschaftsrat im Juli 2007 gebeten, Empfehlungen zur wissenschaftlichen Infrastruktur in den deutschen Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften (einschließlich der Wirtschaftswissenschaften) zu erarbeiten und in diesem Zusammenhang das Sozio-oekonomische Panel (SOEP) am Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Berlin, zu begutachten.

Da die Empfehlungen der Arbeitsgruppe zur „Infrastruktur für sozial- und geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung“ erst in der zweiten Jahreshälfte 2010 zu erwarten sind und strategische Entscheidungen über die Weiterentwicklung des SOEP vor diesem Termin getroffen werden müssen, hat der Wissenschaftsrat seinen Evaluationsausschuss gebeten, die Bewertung des Status und der Entwicklungsperspektiven des SOEP vor der Verabschiedung der übergreifenden Stellungnahme durchzuführen. Im März 2009 hat der Evaluationsausschuss zu diesem Zweck eine eigenständige Arbeitsgruppe eingesetzt. Diese Arbeitsgruppe hat das SOEP am 15. und 16. April 2009 besucht und auf der Grundlage dieses Besuchs sowie der durch das SOEP vorgelegten Informationen einen Bewertungsbericht verfasst. Der Evaluationsausschuss des Wissenschaftsrates hat auf der Grundlage des Berichts der Arbeitsgruppe am 5. Oktober 2009 den Entwurf der wissenschaftspolitischen Stellungnahme erarbeitet.

In der Arbeitsgruppe haben auch Sachverständige mitgewirkt, die nicht dem Wissenschaftsrat angehören. Ihnen und allen, die an der Erhebung und Prüfung der Daten mitgewirkt haben, ist der Wissenschaftsrat zu besonderem Dank verpflichtet. Der Wissenschaftsrat hat diese Empfehlungen am 13. November 2009 verabschiedet.

## A. Kenngrößen

Die Langzeitstudie „Sozio-oekonomisches Panel“ (SOEP)<sup>1</sup> entstand 1983 im Rahmen des Teilprojekts „Integrierte Mikrodatenfiles“ des von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) geförderten Sonderforschungsbereiches (Sfb<sup>2</sup>) 3 zu „Mikroanalytischen Grundlagen der Gesellschaftspolitik“. In den ersten Jahren war die SOEP-Studie in Frankfurt/Main und später am Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW) Berlin beheimatet. Mit dem Ende des Sfb 3 im Jahr 1990 ging die SOEP-Studie vollständig in die Verantwortung des DIW über. Bis 2002 erfolgte die Förderung überwiegend im Rahmen des DFG-Normalverfahrens. Einer Empfehlung des Wissenschaftsrates von 1994<sup>3</sup> folgend, wurde das SOEP ab 2003 als Einrichtung, die in erheblichem Umfang wissenschaftliche Infrastrukturaufgaben wahrnimmt,<sup>4</sup> in die gemeinsame Förderung durch Bund und Länder im Rahmen der Blauen Liste aufgenommen und als „selbständige Abteilung“ innerhalb des DIW institutionalisiert. Als solche ist die dadurch entstandene für das SOEP verantwortliche Abteilung gemeinsam mit dem DIW Mitglied der Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (WGL) und innerhalb der WGL Teil des Interdisziplinären Verbundes der Infrastruktureinrichtungen.

Im Rahmen der gemeinsamen Förderung durch Bund und Länder werden zwei Drittel des Haushaltes des SOEP vom Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) finanziert; das verbleibende Drittel tragen die Länder, wobei das Sitzland Berlin 25 % dieses Anteils übernimmt. Die gesamte Förderung durch Bund und Länder belief sich 2008 auf 4,079 Mio. Euro.<sup>5</sup> Hinzu kamen 165 Tsd. Euro, die das DIW in Fortführung seines Engagements aus Zeiten der DFG-Förderung freiwillig beitrug. Vom Gesamthaushalt entfielen auf Personal 1,284 Mio. Euro, auf den Auftrag zur Durchführung der Feldarbeit für die SOEP-Studie an TNS Infratest Sozialforschung 2,566 Mio. Euro und auf Miete und Gemeinkosten an das DIW 271 Tsd. Euro. 2008 warb das SOEP 1,559 Mio. Euro an Drittmitteln ein.<sup>6</sup> Ungefähr 85 % der Drittmittel wurden vom BMBF akquiriert.

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1 Im Folgenden „SOEP-Studie“.

2 Die untypische Abkürzung „Sfb 3“ erklärt sich als Kompromisslösung eines Konflikts aus den Anfangszeiten des SOEP mit dem Sender Freies Berlin über die Nutzung der Abkürzung „SFB“.

3 Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel, in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Bd. II, Köln 1995, S. 161-182.

4 Vgl. Ausführungsvereinbarung zum GWK-Abkommen über die gemeinsame Förderung der Mitgliedseinrichtungen der Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz e.V. vom 27. Oktober 2008.

5 6 Tsd. Euro stammen aus Mitteln des Wettbewerbsverfahrens im Pakt für Forschung und Innovation der WGL.

6 Ungefähr 500 Tsd. Euro der Drittmittel sind allerdings Gelder des BMBF für den Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten und seine Geschäftsstelle, über die das SOEP nicht verfügen kann und die für seine Arbeit keine direkte Relevanz haben.

Zum 31. Dezember 2008 beschäftigte das SOEP 23 wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter sowie fünf nichtwissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter. Sechs der 23 wissenschaftlichen Mitglieder der Abteilung befanden sich in der Promotion; von den 16 promovierten wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern waren vier durch Drittmittel finanziert. 75 % des promovierten Personals waren männlich. Die zwölf über den institutionellen Stellenplan finanzierten wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter besetzten 10,8 vollzeitäquivalente Stellen von 13 verfügbaren Planstellen für wissenschaftliches Personal. Vier von fünf Planstellen für nichtwissenschaftliches Personal waren besetzt. Zwei der Professorinnen bzw. Professoren wurden gemeinsam mit der Technischen Universität Berlin bzw. der Freien Universität Berlin berufen.

## **B. Aufgaben**

Als Einrichtung mit Infrastrukturaufgaben liegt die Hauptaufgabe des SOEP darin, auf Basis eigener Forschung eine Dienstleistung für die wissenschaftliche Gemeinschaft zu erbringen. Diese besteht in der Planung und Durchführung sowie der methodischen und inhaltlichen Weiterentwicklung der SOEP-Studie und der Bereitstellung der durch diese gewonnenen Daten für die wissenschaftliche Nutzung. Sie schließt auch die Beratung der Nutzerinnen und Nutzer beim Datenabruf und der Datenanalyse mit ein. Die eigenen Forschungsaktivitäten müssen für die Bereitstellung der Dienstleistung relevant sein und sind Voraussetzung dafür, die erbrachten Dienstleistungen eng an den Bedürfnissen aktiv forschender Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler ausrichten zu können.

Neben grundlagenwissenschaftlicher Forschung ist es auch Aufgabe des SOEP, die gewonnenen Daten zur Information politisch Handelnder aufzubereiten und diese zu beraten. Darüber hinaus trägt die SOEP-Studie als bedeutende nationale Langzeituntersuchung zur Reflexion gesellschaftlicher Entwicklungen durch die Medien und die breite Öffentlichkeit bei.

Zur Erfüllung seiner Aufgaben ist das SOEP in zwei Arbeitsgruppen untergliedert: Die *Survey Group* ist primär mit der Erfüllung von Dienstleistungen im engeren Sinn, insbesondere der Planung, Durchführung und Weiterentwicklung der SOEP-Studie sowie mit Politikberatung betraut. Auch Mitglieder dieser Gruppe führen aber eigene

grundlagenwissenschaftliche Forschungsarbeiten durch. Die *Applied Panel Analysis Group* konzentriert sich ausschließlich auf Forschungsarbeiten.

Die Erbringung der Dienstleistung ist nicht auf deutsche Forschende beschränkt. Dadurch trägt das SOEP zur Sichtbarkeit und internationalen Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der deutschen Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften bei.

### **C. Wissenschaftsbasierte Dienstleistungen und Forschung**

Die SOEP-Studie ist eine langzeitliche jährliche Befragung einer für die Bevölkerung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland repräsentativen Stichprobe von ca. 12.500 Haushalten. Befragt werden alle Haushaltsmitglieder, die über 16 Jahre alt sind (ca. 22.600 Personen). Im Jahr 2008 wurde die 25. Welle der SOEP-Studie erhoben<sup>7</sup> – dieses beeindruckende Maß an Kontinuität macht die SOEP-Studie zu einer der am längsten laufenden sozialwissenschaftlichen Längsschnitterhebungen weltweit.

Zentrales inhaltliches Ziel der Studie ist die Untersuchung des individuellen Lebensverlaufes mit seinen zahlreichen Facetten der familiären und beruflichen Einbettung. Dabei werden der Beginn und das Ende des Lebenslaufes durch die Befragung von (werdenden) Eltern und Hinterbliebenen zurecht zunehmend betont. Die grundlegende Fragestellung hat nichts von ihrer Aktualität eingebüßt und die Daten der SOEP-Studie gewinnen aufgrund des längsschnittlichen Charakters mit jeder neuen Welle an wissenschaftlicher Aussagekraft.

Den Kern der Erhebung bilden Fragen zu soziodemografischen Charakteristika des oder der Befragten, zu berufsbezogenen Variablen, zur finanziellen Situation und Wohnsituation, zu Gesundheit, Bildung und subjektivem Wohlbefinden sowie zur sozialen Integration und zu Persönlichkeitsmerkmalen. Zusätzlich zu den Kernvariablen werden in gesonderten Modulen in unregelmäßigen oder mehrjährigen Zeitintervallen Daten zu einer Vielzahl weiterer Aspekte des individuellen Lebenslaufes erhoben (z. B. zu umweltrelevantem Verhalten, zur Zeitverwendung, zu individuellen Werten oder zu sozialen Netzwerken).

Die Erhebung wird in produktiver Zusammenarbeit mit dem kommerziellen Meinungsforschungsinstitut TNS Infratest Sozialforschung durchgeführt, das für die Ziehung der Stichprobe, die Feldarbeit und die querschnittbezogene Aufarbeitung der

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<sup>7</sup> Die jährliche Befragung aller Haushalte der Stichprobe wird in diesem Zusammenhang als (Erhebungs-)„Welle“ bezeichnet.

Daten zuständig ist, während das SOEP für die relevante Grundlagenforschung, die inhaltliche Weiterentwicklung der Studie und den Nutzerservice Verantwortung trägt. Gemeinsam konnten die Partner eine beträchtliche Zahl methodischer Innovationen entwickeln und implementieren. Die Zusammenarbeit ist deshalb beispielhaft für die gelungene Kooperation zwischen einem privaten Unternehmen und einer öffentlichen Forschungseinrichtung. Da nur wenige kommerzielle Umfrageinstitute in der Lage sind, die notwendigen Dienstleistungen zu erbringen, besteht allerdings die Gefahr der zunehmenden Abhängigkeit von einem Anbieter.

Die Bereitstellung der Daten für wissenschaftliche Nutzerinnen und Nutzer erfolgt nach der Unterzeichnung eines Nutzerabkommens je nach Sensibilität der Daten über DVD, Fernzugriff oder abgeschirmte Arbeitsplätze innerhalb des DIW.

Wesentlich für die globale Nutzung der SOEP-Daten ist ihre gelungene Einbeziehung in internationale Datenbanken wie das *Cross-National Equivalent File* (CNEF), die *Luxembourg Income Study* (LIS), die *Luxembourg Wealth Study* (LWS) u. a. Das SOEP treibt diese Entwicklung gemeinsam mit anderen führenden Haushaltspanels in überzeugender Weise voran.

Der Grad der Nutzung der SOEP-Daten ist mit ungefähr 1.600 aktiven Nutzerverträgen beachtlich und folgt einem erfreulichen Trend. Besonders hervorzuheben ist die hohe Zahl der daraus resultierenden begutachteten Artikel in wissenschaftlichen Zeitschriften, die mindestens gleichauf mit ähnlichen Publikationszahlen der amerikanischen *Panel Study of Income Dynamics* (PSID) oder der *British Household Panel Study* (BHPS) liegt.

Auch in der Lehre und der Erstellung von Abschlussarbeiten werden SOEP-Daten intensiv genutzt, wie eine kürzlich durchgeführte Nutzerbefragung belegt.<sup>8</sup> Nach einer in dieser Hinsicht nur durchschnittlichen Bewertung im Rahmen des Forschungsratings<sup>9</sup> hat das SOEP seine Bemühungen im Bereich Lehre und Nachwuchsförderung erfolgreich deutlich ausgebaut. Dies betrifft sowohl die studentische Ausbildung und die Doktorandenausbildung in der Abteilung als auch das Training externer Nutzerinnen und Nutzer.

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8 Siehe Bewertungsbericht Kapitel A.II.2.

9 Wissenschaftsrat: Pilotstudie Forschungsrating: Empfehlungen und Dokumentation, Köln 2008, S. 506.

Was die Weiterentwicklung des SOEP-Erhebungsprogramms angeht, fällt auf, dass das SOEP eine Einbeziehung der Nutzerinnen und Nutzer auf informeller Ebene umfassenden Befragungen gegenüber bevorzugt. Obwohl das SOEP diesen Ansatz erfolgreich verfolgt hat und im Sinne einer behutsamen langfristigen Entwicklung auch sorgsam abzuwägen ist, welche Nutzerwünsche einbezogen werden können, sollten im Sinne der Akzeptanz der Studie und der nachhaltigen Sicherung ihrer Verankerung in der Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft die Rückmeldungen der Nutzerinnen und Nutzer zukünftig institutionell berücksichtigt werden.

Die gegenwärtig vom SOEP verfolgten Pläne für Neuerungen und zukünftige Entwicklungen der SOEP-Studie erreichen eine angemessene Balance zwischen Kontinuität und Innovation. In diesem Zusammenhang sind unter anderem die verstärkte Fokussierung auf Anfang und Ende des Lebenslaufs, die Einbeziehung von Verhaltensexperimenten, die Erfassung des individuellen Zeitbudgets, die verstärkte Nutzung von ereignisgebundenen Fragemodulen, die erweiterte Erhebung und Aufbereitung von geografischen Daten, die geplante stärkere Verknüpfung mit Daten der öffentlichen Statistik und der geplante Ausbau der Erfassung biologischer Variablen zu nennen.

Beachtlich ist in diesem Zusammenhang die Offenheit des SOEP für Kooperationen mit anderen universitären und außeruniversitären wissenschaftlichen Einrichtungen und die enge Verknüpfung methodischer und thematischer Weiterentwicklungen mit neuen Forschungsfragen. Die Expertise starker Kooperationspartner in Berlin, Deutschland und international leistet einen wertvollen Beitrag zur Absicherung der Relevanz neuer Entwicklungen für die wissenschaftliche Gemeinschaft.

Hinsichtlich des zukünftigen Finanzierungsbedarfs sind insbesondere zwei Vorschläge zur Weiterentwicklung der SOEP-Studie von Bedeutung:

1. Das SOEP schlägt vor, die Stichprobe der SOEP-Studie deutlich zu vergrößern. Dies erhöhe die querschnittbezogene Aussagekraft und die längsschnittbezogene Analysemöglichkeiten, ermögliche Analysen kleinerer Untergruppen (z. B. Migranten, Alleinerziehende, Besserverdienende) und steigere die Aussagekraft der SOEP-Studie als Referenzstichprobe. Außerdem werde dadurch die internationale Konkurrenzfähigkeit der SOEP-Studie ausgebaut.

2. Das SOEP spricht sich außerdem für die Einrichtung eines Innovations-Panels aus. Dies solle für methodische und thematische Forschung zur Verfügung stehen, die für die langfristig orientierte SOEP-Studie ein zu großes Risiko hoher Ausfallraten berge. Insbesondere erlaube ein solches Panel die Durchführung von Experimenten und Interventionsstudien, in denen beispielsweise kontrolliert die Auswirkungen spezifischer Trainingsangebote im weiteren Lebenslauf untersucht werden könnten, und von verhaltensgenetischen Studien, die das Zusammenspiel sozialer und genetischer Faktoren in der menschlichen Entwicklung zum Gegenstand hätten. In der Tat verspricht die Einrichtung eines Innovations-Panels einen hohen Grad an multidisziplinärem Interesse.

Der Wissenschaftsrat steht beiden Vorhaben grundsätzlich sehr positiv gegenüber. Weitere Details zur jeweiligen Ausgestaltung werden in Abschnitt E erläutert.

Die eigenen methodischen und inhaltlich orientierten Forschungsarbeiten des SOEP wirken sich unmittelbar positiv auf die kontinuierliche qualitative Verbesserung der erbrachten Dienstleistung aus. Übereinstimmend mit der letzten Evaluation des DIW durch die Leibniz-Gemeinschaft<sup>10</sup> und der Pilotstudie Forschungsrating in der Soziologie<sup>11</sup> bewertet der Wissenschaftsrat die Forschungsleistung des SOEP ausgesprochen positiv. Die sehr guten Forschungsleistungen sind nicht nur Voraussetzung für eine hohe Qualität der Betreuung der SOEP-Studie, sondern auch zentral, wenn es darum geht, hoch qualifizierte Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter zu gewinnen oder zu halten.

Die Verschiebung des Verhältnisses zwischen Forschung und Dienstleistung im Zeitaufwand der alltäglichen Arbeit zugunsten der Dienstleistungsfunktion ist vor diesem Hintergrund problematisch. Um die langfristige Qualitätssicherung der SOEP-Studie sicherzustellen, sollten beide Aufgaben weiterhin zeitlich ungefähr gleich gewichtet sein.

## **D. Organisation und Ausstattung**

Die im Begriff „selbständige Abteilung“ angelegte Spannung zwischen Unabhängigkeit des SOEP vom DIW und Interdependenz der beiden Einrichtungen charakteri-

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10 Leibniz-Gemeinschaft: Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Berlin 2005.

11 Wissenschaftsrat: Pilotstudie Forschungsrating: Empfehlungen und Dokumentation, Köln 2008.

siert das Verhältnis zwischen SOEP und DIW seit der Aufnahme des SOEP in die gemeinsame Förderung von Bund und Ländern.

Auf der administrativen Ebene besteht ein Mangel an Klarheit über gegenseitige Rechte und Verpflichtungen. Dies betrifft insbesondere die technische und administrative Unterstützung des SOEP durch das DIW sowie die entsprechenden Zahlungen des SOEP an das DIW.

Im Bereich der Governance des SOEP begrüßt der Wissenschaftsrat erste Schritte hin zu einer angemessenen Berücksichtigung der spezifischen Beratungsbedürfnisse des SOEP in der Struktur der wissenschaftlichen Beiratsgremien und damit einer stärkeren Berücksichtigung der Eigenständigkeit des SOEP innerhalb des DIW. Die Bildung und hochkarätige Besetzung eines SOEP Survey Committees zur Beratung bezüglich der Stichprobenerhebung und des Service des SOEP ist ein vielversprechender Schritt in diese Richtung. Es kann sinnvoll sein, die wissenschaftliche Begleitung des SOEP hinsichtlich der Forschungs- und Entwicklungsplanung<sup>12</sup> beim wissenschaftlichen Beirat des DIW zu belassen; allerdings ist sicherzustellen, dass der Beirat dazu fachlich in der Lage ist. Gegenwärtig ist dies aufgrund der fast ausschließlichen Besetzung mit Wirtschaftswissenschaftlerinnen und -wissenschaftlern nur eingeschränkt der Fall.

Obwohl die Verankerung des SOEP am DIW nicht alternativlos ist, sieht der Wissenschaftsrat zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt keinen Anlass, eine andere Form der Institutionalisierung zu empfehlen. Zwischen den beiden Einrichtungen besteht erhebliches Potenzial zur Zusammenarbeit auf den Gebieten der Nachwuchsförderung, der Politikberatung und der Forschung bei gleichzeitiger Erhaltung und Stärkung der Eigenständigkeit des SOEP.

Die Ausstattung des SOEP mit finanziellen Mitteln und wissenschaftlichem Personal ist angemessen. Allerdings begründen die verstärkten Aktivitäten in den Bereichen Öffentlichkeitsarbeit und netzbasierte Dienste einen zusätzlichen Bedarf an Unterstützung durch nichtwissenschaftliches Personal von ca. drei Planstellen. Außerdem sollte das SOEP Anstrengungen unternehmen, durch die Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Einrichtungen im Bereich der Datenbereitstellung Ressourcen einzusparen. Falls

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12 Wissenschaftsrat: Systemevaluation der Blauen Liste. Stellungnahme des Wissenschaftsrates zum Abschluß der Bewertung der Einrichtungen der Blauen Liste, Bd. XII, Köln 2001, Anhang 8 (Aufgaben und Organisation der Wissenschaftlichen Beiräte für Institute, Museen und Serviceeinrichtungen der Blauen Liste).

diese Anstrengungen nicht ausreichen, um das Gleichgewicht zwischen eigener Forschung und Dienstleistungsaufgaben wiederherzustellen, ist eine personelle Entlastung im Bereich der Datenaufarbeitung und -bereitstellung sinnvoll. Neue Aufgaben, insbesondere eine Vergrößerung der Stichprobe oder die Einrichtung eines Innovations-Panels, erfordern zusätzliche finanzielle und personelle Ressourcen. Bei Neubesetzungen sollte das SOEP eine ausgeglichene Quote zwischen männlichen und weiblichen Beschäftigten anstreben. Eine inhaltliche Verschiebung (beispielsweise aufgrund der Einrichtung eines Innovations-Panels) sollte mittelfristig auch eine Veränderung der disziplinären Zusammensetzung des Personals des SOEP nach sich ziehen.

Die räumliche Situation des SOEP ist angespannt. Insbesondere für Gastwissenschaftlerinnen und Gastwissenschaftler sollten zusätzliche Räumlichkeiten zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Weiterhin sind für zusätzliches Personal aufgrund der Vergrößerung der Stichprobe und der Einrichtung des Innovations-Panels auch entsprechend weitere Büroräume vorzusehen.

## **E.     Stellungnahme und Empfehlungen**

Das SOEP stellt eine zentrale und singuläre Forschungsinfrastruktur für die deutschen Sozial-, Wirtschafts- und Verhaltenswissenschaften dar, die sich auch international hohes Renommee erworben hat. Aufgrund des längsschnittbezogenen Charakters der Studie gewinnt der Datensatz mit jeder weiteren Welle signifikant an wissenschaftlicher Aussagekraft. Die für die SOEP-Studie verantwortliche Abteilung war bisher in der Lage, die Studie auf internationalem Niveau stetig weiterzuentwickeln und eine gute Balance zwischen Kontinuität und Innovation zu finden. Diese Arbeit wird durch hochkarätige eigene Grundlagenforschung unterlegt. Der Wissenschaftsrat empfiehlt auf dieser Basis weitere Investitionen in das SOEP zur Sicherung und zum Ausbau dieser zentralen Forschungsinfrastruktur im Interesse der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der deutschen Sozial-, Wirtschafts- und Verhaltenswissenschaften.

Die folgenden Empfehlungen zielen darauf ab, Voraussetzungen für eine solche Investition zu klären und die zukünftige Entwicklung des SOEP zu unterstützen:

- Mission Statement: In den vergangenen Jahren sind mit dem Nationalen Bildungspanel (NEPS), der *Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics* (PAIRFAM) und dem *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe*

(SHARE) weitere langzeitliche Studien entstanden, die signifikante Überlappungen mit der SOEP-Studie aufweisen. Obwohl diese Überlappungen aus wissenschaftlicher Perspektive nicht per se negativ sind, sollte im Interesse eines effizienten Ressourceneinsatzes jede Studie ein spezifisches Profil entwickeln, das neben Überlappungsgebieten mit anderen Studien auch deutliche Alleinstellungsmerkmale aufweist. Das SOEP sollte deshalb in Form eines Mission Statements die Identität und langfristige wissenschaftliche Zielhierarchie der SOEP-Studie definieren. Die Definition von zentralen Forschungsprogrammen und zugrunde liegenden gesellschaftlichen Aufgaben wird bei der Verortung in der sich neu organisierenden Forschungsinfrastruktur-Landschaft helfen. Eine solche Aufgabendefinition kann auch zur Vermeidung einer zu großen Breite der SOEP-Studie und eines dadurch bedingten Mangels an wissenschaftlicher Tiefe in spezifischen Bereichen beitragen.

- Flexibilisierung: Ein weiteres Ziel eines Mission Statements sollte es sein, Orientierung darüber zu bieten, welche Forschungsfragen in der Hauptstudie geklärt werden können und welche Fragen außerhalb der SOEP-Studie bearbeitet werden sollten. Dazu stehen u. a. folgende Datenquellen zur Verfügung:
  1. „Verwandte Studien“, die relevante Teile des SOEP-Fragebogens verwenden, um Fragestellungen außerhalb der Hauptstudie zu beantworten;
  2. Studien, die die SOEP-Studie als Referenzdatensatz oder Kontrollstichprobe verwenden;
  3. Datensätze der offiziellen Statistik, die mit dem SOEP-Datensatz verknüpft werden können;
  4. Das neu zu schaffende Innovations-Panel, das risikoreiche längsschnittbezogene Fragestellungen außerhalb der Hauptstudie beantworten kann.

Die SOEP-Studie sollte sich entsprechend zum Zentrum eines flexiblen Instrumentariums verschiedener Datenquellen zur Beantwortung sozial-, wirtschafts- und verhaltenswissenschaftlicher Fragestellungen entwickeln.

- Methodische Weiterentwicklung der SOEP-Studie: Der Wissenschaftsrat begrüßt die Bemühungen des SOEP, neue Datenerhebungsmethoden (beispielsweise über das Internet oder Mobiltelefone) zu erproben. Diese Bemühungen sollten verstärkt fortgesetzt werden. Auch die angestrebte stärkere Verknüpfung mit Daten der offiziellen Statistik ist wegweisend.

- Stärkung der Nutzerperspektive aus Gründen der Governance der SOEP-Studie: Es ist zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt noch nicht möglich, die Arbeit des neu gegründeten SOEP Survey Committees fundiert zu bewerten. Allerdings sollte der Einfluss der Nutzerinnen und Nutzer auf das Erhebungsprogramm gestärkt werden.<sup>13</sup> Dies erfordert, dass mindestens zwei der neun Mitglieder des SOEP Survey Committee explizit damit beauftragt werden, die Nutzerperspektive zu vertreten.
- Vergrößerung der Stichprobe: Eine verbesserte Governance der SOEP-Studie stellt eine gute Basis für die weitere Entwicklung der Studie dar. Die Argumente für eine Vergrößerung der Stichprobe auf 20.000 Haushalte überzeugen. Eine vergrößerte Stichprobe bietet a) bessere Möglichkeiten zur querschnittlichen Untersuchung der Effekte diskreter Ereignisse oder politischer Maßnahmen, b) ein erhöhtes Analysepotenzial für kausale längsschnittbezogene Effekte, das durch eine ausreichend große Ausgangsstichprobe sichergestellt wird, c) die Möglichkeit zur Untersuchung gesellschaftlich relevanter Teilgruppen, d) die verbesserte Nutzbarkeit als Referenzstichprobe und e) die Erhöhung der internationalen Wettbewerbsfähigkeit.
- Einrichtung eines Innovations-Panels: Der Wissenschaftsrat sieht in der Einrichtung eines Innovations-Panels im Umfang von 5.000 Haushalten erhebliches wissenschaftliches Potenzial und empfiehlt nachdrücklich die Förderung einer solchen international in der vorgeschlagenen Form einmaligen Forschungsinfrastruktur. Er erwartet davon einen starken Impuls für empirisch fundierte, interdisziplinäre und längsschnittbezogene Forschung am Schnittpunkt der Sozial-, Gesundheits- und Verhaltenswissenschaften. Neben Forschungsthemen aus der Soziologie, Politikwissenschaft und Ökonomie ist eine Erweiterung auf Themen der Psychologie, der Geografie, der Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaften und der Bildungsforschung zu erwarten.

Der Wissenschaftsrat empfiehlt, dass das SOEP mit der Durchführung des Innovations-Panels betraut wird. Die Struktur des Innovations-Panels muss dabei sicherstellen, dass das Panel allen interessierten Forschenden gleichermaßen zur Verfügung steht. Ein unabhängiges Steuerungskomitee ist zur Lenkung der Studie vorzusehen. Die Durchführung des Innovations-Panels darf nicht zu Lasten der SOEP-Studie gehen. Eine Inklusion von Teilstichproben der SOEP-Studie ins In-

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<sup>13</sup> siehe auch: Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel, in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Bd. II, Köln 1995, S. 161-182.

novations-Panel ist entsprechend angesichts des damit verbundenen substanziellen Schadens an der SOEP-Studie sorgfältig abzuwägen.

- Kooperation mit anderen Trägern großer Umfragestudien: Es besteht erhebliches Potenzial für verstärkte Kooperation des SOEP mit den Trägereinrichtungen anderer großer Umfragestudien. Dies betrifft primär die folgenden Bereiche:
  1. Forschung im Bereich der Umfragemethodologie;
  2. Koordination der Verhandlungen mit kommerziellen Meinungsforschungsinstituten. Aufgrund der oligopolistischen Marktbedingungen sollte eine solche Abstimmung zur Vermeidung einseitiger Abhängigkeiten von einem bestimmten Anbieter beitragen;
  3. Verstärkte Anstrengungen zur Ex-ante-Harmonisierung zentraler Variablen;
  4. Zusammenarbeit in der Entwicklung eines integrierten Daten- und Datenzugangsmanagements unter Einbeziehung der Expertise von Datenarchiven (beispielsweise dem Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften, GESIS). Der Wissenschaftsrat lässt an dieser Stelle offen, ob es sinnvoll sein kann, die Daten vollständig über ein Datenarchiv zugänglich zu machen.

In einigen dieser Bereiche existieren schon begrüßenswerte Anstrengungen zur verstärkten Koordination. Diese Ansätze sollten mit Nachdruck weiter verfolgt werden.

- Einbindung des SOEP in das DIW: Der Wissenschaftsrat empfiehlt beiden Einrichtungen, baldmöglichst zu einer schriftlichen Vereinbarung bezüglich der gegenseitigen Verantwortlichkeiten und Verpflichtungen zu kommen, die die notwendige Eigenständigkeit des SOEP und seine budgetäre Handlungsfähigkeit ausgestaltet. In den wissenschaftlichen Beirat des DIW sollten mindestens zwei Personen berufen werden, die nicht Ökonominen oder Ökonomen sind, sondern andere Teilbereiche der Arbeit des SOEP beratend begleiten können. Dies wird zunehmend wichtig werden, wenn sich die disziplinäre Zusammensetzung des SOEP verändert.
- Status des SOEP in der WGL: Das SOEP ist interessiert daran, Anträge im Wettbewerbsverfahren der WGL zu stellen. Der Wissenschaftsrat befürwortet dieses Anliegen. Dafür ist es erforderlich, dass die Eigenständigkeit des SOEP innerhalb des DIW und innerhalb der WGL ausdrücklich anerkannt wird.
- Finanzierung des SOEP: Die Finanzierung der empfohlenen Stichprobenvergrößerung und die Einrichtung des Innovations-Panels erfordern beträchtliche Investitio-

nen. Diese sollten im Rahmen der gemeinschaftlichen Förderung sowohl vom Bund als auch von den Ländern getragen werden. Das SOEP stellt eine wesentliche Bereicherung für die wissenschaftliche Umgebung in Berlin und die zahlreichen ortsansässigen Kooperationspartner dar. Gleichzeitig bietet es in zunehmendem Maße eine nationale und internationale Forschungsinfrastruktur zur Nutzung an.

- Internationale Kooperation: Das SOEP sollte die Kooperation mit anderen internationalen Haushaltspanels weiter ausbauen. Insbesondere stellt die Erarbeitung eines Vorschlags zur Entwicklung eines europäischen Haushaltspanels, das sich um Aufnahme in die Roadmap des Europäischen Strategieforschums für Forschungsinfrastrukturen (ESFRI) bewerben könnte, ein attraktives mittelfristiges Ziel dar.

Der Wissenschaftsrat behält sich vor, in seiner übergreifenden Stellungnahme zur „Infrastruktur für sozial- und geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung“ weitergehende Empfehlungen zur Rolle des SOEP innerhalb der Forschungsinfrastruktur-Landschaft und ihrer weiteren Entwicklung zu erarbeiten.

Der Wissenschaftsrat bittet das BMBF und das Land Berlin, im Zusammenhang mit den übergreifenden Empfehlungen zur Infrastruktur für die sozial- und geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung auch über die weitere Entwicklung des SOEP zu berichten.



**Science-Policy Statement  
on the Status and Future Development of the  
Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), Berlin**

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Preface .....	21
A. Parameters.....	22
B. Tasks.....	23
C. Science-Based Services and Research .....	24
D. Organisation and Resources.....	27
E. Statement and Recommendations .....	29
Attachment: Statement on the Status and Future Development of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), Berlin .....	35



## **Preface**

In July 2007, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) asked the German Council of Science and Humanities (*Wissenschaftsrat*) to develop recommendations concerning the scientific infrastructure in German humanities and social sciences (including economics). In this context, the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) at the German Institute for Economic Research (*Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung*, DIW), Berlin, was also supposed to be evaluated.

As the recommendations of the working group on “Infrastructure for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities” are only expected to come in the second half of 2010 and as strategic decisions about the future development of the SOEP Study and Department need to be made before this date, the German Council of Science and Humanities asked its evaluation committee to conduct the appraisal of the current status and future development perspectives of the SOEP before the report of the overarching working group is endorsed. In March 2009 the evaluation committee established a separate working group for this purpose. This group visited the SOEP Department on April 15 and 16, 2009, and subsequently composed an evaluation report based on this site visit and the information submitted by the SOEP Department. On the basis of the report of the working group, the evaluation committee of the German Council of Science and Humanities, during its meeting of October 5, 2009, drafted a science-policy statement concerning the SOEP in the larger context of German research and higher education policies.

The working group partly consisted of external experts who are not members of the German Council of Science and Humanities. The Council is particularly indebted to these experts and everyone who was involved in collecting and reviewing the data. The German Council of Science and Humanities adopted these recommendations on November 13, 2009.

## A. Parameters

The longitudinal study called the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)<sup>14</sup> came into being in 1983 as part of the subproject “Integrated Microdata Files,” which was sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG) in the framework of the special research programme 3 (*Sonderforschungsbereich 3, Sfb 3*)<sup>15</sup> on the topic “Micro-Analytical Foundations of Social Policy”. During its early years, the SOEP Study was located in Frankfurt/Main and later moved to the premises of the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin. When the Sfb 3 came to an end in 1990, the SOEP Study was transferred completely to the DIW’s responsibility. Up to 2002, funding was mainly provided through the DFG’s individual-project funding mode (*Normalverfahren*). Following a 1994 recommendation by the German Council of Science and Humanities,<sup>16</sup> the SOEP from 2003 onwards was designated as a facility with a significant amount of research infrastructure tasks<sup>17</sup>. It was entered into a programme run jointly by Germany’s federal government and the state (*Länder*) governments providing funding for research through the “Blue List” of research facilities, and was given institutional status as an “independent department” of the DIW. As such, the department responsible for the SOEP Study – together with the DIW – is a member of the Leibniz Association (*Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, WGL*) and is part of the interdisciplinary network of infrastructure facilities within the WGL.

Through the joint funding scheme of Germany’s federal government and the state governments, two-thirds of the SOEP budget is provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), and the remaining third is provided by the state governments, of which Berlin – the state in which the SOEP is located – covers 25 %. In 2008, total support from the federal and state governments amounted to 4,079,000 euros.<sup>18</sup> This was supplemented by 165,000 euros contributed on a voluntary basis by the DIW, thus continuing its commitment from the period of DFG support. From the total budget, 1,284,000 euros were allocated to personnel costs, 2,566,000 euros went to TNS Infratest Sozialforschung, the agency commissioned to conduct the fieldwork for the SOEP Study, and 271,000 euros went to the DIW for

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14 Referred to in the following as the “SOEP Study”.

15 The unusual acronym “Sfb 3” was the result of a compromise made in the early days of SOEP, when a conflict arose with the radio station “Sender Freies Berlin” over the use of the acronym “SFB”.

16 Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel (SOEP), in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Vol. II, Cologne 1995, p. 161-182.

17 See Ausführungsvereinbarung zum GWK-Abkommen über die gemeinsame Förderung der Mitgliedseinrichtungen der Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz e.V. of October 27, 2008.

18 6,000 euros of funding was acquired through the competitive funding scheme in the Leibniz Association’s “Pact for Research and Innovation”.

rent and overheads. In 2008, the SOEP raised 1,559,000 euros in third-party funds,<sup>19</sup> approximately 85% of which were acquired from the BMBF.

As of December 31, 2008, the SOEP employed 23 people as academic staff as well as five as nonacademic support staff. Six of the department's 23 academic staff members were in the process of completing a doctoral degree, while four of the 16 academic staff members with a doctoral degree were financed by third-party funds. Seventy-five percent of the personnel with a doctoral degree were male. The twelve academic staff members who were financed through the institutional staff plan held 10.8 full-time-equivalent positions out of the 13 available permanent positions for academic staff provided by the staff plan. Four of the five permanent positions for nonacademic personnel were staffed. Two professors had received joint appointments: one at the Technical University Berlin and one at the Free University Berlin.

## **B. Tasks**

As an institution entrusted with infrastructural tasks, the SOEP's main responsibility is to provide a service to the scientific community based on its own original research. This service consists of planning and conducting the SOEP Study, developing it further in terms of both content and methodology, and making the data collected available to the research community. It also entails advising users regarding the access to these data and their analysis. The SOEP's own research activities must be relevant to the service provided and form the prerequisite for adjusting the services closely to the needs of scholars actively engaged in research.

Along with basic research, the SOEP also has the task of processing the data it collected in order to provide political decision-makers with information and advice on policy issues. Furthermore, as an important national longitudinal study, the SOEP Study contributes to the discussion of social developments by the media and the public at large.

To meet its tasks, the SOEP is organised into two working groups: The *Survey Group* is primarily responsible for carrying out service tasks in the narrower sense of the term – in particular, planning, conducting, and further developing the SOEP Study, as well as providing policy advice. However, members of the group also conduct their

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<sup>19</sup> However, approx. 500,000 euros of the third-party funding were BMBF funds for the German Council for Social and Economic Data (Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten, RatSWD) and its business office. These funds are not at the SOEP's disposal and have no direct relation to its work.

own basic research projects. The *Applied Panel Analysis Group* focuses exclusively on research.

The SOEP's services are not limited to researchers in Germany. The SOEP thus contributes to the visibility and international competitiveness of German social and economic sciences.

### **C. Science-Based Services and Research**

The SOEP study is an annual longitudinal survey of a sample representing the entire population of the Federal Republic of Germany. The sample contains approximately 12,500 households, and all household members above the age of 16 are interviewed (approximately 22,600 individuals). In 2008, the 25<sup>th</sup> wave of the SOEP Study was conducted.<sup>20</sup> This impressive evidence of SOEP's continuity makes it one of longest-running longitudinal studies in the social sciences worldwide.

One of the study's main conceptual goals is to examine the individual life course in all of the multifaceted family and professional contexts this entails. To achieve this end, the survey is increasingly emphasising the phases at the beginning and the end of the life course by surveying (expecting) parents and bereaved family members. The survey's basic scientific question has lost none of its immediacy or relevance, and thanks to the longitudinal character of the study, the SOEP data are gaining explanatory scientific power with each successive wave.

At the core of the survey are questions dealing with the socio-demographic characteristics of survey respondents, work-related variables, the financial and residential situation, health, education and subjective well-being, and social integration and personality traits. In addition to the core variables, data on a wide range of additional aspects of the individual life course are surveyed in special modules conducted at irregular intervals or at intervals of several years (e.g., environmental behaviour, time use, personal values or social networks).

The survey is carried out in productive cooperation with the commercial opinion research institute TNS Infratest Sozialforschung, which is responsible for drawing the sample, conducting the fieldwork, and processing the cross-sectional data, while the SOEP is responsible for doing the relevant basic research, developing the study con-

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20 The annual survey of all households in the sample is referred to in this context as a (survey) "wave".

tent, and providing user services. Together, the two partners have succeeded in developing and introducing an impressive number of methodological innovations. Their collaboration is thus exemplary for the successful cooperation between a private company and a public research institution. However, since very few commercial survey institutes are capable of providing the necessary services, there is a danger of an increasing dependence on one single provider.

After signing a user agreement, users in the research community are provided with the data on DVD, by remote access, or on protected computers located on the premises of the DIW, depending on the sensitivity of the particular data in question.

The effective integration of the SOEP data in international databases, such as the *Cross-National Equivalent File* (CNEF), the *Luxembourg Income Study* (LIS), the *Luxembourg Wealth Study* (LWS), and others, is essential to their global use. The SOEP is making a convincing effort to push this agenda forward together with other leading household panels.

The level of SOEP data usage is impressive, with approximately 1,600 active user contracts, and it follows a very positive growth trend. The high number of articles that result from this research and are published in refereed scientific journals should be highlighted in particular: The publication figures for SOEP are at least equal to those of the US *Panel Study of Income Dynamics* (PSID) or the *British Household Panel Study* (BHPS).

Furthermore, the SOEP data are used extensively in university teaching and in thesis projects, as shown by a recent user survey.<sup>21</sup> After having received a rating of only “average” in these areas by the German Council of Science and Humanities in the course of its research rating,<sup>22</sup> the SOEP intensified its efforts in the teaching and the promotion of young scholars. This is also true for undergraduate and graduate student training within the department, as well as for the training of external users.

Regarding the further development of the SOEP survey programme, it is clearly apparent that the SOEP prefers to involve users on an informal level instead of conducting comprehensive surveys. Although the SOEP has pursued this approach successfully in the past, and although it is important to carefully consider which user requests can be met in order to cautiously maintain the survey’s long-term develop-

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21 See Attachment, Chapter A.II.2.

22 Wissenschaftsrat: Pilotstudie Forschungsrating: Empfehlungen und Dokumentation, Cologne 2008, p. 506.

ment, user responses should be taken into consideration on an institutional level in the future. This will promote the acceptance of the study and ensure that it has a sustainable and firmly established base in the research community.

Current plans pursued by the SOEP for new additions to the study and future developments effectuate an appropriate balance between continuity and innovation. These include, among others, an increased focus on the beginning and the end of the life course, also featuring behavioural experiments, surveying respondents on their personal time budgets, increasing the use of event-triggered survey modules, increasing the collection and processing of geographic data, intensifying the linkage with data from public statistics agencies, and expanding the survey to cover biological variables.

Noteworthy in this respect is the SOEP's openness to cooperate with other universities and non-university research institutes and the close connection of new methodological and thematic developments and new research questions. The expertise of strong cooperation partners in Berlin, in Germany, and throughout the world contributes significantly to ensuring the relevance of the SOEP's new developments to the scientific community.

Regarding the need for future funding, two proposals for the further development of the SOEP Study are of particular importance:

1. The SOEP proposes to considerably expand the sample of the SOEP Study. This would increase the cross-sectional explanatory power of the survey and the potential for longitudinal analysis, would enable analyses of smaller subgroups (e.g., immigrants, single parents, high-income earners), and would improve the SOEP's potential as a reference sample. The sample expansion would also boost the SOEP Study's international competitiveness.
2. The SOEP also advocates the creation of an innovation panel. This panel would be available for research on methodology and topics that would otherwise pose too high a drop-out risk to the longitudinally oriented SOEP Study. In particular, such a panel would permit experiments and intervention studies allowing, for example, for a controlled investigation of the effects of specific training programmes over the life course, and for behavioural genetic studies dealing with the interaction between social and genetic factors in human development. In

fact, the establishment of an innovation panel promises to raise a high degree of multidisciplinary interest.

On a general level, the German Council of Science and Humanities is very much in favour of both undertakings. Further details on the specifics of each are given in Section E.

The SOEP's own methodological and thematic research work has an immediate positive impact on the continuing qualitative improvement of the services provided. In accord with the WGL's last evaluation of the DIW<sup>23</sup> and the "Research Rating in Sociology" pilot study,<sup>24</sup> the German Council of Science and Humanities evaluates the research achievements of the SOEP highly positively. The very good research performance is not just the prerequisite for the high-quality support of the SOEP Study, but is also central when the objective is to recruit – or keep – highly qualified staff members.

In this context, the shift in the relationship between research and service toward more service activities in the staff members' daily work schedules is problematic. In order to ensure the sustained quality of the SOEP Study, the two tasks should be given approximately equal weight in terms of the time spent on each.

#### **D. Organisation and Resources**

The tension inherent in the term "independent department" – between the SOEP's independence from the DIW and the interdependence of the two institutions – has characterised the relationship between the SOEP and the DIW since the SOEP became part of the joint funding scheme by Germany's federal government and the state governments.

On the administrative level, there is a lack of clarity over reciprocal rights and duties. This applies in particular to the technical and administrative support provided to the SOEP by the DIW as well as to the payments made by the SOEP to the DIW.

Looking at the SOEP's governance, the German Council of Science and Humanities commends the first efforts that have been undertaken towards appropriately addressing the SOEP's specific advisory needs in the structure of the scientific advisory bod-

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23 Leibniz-Gemeinschaft: Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Berlin 2005.

24 Wissenschaftsrat: Pilotstudie Forschungsrating: Empfehlungen und Dokumentation, Cologne 2008.

ies, and thus towards a stronger recognition of the SOEP's specific position within the DIW. A promising step in this direction was made with the creation of the SOEP Survey Committee and the appointment of its eminent members, who provide advice on the data collection for the SOEP Study and the SOEP Department's service tasks. It may be sensible to leave the advice on the SOEP Department's research and development planning<sup>25</sup> in the hands of the DIW Scientific Advisory Board; however, in this case it should be ensured that the Board is equipped with the appropriate disciplinary expertise to be able to carry out this task. At present, this is only the case to a limited degree owing to the fact that the Board consists almost exclusively of economists.

Although there are alternatives to the DIW as the SOEP's host institution, the German Council of Science and Humanities at present does not see a reason to recommend a change in the form of institutionalisation. There is great potential for cooperation between the two institutions in promoting young scholars, providing policy advice, and conducting research, while at the same time maintaining and strengthening the SOEP's partial autonomy.

The level of financial resources and academic staff allocated to the SOEP is appropriate. However, increased activities in the areas of public relations and web-based services have created an additional need for nonacademic support staff amounting to approximately three permanent positions. The SOEP should also undertake efforts to save resources through cooperation in data provision with other institutions. If these efforts are not sufficient to re-establish the balance between original research work and service tasks, it would be sensible to allow for additional resources to reduce staff workloads in the area of data processing and data provision. New tasks – in particular enlarging the sample or setting up an innovation panel – would require additional financial and personnel resources. When hiring new staff, the SOEP should aim for a more balanced ratio between male and female employees. Shifting the content of the survey (for example, by setting up an innovation panel) should be accompanied, in the medium term, by a change in the composition of the SOEP staff's disciplinary background.

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25 Wissenschaftsrat: Systemevaluation der Blauen Liste. Stellungnahme des Wissenschaftsrates zum Abschluß der Bewertung der Einrichtungen der Blauen Liste, Vol. XII, Cologne 2001, Annex 8 ("Aufgaben und Organisation der Wissenschaftlichen Beiräte für Institute, Museen und Serviceeinrichtungen der Blauen Liste").

The SOEP is somewhat short on office space. Further space should be made available for guest scholars in particular. Additional office space should also be provided for the additional personnel that will be needed when expanding the sample and creating an innovation panel.

## **E. Statement and Recommendations**

The SOEP constitutes a central and unique research infrastructure for the German social, economic, and behavioural sciences that has built an outstanding international reputation for itself. Given the longitudinal character of the study, the dataset gains considerably in scientific explanatory power with each additional wave. The department responsible for the SOEP Study has hitherto been capable of continuously improving and developing the study on an international quality level and of achieving a good balance between continuity and innovation. This work is based on high-class basic research pursued by the SOEP itself. On this basis, the German Council of Science and Humanities recommends further investments in the SOEP to ensure and expand this central research infrastructure and thereby promote the competitiveness of the German social, economic, and behavioural sciences.

The following recommendations are aimed at defining prerequisites for such an investment and supporting the future development of the SOEP:

- **Mission statement:** In recent years, additional longitudinal panel studies have come into existence that overlap significantly with the SOEP Study. These include the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (PAIRFAM), and the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). Although from a scientific point of view, these overlaps are not negative *per se*, each study should, in the interests of an efficient use of resources, develop its own specific profile, demonstrating not just overlaps with other studies but also clear distinctions. The SOEP should therefore define the identity of the SOEP Study and a long-term hierarchy of scientific objectives in the form of a mission statement. Defining key research programmes and the societal tasks on which they are based will help to better define the appropriate place of the SOEP Study in the research infrastructure landscape, which is currently re-organising itself. Defining tasks in this way can also help to prevent the SOEP

Study from becoming too broad and thus lacking in scientific depth in particular areas.

- Increasing the SOEP's flexibility: Another objective of the mission statement should be to provide a sense of orientation as to which research questions can be answered in the main study and which questions need to be addressed outside the SOEP Study. The following data sources are available for this purpose:
  1. "Related studies" that use the relevant parts of the SOEP questionnaire to answer questions outside the main study;
  2. Studies that use the SOEP Study as a reference dataset or control sample;
  3. Datasets from official statistics agencies that can be linked to the SOEP dataset;
  4. The innovation panel still to be created, which can address risky longitudinal questions outside the main study.

The SOEP Study thus should become the core of a flexible set of instruments encompassing various data sources to answer social, economic, and behavioural questions.

- Methodological development of the SOEP Study: The German Council of Science and Humanities commends the SOEP's efforts to test new data collection methods (e.g., using the internet or mobile phones). These efforts should be intensified in future. The currently planned increased linkage of SOEP data with official statistics is also a step in the right direction.
- Strengthening the user perspective for reasons of governance of the SOEP Study: At the present point of time, it is impossible to perform a sound evaluation of the work of the newly founded SOEP Survey Committee. However, users' influence on the survey programme should be increased.<sup>26</sup> This requires at least two of the nine members of the SOEP Survey Committee to be explicitly tasked with representing the user perspective.
- Enlarging the sample basis: Improved governance of the SOEP Study will provide a good basis for further developing the study. The arguments for enlarging the sample to 20,000 households are convincing. An enlarged sample offers (a) better opportunities for cross-sectional examination of the effects of discrete events or of political measures, (b) an increased analysis potential for causal effects relating to

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<sup>26</sup> See also: Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel, in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Vol. II, Cologne 1995, p. 161-182.

longitudinal observations ensured by an adequately large base sample, (c) the option to study socially relevant subgroups, (d) improved usability as a reference sample, and (e) increased international competitiveness.

- Creating an innovation panel: The German Council of Science and Humanities sees great scientific potential in the creation of an innovation panel with a sample size of 5,000 households and strongly recommends funding this research infrastructure, which in the proposed form would be unique on a global level. The Council believes that this will generate a strong impulse toward empirically sound, interdisciplinary, longitudinal research at the intersection of the social, health, and behavioural sciences. It is to be expected that alongside research themes from the fields of sociology, political science, and economics, the scope of the study will expand to encompass psychology, geography, communication and media science, and educational research.

The German Council of Science and Humanities recommends that the SOEP be entrusted with the task of conducting the innovation panel. The structure of the innovation panel must ensure that the panel is equally accessible to all interested researchers. An independent steering committee should be set up to manage the study. The innovation panel should not, however, be carried out at the expense of detriment to the SOEP Study. Including subsamples from the SOEP Study in the innovation panel should therefore be considered carefully in view of the substantial damage to the SOEP Study that could result.

- Cooperation with other organisations running major survey studies: There is significant potential for increased cooperation between the SOEP and other organisations running major survey studies. This is true primarily in the following areas:
  1. Research in the area of survey methodology;
  2. Coordination of negotiations with commercial opinion research institutes. Owing to the oligopolistic market conditions, such consultations should help to avoid unilateral dependence on specific providers;
  3. Increased efforts toward ex-ante harmonisation of central variables;
  4. Cooperation in the development of an integrated management of data and data access, involving experts in data archiving (e.g., the Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences, GESIS). The German Council of Science and Humanities leaves the question open whether or not it could be sensible to provide the data entirely through a data archive.

In some of these areas, noteworthy efforts toward an increased coordination have already been taken. These efforts should be stepped up.

- Integration of the SOEP into the DIW: The German Council of Science and Humanities recommends that both organisations as soon as possible conclude a written agreement outlining the reciprocal responsibilities and duties. This agreement should develop the SOEP's autonomy to the degree necessary and increases its capacity to control its own budget. The Scientific Advisory Board of the DIW should appoint at least two individuals who are not economists but are able to give advice on other aspects of the SOEP's work. This will become increasingly important when the composition of disciplines involved in the SOEP is to change.
- Status of the SOEP within the WGL: The SOEP is interested in submitting applications to the WGL's competitive funding scheme within the "Pact for Research and Innovation". The German Council of Science and Humanities approves of this undertaking. This requires that the SOEP's partial autonomy within the DIW and within the Leibniz Association is expressly recognised.
- Funding of the SOEP: The funding for the recommended sample enlargement and the innovation panel requires significant investments. These should be made in the framework of joint funding by both Germany's federal government and the state governments. The SOEP is a substantial enrichment for the research environment in Berlin and for the numerous cooperation partners located there. At the same time, it increasingly offers a national and international research infrastructure for external users.
- International cooperation: The SOEP should further expand its cooperation with other international household panels. The formulation of a proposal for the development of a European household panel, which could apply for inclusion in the roadmap of the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), would comprise a particularly attractive medium-term goal.

The German Council of Science and Humanities reserves itself the right to make further recommendations on the SOEP's role within the research infrastructure landscape and the SOEP's further development in its upcoming overarching recommendations on "Infrastructure for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities."

The German Council of Science and Humanities asks the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the State of Berlin to also report on the SOEP's fur-

ther development in the context of the overarching recommendations on the infrastructure for research in the social sciences and humanities.



## Attachment

### Statement on the Status and Future Development of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), Berlin

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Preface .....	37
A. Description of Institution .....	39
A.I. Historical Development .....	39
I.1. History of the SOEP Department.....	39
I.2. Development and Current State of the SOEP Study .....	40
A.II. Core Tasks and Work Areas .....	45
II.1. Conducting and Developing the SOEP Study .....	46
II.2. Providing Data and Advice to External Users .....	47
II.3. Conducting Basic and Policy-Oriented Research .....	52
II.4. Teaching and Capacity-Building .....	56
A.III. Evaluations .....	57
A.IV. Organisation and Resources .....	59
IV.1. Status .....	59
IV.2. Budget .....	59
IV.3. Personnel.....	61
IV.4. Premises, Facilities, Consumables .....	62
IV.5. Quality Assurance.....	62
A.V. National and International Context.....	63
V.1. Other National Panel Studies .....	63
V.2. International Household Panel Studies .....	64
V.3. Cooperations .....	64
A.VI. The Future of the SOEP Department.....	66
A.VII. The Future Development of the SOEP Study .....	67
VII.1. Methodological and Content-Related Innovations.....	67
VII.2. Structural Changes .....	71
VII.3. Development of Service Infrastructure .....	73
B. Statement and Recommendations .....	75
B.I. Core Tasks and Work Areas .....	75
I.1. Developing the SOEP Study .....	76

I.2. Conducting the SOEP Study .....	80
I.3. Extending the SOEP Study .....	82
I.4. Providing Data and Advice to External Users.....	86
I.5. Research Activities .....	88
I.6. Teaching and Capacity-Building.....	89
B.II. Resources, Organisation and Governance .....	90
II.1. Budget and Personnel .....	90
II.2. Premises and Facilities.....	90
II.3. The SOEP Department within the DIW.....	91
II.4. Innovation Panel.....	94
B.III. National and International Context.....	95
III.1. National Context .....	95
III.2. European and International Context .....	97
B.IV. Summary .....	98
Appendices.....	103

## **Preface**

The present evaluation report on the status and future development of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study at the German Institute for Economic Research, Berlin, is divided into two parts. For the descriptive part, the institution has approved the factual accuracy of the final version. The evaluation part reports the assessment of the scientific performance, structures, and organisational characteristics.



## **A. Description of Institution**

### **A.I. Historical Development**

The term “Socio-economic Panel” (SOEP) is commonly used to refer to both the German Socio-Economic Panel Study and the group of researchers responsible for running and developing the study and distributing its data to interested academics. In the following, the former will be referred to as the “SOEP Study”, whereas the latter will be labelled the “SOEP Department”, which is located at the German Institute for Economic Research (*Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung*, DIW), Berlin.

#### **I.1. History of the SOEP Department**

Up until the 1960s, large-scale quantitative empirical research in the social sciences was based not on academic data collection but on official statistics. Sociologists and economists, for example, predominantly relied on the statistical tables provided by statistics agencies for their analyses. Starting in the 1960s, however, social scientists began to obtain limited access to statistics agencies’ microdata on private households, individuals, and, somewhat later, on firms. These data focused on variables such as occupational status and income and did not include subjective measures, such as ratings of life satisfaction. Also, the data did not allow for longitudinal analyses, in spite of the fact that an increasing number of social and economic theories dealt with the human life course. Thus, as a pioneer of longitudinal analyses, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) was established in 1968 by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan. The PSID and other subsequent household panel studies have been concentrating on the household as the unit of analysis and thereby differ in their design from the longitudinal cohort studies developed by epidemiologists and psychologists, which focus on individuals.

In this broader context, the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, DFG) funded the establishment of the SOEP Study in 1983 as part of the “Integrated Microdata Files” subproject within the special research programme (*Sonderforschungsbereich 3*, Sfb 3) on “Micro-Analytical Foundations of Social Policy”.<sup>27</sup> The project was then located at the universities of Frankfurt/Main, Mannheim, and Berlin. Hans-Jürgen Krupp, the lead investigator of the Sfb 3 was first affiliated

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<sup>27</sup> Krupp, H.-J.: Das Sozio-oekonomische Panel (SOEP): Genese und Implementation, in: SOEPpapers on Multidisciplinary Panel Data Research, 25 (2007), p. 1-16.

with the University of Frankfurt, but, in 1978, moved to the DIW Berlin, a non-profit, non-partisan think-tank on economic and social policies, where he hosted the SOEP Study. In 1988 another project head of the Sfb 3, Wolfgang Zapf (then president of the Social Science Research Center Berlin, *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung*, WZB), was responsible for the SOEP Study as principal investigator for one year. The project group stayed at the DIW Berlin and Gert G. Wagner, the current director of the SOEP Department, became the principal investigator in 1989. In 1990, with the end of the Sfb 3, full responsibility for the project was transferred to the DIW.

From 1990 to 2002 the project was mainly funded by the DFG through its individual-project funding mode (*Normalverfahren*), while the DIW Berlin provided office space, IT support, and some research and service staff. In 1994, the German Council of Science and Humanities (*Wissenschaftsrat*) recommended that the group responsible for the SOEP Study be funded as a service unit of the “Blue List”, which is a means for joint research funding by the federal government and the state governments in Germany. Today’s “umbrella organisation” for the “Blue List” is the Leibniz Association (*Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, WGL).<sup>28</sup>

The German Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (*Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung*, BLK)<sup>29</sup> followed the recommendation to fund the SOEP Department as a service unit. Since January 2003 the SOEP Department has been funded as part of the “Blue List” and has been an independent department within the DIW Berlin. The department provides a ‘public good’ to the social sciences by collecting and providing longitudinal microdata on persons and households (i.e., on respondents’ well-being over their life course).

## **I.2. Development and Current State of the SOEP Study**

### **a) General Characteristics and Subsamples**

The SOEP Study is a household panel survey representative of the population in Germany. The study was designed to include all members of the first-wave survey households and all their offspring in the sample. It also elicits responses from and later tracks non-original sample members such as new spouses of original sample

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28 Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel, in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Vol. II, Cologne 1995, p. 161-182.

29 Since 2008 Joint Science Conference (*Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz*, GWK).

members. In each yearly wave, all adult members of these households (individuals 17 years and older) are interviewed. Certain subpopulations of interest, such as immigrants or groups of particularly high socio-economic status, are oversampled to provide a more detailed picture of these groups. In addition, new subsamples have been introduced to stabilise or increase the cross-sectional sample size.

The SOEP Study started in West Germany in 1984 with two sub-samples. *Sample A* covered the population living in private households whereas *Sample B* oversampled the five main immigrant groups in West Germany at that time.<sup>30</sup> In the two samples combined there were just over 12,000 respondents in just under 6,000 households (4,528 households in *Sample A* and 1,393 households in *Sample B*). In the following years, further samples were added:

- *Sample C* (1990): Sample of 2,179 East German households intended to measure conditions in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) before it ceased to exist, and then trace social and economic changes and the integration of the two societies;
- *Sample D* (1994/1995): Sample of 522 households of new immigrants who had moved to West Germany after 1984;
- *Sample E* (1998): Refresher sample of 1,067 households representative of the population in Germany drawn independently from the ongoing panel;
- *Sample F* (2000): Refresher sample of 6,052 households representative of the population in Germany drawn independently from the ongoing panel. This near-doubling of the overall sample size was intended to provide a sufficient number of observations of members of key 'policy groups' such as, for example, single parents and recipients of specific welfare payments. This extension also facilitated empirical analyses of potential panel effects in earlier samples;
- *Sample G* (2002): Sample of 1,224 private households with a monthly income of at least 7,500 DM (3,835 euros);
- *Sample H* (2006): Refresher sample of 1,505 households representative of the population in Germany drawn independently from the ongoing panel.

After this latest increase in sample size in 2006, the SOEP Study included 22,639 respondents in 12,499 households. Information about an additional 5,143 children

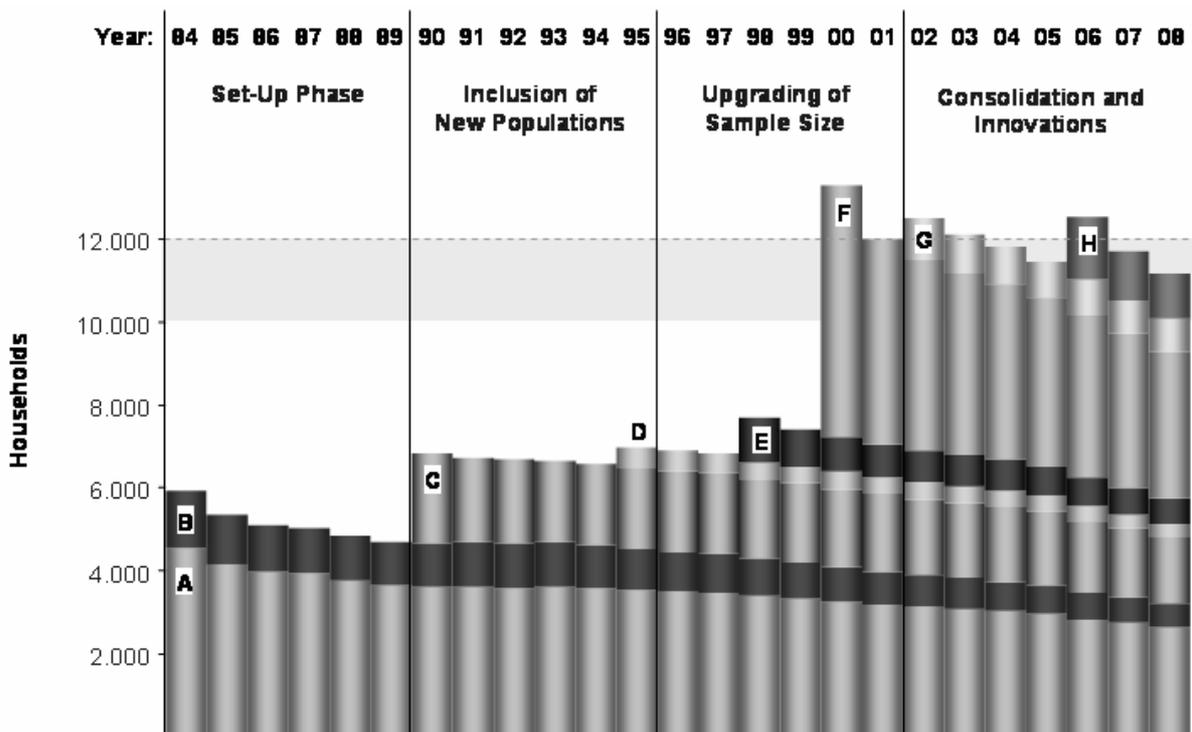
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<sup>30</sup> Turkish, Spanish, Italian, Greek or Yugoslavian immigrant households. Households with household heads belonging to these five groups are excluded by design from subsample A.

under 17 living in these households was also recorded. Furthermore, about 2,500 respondents had participated in each of the 25 waves to that date. Children of the original sample members who turn 17 join the sample as respondents. The first of an increasing number of grandchildren turned 17 in 2005.

The average rate of sample attrition is about 5 % from wave to wave. Attrition is reported to be selective but not highly so. The department argues that the selection bias can be controlled for by statistical means. Figure 1 illustrates how sample attrition and the drawing of new samples combine in the development of the overall sample size.

**Figure 1 Development of Household Sample Size 1984-2008**



Source: TNS Infratest Sozialforschung

## b) Fieldwork

Although the SOEP Department carries the overall responsibility for the SOEP Study, there are, in fact, two survey groups responsible for developing and operating the survey: Besides the SOEP Department itself, there is a group at the commercial opinion research institute TNS Infratest Sozialforschung in Munich which is responsible for the sampling, fieldwork, and cross-sectional editing of the data. It shares responsibility with the SOEP department for planning the fieldwork and the coding

techniques as well as implementing new survey measures such as behavioural experiments or the collection of biomarkers. TNS Infratest Sozialforschung has detailed contracts to run the survey, and the SOEP Department monitors its adherence to standards and budgets for all tasks. According to the department, TNS Infratest services are well established and tailor-made for its specific requirements. A special interviewer field force is being maintained by TNS Infratest Sozialforschung, with more than 500 out of more than 1,000 TNS Infratest interviewers being involved in field-work for the SOEP survey each year. More than 100 of these interviewers either exclusively work for the SOEP Study or are engaged in interviewing for the SOEP Study and no more than two other complex social surveys. Only experienced face-to-face interviewers are involved in the interviewing for the SOEP Study. For those respondents who prefer to fill out the questionnaires themselves, a specialised team of permanent telephone supervisors maintain continuous contact with the respondents.

When the SOEP Study started, all interviews were face-to-face and responses were recorded by the paper-and-pencil interviewing method. In 1998, computer-assisted personal interviewing was introduced.

The ownership of respondents' addresses rests with the SOEP Department. This offers the option to transfer all work to another opinion research institute should this be deemed necessary.

### **c) Questionnaire Content**

In terms of content, the core aim of the SOEP Study is to measure the development of 'well-being over the life course'. To this end the SOEP Study assesses 'objective' variables such as age, gender, marital status, income, wages, working hours, employment status, health status, and level of education as well as 'subjective' indicators such as ratings of life satisfaction, social networks, expectations about the future, and beliefs. Starting in 2002 questions about personal traits such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, risk aversion, and willingness to trust and cooperate were introduced.

There is a certain set of core questions that are asked in each wave. These cover the following areas:

- *Socio-demographic characteristics* are assessed, for example, by questions about gender, year of birth, nationality, immigration status, marital status, number of persons in the household, and key family events such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child or death of a household member.
- *Labour force status, occupation, and time use.* Items cover, for example, current employment status, monthly gross and net income, type of work contract, size of company, number of working hours, and activities in leisure time.
- *Income, taxes, and social security.* Questions concern, for example, non-labour income and social benefits, pension contributions, health insurance, subjective evaluation of income, income and expenses from rentals, and life insurance coverage.
- *Housing* is covered by items concerning, for example, housing status, quality of housing, housing costs, neighbourhood and environment, and housing region.
- *Health-related questions* include, for example, height and weight, state of health, health provision, and satisfaction with health. Recent additions to the survey include physical health measures (grip strength).
- *Education participation and qualification* is assessed by questions concerning, for example, type and length of education, education calendar, obtained qualification, further education and formal child care. Since 2006 selected tests of cognitive abilities have been implemented.
- *Personal traits and integration* are covered by questions about, for example, traits such as extraversion and openness, aspirations about education and working life, political involvement and orientation, experience of disadvantage due to origin, and length of planned residence in Germany.
- *Subjective well-being.* Items cover, for example, satisfaction with life domains, general satisfaction with life, affective states, and personal worries. The SOEP Department claims that the SOEP Study is the only household panel survey worldwide that provides continuous time series and individual life course data for 25 measurement points of these kinds of indicators.
- *Childhood.* Since 2001 additional questions are asked about childhood and the life of teenagers and, since 2003, specific questions are asked about birth and early childhood (e.g., concerning height and weight of the child, health status, and care

situation). For children of two to three years of age “child outcomes” are measured by questions on the child’s adaptive behaviour (since 2005). Children aged five to six respond to a questionnaire measuring their socio-emotional skills and assessing their personality traits (since 2005).

In addition to survey questions that are posed to respondents every year, the SOEP Study includes special topic modules on a less regular basis. The inclusion of these modules is intended to allow administering a broad range of questions without putting excessively high demands on participants’ time; at the same time, these topic modules are intended to provide more in-depth information in the annually surveyed core areas. Some of the special topic modules are asked just once, others are repeated in a certain rhythm (e.g., every five years). Questions cover a broad range of topics such as ecology and environmental behaviour, values, personality, time use, social networks, individual wealth situation, further education, and neighbourhood conditions.

## **A.II. Core Tasks and Work Areas**

The three main tasks of the SOEP Department at DIW Berlin are (a) to conduct and develop the SOEP Study, (b) to provide service to and to support external users of the data and (c) – intended as a means of quality assurance for the other tasks – to conduct both basic and policy-oriented research. Thus the department is further engaged in supporting early career researchers.

To address these tasks, the SOEP Department is divided into two working groups. Working Group I, the *SOEP Survey Group*, mainly focuses on data collection and service, whereas Working Group II, the *Applied Panel Analysis Group*, is exclusively concerned with research. However, it is part of the SOEP Department’s philosophy that all academic staff, including those of the SOEP Survey Group, pursue self-defined research projects based on SOEP Study data and similar microdata. The SOEP Department maintains that individual research experience is an essential prerequisite for good service that is attuned to the needs and interests of the academic user community.

In addition, the opportunity to pursue self-defined research projects is seen as crucial in retaining highly qualified and motivated personnel.

## II.1. Conducting and Developing the SOEP Study

Conducting the SOEP Study and making its data accessible to external users are the central tasks for the SOEP Department. The two deputy department heads share responsibility for these tasks. The Survey Manager is responsible for the thematic content of the SOEP Study and for collaboration with external experts, who help to shape the content, and with the fieldwork organisation. The Data Operations Manager heading the SOEP Survey Group (Working Group I) is responsible for coordinating collection, in-house processing, documentation, and dissemination of the data. In particular, in the context of conducting the SOEP Study this working group is engaged in:

- Planning the study's content, samples, and design;
- Conceptualising, implementing, and analysing pretests, feasibility studies, and special surveys such as interviewer surveys and surveys of non-respondents;
- Contracting out the fieldwork, co-operating with the fieldwork agency in maintaining the panel, and controlling the fieldwork agency;
- Processing and editing the data and checking its consistency. Data processing includes generating new variables such as annual income measures, creating pointers between respondents who stand in a particular relationship (e.g., from children to parents), including geographical reference data and tailored context data, imputing missing data, and developing cross-sectional and longitudinal weighting variables;
- Updating and improving the database architecture as new data become available and preparing SOEP Study microdata in both German and English language versions for different software formats and at different data protection levels
- Developing and maintaining user-friendly documentation;
- Providing online user support features and tailored user service (e.g., offering a hotline service to support other studies that use the SOEP Study as a reference dataset or control sample).

The SOEP Study is continuously developed by the SOEP Survey Group. It is supported by a multidisciplinary team of researchers. These were originally from within the former Sfb 3 and after its conclusion in 1990 formed a group of active data users. The DIW Scientific Advisory Board has abstained from initiating any major changes and holds that the SOEP Department should observe the needs of its users and

shape the SOEP Study accordingly. The SOEP Department perceives that the best way to do so is to engage in dialogue with current and potential users at conferences and with those who come to the department as visiting scholars. The department considers this more efficient than comprehensive formalised consultations with potential users from various disciplines, which it regards as helpful but expensive and time-consuming. The SOEP Department doubts that these consultations will be able to identify important new research topics that otherwise would not have been recognised as long as the staff responsible for the survey are involved in active research.

The newly established SOEP Survey Committee, which will begin its work in 2009, consists of nine leading scholars reflecting the multidisciplinary user community of the SOEP Study. The SOEP Department indicates that all planning for the future development of the SOEP Study will closely involve this new advisory body.

## **II.2. Providing Data and Advice to External Users**

The dissemination of the data of the SOEP Study is done by the SOEP Department and not by a data archive. The department stresses that this is the most common solution worldwide for archiving and providing complex longitudinal datasets. The department believes that the complexity of longitudinal data requires highly detailed knowledge of the data in order to offer optimal user support. This level of knowledge, according to the SOEP Department, is only available in the group running the study. A central archive without very close connections to the group responsible for the panel would, according to the department, not be able to offer the same level of support. In addition, the SOEP Department holds that practical issues of data protection speak in favour of data dissemination by the department. In the SOEP Department's view, these arguments outweigh the advantages of a centralised technical storage solution using a standardised data format, which, according to the SOEP Department, does not yet exist. However, the department would welcome a solution for safe long-term data storage only (e.g., at the German Federal Archives at Koblenz [*Bundesarchiv Koblenz*] or at the German National Library at Leipzig [*Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, Leipzig*]).

### **a) User Characteristics and Development of Data Use**

The users of the SOEP Department's services are national and international social and behavioural scientists mainly from the disciplines of economics and economet-

rics, sociology, psychology, public health, statistics and survey methodology, demography, political science, educational science, environmental studies, and geography. They include senior scientists as well as undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers from universities, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) and non-university research institutions.

To date, more than 2,000 users have signed a user contract with 179 new users signing up in 2008 (compared to 172 in 2007 and 169 in 2006). About 1,600 of these user contracts are currently active, with 884 contract holders being employed at German universities or institutions and 720 contract holders from abroad. About two thirds of both national and international contracts are held by economists, followed by sociologists and users from other disciplines.

A special user survey among all contract holders conducted at the beginning of 2009, to which 691 contract holders had responded by the end of March 2009, revealed that at least 445 students/researchers without a Ph.D./doctoral degree, 275 post-doctoral researchers, and 181 student assistants and 32 non-scientific research assistants are currently working with SOEP Study data outside of the DIW Berlin.

Among the projects for which SOEP Study data or data of the Cross-National Equivalent File (CNEF) including the SOEP sample were used in 2008, at least 153 were externally funded (third-party funding) and 387 were internally funded (institutional funding).

Apart from the number of users and projects employing the SOEP Study data, the quality of the research output has also been monitored. SOEP data have been used in publications that have appeared in some of the most widely cited journals in the fields of economics, psychology, and sociology, such as the *American Economic Review*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *Economic Journal*; *Psychological Science* and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, as well as the *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, and *European Sociological Review*. In other fields, including political science, public health, and survey methodology, users publish in journals such as the *American Journal of Education*, *Congenital Heart Disease*, *Energy Economics*, *European Journal of Political Research*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Gender & Society*, *International Migration Review*, and *Journal of the Royal*

*Statistical Society*. Policy reports based on SOEP Study data have been published by organisations such as the OECD and UNICEF.

Up to now, more than 5,000 SOEP-related publications have been counted. In 2008 more than 500 SOEP-based publications were recorded for the first time.

A relatively novel kind of use of the SOEP Study lies in its utilisation as a “reference dataset” or “control sample” for other studies, in particular intervention studies. The SOEP Department reports that this use of the SOEP Study has been increasing for about one year.

As the most important “related studies” using the SOEP Study data as a reference dataset or as a control sample, the department identifies COGITO, BASE II, and “*pro Kind*.” COGITO and BASE II, which are gerontological studies of the life span, are based at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin. “*Pro Kind*,” an intervention study in early childhood, is based at the University of Hanover and is conducted independently from the SOEP Department.

Another “related study” that tests the usefulness of mobile phones for experience sampling and cognitive testing is also located at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. Apart from its other research goals, it also serves as a pretest study for the SOEP Study applying parts of the SOEP Study’s individual questionnaire.

Selected questions of the SOEP Study are applied in studies like the longitudinal study on the “Long-term Consequences of Congenital Heart Disease” (Hanover Medical School), and the “IZA Evaluation Data Set” (Institute for the Study of Labor, *Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit*, IZA), which is intended to be used for analyses of German labour market policies. Both studies are run independently from the SOEP Department.

The Free University Berlin leads the preparations for a study on early childhood education and care of young children in Germany. The consortium of collaborators includes the SOEP Department and the study would use the SOEP Study as a control sample.

In the near future, the SOEP Study will act as a reference dataset for the National Educational Panel (*Nationales Bildungspanel*, NEPS) and the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (PAIRFAM). Neither study covers the full

age spectrum of the population in Germany but instead both concentrate on “strategic age cohorts.”

The SOEP Study data are also used in higher education teaching. In the 2009 user survey, 193 contract holders reported that they had used SOEP Study data for their teaching. They further indicated that SOEP Study data were used in 314 bachelor or master theses. The respective figures in 2004 were 76 uses in teaching and 119 uses in bachelor and master theses.

The SOEP Department holds that the most severe impediment to the use of its data is the lack of specific methodological qualifications among economists and social scientists and not the fee of 30 euros per DVD.

## **b) Services**

The most important service of the SOEP Department is the provision of the SOEP Study data to interested academic users.

Data are mainly made available in the form of scientific use files distributed on DVD. With regard to more sensitive data that require high levels of data protection, interested researchers may use the *SOEPremote* remote access service or, for highly sensitive geo-coded data, dedicated work space within the SOEP Department. The SOEP Department reports that these new services have not been reflected in an increase in staff size, which it believes would be necessary.

In addition to the provision of the dataset, the SOEP Department offers the following services:

- *SOEPinfo* is an online database offering information on all available variables and their frequencies within the SOEP Study datasets. The programme is tailored to support setting up cross-sectional and longitudinal data files.
- *SOEPmonitor* comprises a range of statistical series for households and individuals from 1984 to the most recent wave of data. The *SOEPmonitor* makes reference to the underlying SOEP variables to facilitate replication.
- *Original questionnaires* of the waves from 1997 to 2007 can be obtained online in pdf-format.
- The *Desktop Companion* offers a detailed handbook for the work with the SOEP Study data.

- The *SOEPnewsletter* is a magazine that is published on a quarterly basis for all SOEP Study users and interested individuals. It offers recent information concerning the database as well as activities of the SOEP Department and its collaborators.
- A list of known bugs and solutions pertaining to the last SOEP Study data release is continually updated.
- *SOEPLIT* is a database listing many of the publications that utilised data from the SOEP Study.
- The *SOEPdata-center* provides further information on the availability of the SOEP Study data by itself and in combination with data from other international panel surveys.
- The *SOEPHotline* provides advice on how to obtain access to the data as well as on using SOEP Study data.

The SOEP Department also offers user trainings. Since the end of the 1980s, the department has conducted an annual training course. Since 1993, there have also been training courses in the USA including a biannual workshop introducing researchers to the SOEP Study and the CNEF. In addition, members of the department give approximately 15 conference talks, workshops, and seminar presentations per year informing others about possibilities for research based on SOEP Study data and about recent innovations to the survey.

Since 2007, a workshop series called *SOEP@campus* provides advanced courses at different universities to foster better knowledge transfer on longitudinal data analysis for students and new users of SOEP Study data. The department predicts that at least six courses will take place in 2009.

### **c) Promoting User Services**

The SOEP Department believes that the best way to promote its services is to publish in academic journals and, more importantly, to provide the data for publications by external users.

As a further method of making its services visible, the SOEP Department engages in research for policy advisory reports for national and supranational organisations.

In addition, the inclusion of SOEP Study data in international comparative datasets like the CNEF or the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) and the Luxembourg Wealth Study (LWS) increases its use by national and international researchers. The department intends to explore whether an inclusion in the Integrative Analysis of Longitudinal Studies on Aging (IALSA) is desirable. IALSA combines longitudinal studies in the behavioural sciences with a developmental or gerontological perspective.

Besides the SOEP@campus series, the department has also been increasing its outreach efforts in recent years by setting up information stands at major conferences.

In order to provide a platform for recent results based on SOEP Study data, the discussion paper series "SOEPpapers on Multidisciplinary Panel Data Research" was launched in 2007. The series is available online and publishes papers involving SOEP Study data. It is designed to open up ongoing research to an international audience for discussion and debate. *SOEPpapers* are published on a nonexclusive basis, allowing the authors to submit the same results to other pre-publication outlets as well.

The department maintains that these promotional activities, together with the development of the survey content and design will make it increasingly attractive for researchers in psychology, behavioural genetics, public health, epidemiology, human resource and personnel management, and educational science.

### **II.3. Conducting Basic and Policy-Oriented Research**

All scientific staff of the SOEP Department are actively involved in conducting research. The Survey Group, which brings together senior researchers within the department and which runs the SOEP Study, should be able to dedicate 50 % of their time to research. However, since the definition of research has shifted and policy advice is no longer counted as research, members of the group report spending less than 50 % of their time on their own research. The department suggests that this is because, due to its function in quality assurance, efforts in policy advice need to be maintained.

The members of the Applied Panel Analysis Group, which brings together doctoral students, post-docs, and visiting scholars, should be able to dedicate 100 % of their

time to doing research, but details depend on the specific project arrangements as some projects require a certain amount of policy-related or service work.

None of the research areas are freely chosen by the department; rather, they follow the main themes of the SOEP Study. Within this framework the members of the Survey Group themselves determine their research foci. The research foci of the Applied Panel Analyses Group are derived from the research foci of the Survey Group.

#### **a) Main Research Areas**

The SOEP Department currently focuses on the following four research priorities, all of which are closely related:

The *Survey Operation and Survey Statistics* team (within the Survey Group) draws up the SOEP questionnaire and oversees the implementation of the survey. This task includes the generation of new, theory-driven research queries as well as the application and development of new survey methods (behavioural experiments, measurement of cognitive abilities, new health indicators, and measurement of the learning environment of children and young people).

The work carried out in the *Information Management and Statistical Modelling* unit (within the Survey Group) focuses on further processing the raw data for incorporation in the longitudinal design of the SOEP Study database and on drawing up detailed German and English language documentation. Important aspects of the data preparation procedure are the statistical and econometric analysis of sampling losses, the imputation of missing values, and the weighting of the sample.

The *International Panel Data* team (within the Survey Group) is responsible for providing the required services so that the SOEP Department can participate in cooperative research activities at the international level. The group is in continuous contact with other providers of panel data around the world to determine what constitutes a user-friendly panel database.

The *Applied Panel Analyses Group* (Working Group II) is concerned with the acquisition of external funds for in-depth analytical studies on selected topics. This group defines, organises, finances, and implements supplementary projects together with the members of the above three teams. This work currently encompasses projects in

the fields of experimental economics, economic inequality, and intergenerational research.

It should be noted that all research done by the Survey Group is required to contribute directly to the quality of the SOEP Study. The department states that research not fulfilling this criterion is not welcome because it would not fall within the service-oriented aims of the SOEP Department.

Externally funded projects, including projects run by the Applied Panel Analyses Group, are selected according to whether (a) they improve the SOEP Study, (b) they facilitate international collaboration with other panel studies, and (c) whether they address interesting research questions. The latter category must have a connection to one of the SOEP Study themes.

During the past three years, the most actively researched topics addressed by members of the SOEP Department included:

- Poverty, income and wealth inequality, and well-being;
- Intergenerational mobility;
- Human capital formation – cognitive and non-cognitive skills;
- Immigration;
- Labour economics and health economics;
- Family economics and demography;
- Life-span psychology and gerontological research;
- Survey methodology.

#### **b) Departmental Service and Research Environment**

To provide an engaging environment for its researchers, nonacademic staff, and visiting scientists, the SOEP Department organises the following seminar series and meetings:

- A weekly “Coffee Break” for informal discussions among everyone in the department;
- A “Brown Bag Seminar” (open to external researchers);
- A monthly Survey Group Meeting (for Working Group I only);
- A monthly Business Meeting (Jour Fixe) for the department;
- An annual retreat for the department;

- An annual meeting of the Survey Group with TNS Infratest Sozialforschung (besides regular meetings of particular members of the Survey Group with TNS Infratest Sozialforschung).

There are no joint lecture series with other DIW Departments, although in some cases individual researchers choose to take part in other departments' seminar series or researchers from other departments participate in sessions at the SOEP Department.

The department believes that its visitor programme (for scientists and student interns) plays a central role in the research-driven service culture of the department.

### **c) Dissemination and Transfer of Results**

The SOEP Department disseminates the results of its research by means of scientific journals, scientific presentations at major scientific conferences, the internet, and news media. The DIW Weekly Report (*DIW Wochenbericht*), newspapers, radio and TV, and the internet are the most important communication channels to reach the general public. In addition, many of the department members serve on advisory committees that offer the opportunity to bring the SOEP Study results into government reports and other official papers on topics like family policy, immigration, and others.

Findings based on SOEP Study data are, according to the SOEP Department, the subject of numerous public discussions with the most prominent field being social policy and, in particular, income distribution. The department claims that childcare system reforms in past years have been influenced by SOEP Study results and by policy advice from the SOEP Department. Dissemination activities do not directly target the private business sector.

Table 1 summarises some of the central dissemination activities of the SOEP Department.

Table 1: Publications and Presentations of the SOEP Department (2006-2008)

Dissemination activity	2006	2007	2008	Total
Books	4	1	4	9
Contributions to edited volumes	33	19	25	77
Articles				
in peer-reviewed SSCI/SCI journals	13	9	14	36
in other peer-reviewed journals	9	12	7	28
in DIW Weekly Reports	15	15	17*	47
in journals without peer-review	23	13	4	40
in newspapers	51	31	19	101
Presentations				
at scientific conferences	73	84	107	264
at invited policy forums	10	15	22	47

\* Including short comments and translations.

Source: SOEP Department

Twelve publications that the SOEP Department identified as its most important and influential contributions of the last three years are listed in Appendix 5.

However, the department emphasises that next to its own publications, it also aims at increasing the number of publications using SOEP Study data. With *SOEPlit*, the SOEP Department provides online access to the bibliographic references of research articles and publications based on these data. The aim of this service is to provide researchers with an initial overview of research areas addressed using SOEP Study data. To date, more than 5,000 SOEP-related publications have been entered into the *SOEPlit* database.

#### II.4. Teaching and Capacity-Building

The SOEP Department is supporting young researchers by providing hands-on training and supervision within the department. In particular, the department employs about 20 student research assistants and hosts 10 to 15 student interns each year.

The department currently has eight doctoral students. Three of them are affiliated with the DIW Berlin Graduate Center of Economic and Social Research and five are affiliated with university doctoral programmes. The latter are linked to the SOEP Department as part-time research assistants. The newly established DIW Graduate Center of Economic and Social Research, an institution offering one-year funding and a training structure to doctoral students at the DIW, has supported the recruitment of doctoral students in economics, but less so in the social sciences. According to the department, this is likely to change in the near future. In general, given the joint appointments of staff members with universities and the close collaborations with doctoral programmes at universities, the SOEP Department does not see a problem in not holding the right to award doctoral degrees itself.

The department also participates in the Berlin Network of Labor Market Research which offers a weekly seminar series and occasional lectures and, together with the Hanse Institute for Advanced Study in Delmenhorst (*Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg*, HWK), holds an annual Young Scholar Symposium. Almost all senior members of staff are also engaged in teaching at Berlin universities.

Together the SOEP Department and the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) organise an exchange programme allowing young researchers, in particular Ph.D. students, to spend short visits at the partner institute. This exposure to a different research environment is intended to foster cross-national cooperation and to share experiences.

### **A.III. Evaluations**

There are annual internal evaluations of the SOEP by the DIW Berlin Scientific Advisory Board. Further internal evaluations concern specific products. In particular, contributions to internal publications series are reviewed by other DIW researchers.

In terms of external evaluations, the German Council of Science and Humanities (*Wissenschaftsrat*) positively evaluated the SOEP Department in 1994.<sup>31</sup> Besides its recommendation to securely fund the SOEP Department through the “Blue List” (now organised in the WGL), other recommendations that are still relevant include a sig-

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<sup>31</sup> Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel, in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Vol. II, Cologne 1995, p. 161-182.

nificant research share for the scientific staff,<sup>32</sup> 30 % to 50 % positions for scientific staff on fixed-term contracts, the continuation of a scientific advisory body for the SOEP Department that is separate from the one responsible for the DIW, significant influence of the users on the future development of the survey, and a caution against fees that might restrict data access.

The German Council of Science and Humanities again positively evaluated the SOEP Department in the context of an overall DIW evaluation in 1998.<sup>33</sup> In 2008, the SOEP Department participated in a pilot study of a rating of research institutions in sociology conducted by the German Council of Science and Humanities.<sup>34</sup> Among 254 research units, the SOEP was one of three institutions receiving the highest rating of *excellent* for their research profile. Efficiency was also rated as *excellent*, with impact being rated as *very good* and support for early career researchers as *good*. The department explains that the less than excellent rating for efficiency might be due to the small number of researchers compared to university departments and that the rating for early career researchers was partly based on a period when the DIW Berlin Graduate Center was not yet in place. The committee responsible for the rating also concluded that the SOEP Department's transfer of its results into the public domain and, in particular, political advice, was *above average*, the highest rating awarded for this criterion.

External evaluations by the WGL are conducted every seventh year with the first one of the DIW having taken place in 2005.<sup>35</sup> The WGL concluded that the SOEP Department showed very good and internationally recognised performance both in terms of research output and data collection and provision. However, the governance and integration of the SOEP Department into the DIW was regarded as in need of improvement.

In addition to these institutional reviews, there has been a review commissioned by the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The study was conducted by Longview, a company focusing on longitudinal research. The SOEP reports that it was seen as one of the leading household panels worldwide in several respects.

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32 The SOEP Department reports that from the very beginning of the SOEP Study this was operationalised as a 50/50 division between service and research tasks.

33 Wissenschaftsrat: Wirtschaftsforschungsinstitute in den alten Ländern. Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung in Berlin, in Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahmen zu Instituten der Blauen Liste, Vol. III, Cologne 1999, p. 51-88.

34 Wissenschaftsrat: Pilotstudie Forschungsrating: Empfehlungen und Dokumentation, Cologne 2008.

35 Leibniz-Gemeinschaft: Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Berlin 2005.

## **A.IV. Organisation and Resources**

### **IV.1. Status**

The SOEP is a service unit of the WGL and an independent department of the DIW Berlin.

As a service unit, the SOEP is a member of the Interdisciplinary Network of Service Units (*Interdisziplinärer Verbund Serviceeinrichtungen*, IVS) of the WGL. As a data provider it is also represented in the German Council for Social and Economic Data (*Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten*, RatSWD).

According to the Statutes of the DIW, the President of the DIW is “responsible for all the Institute’s affairs” and in particular “its direction”. Departmental heads “participate in the research planning and in the scientific coordination of the work of the Institute”. The SOEP is one of seven research departments within the DIW, albeit with a somewhat ambiguous status due to its specific funding arrangements and its additional service tasks in the field of data provision. According to the principles of joint funding, all of the WGL institutes are financed by federal and state contributions. Whereas the DIW receives federal funding from the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie*, BMWi), the SOEP is funded by the BMBF. Furthermore, there is no explicit definition of the exact status of the SOEP within the DIW, in particular as far as the mutual financial obligations are concerned.

### **IV.2. Budget**

The SOEP Department is running on the basic budget (*Grundhaushalt*) of the DIW, but the department’s budget makes up a separate part thereof. There is no written agreement about the amount of money the SOEP Department must pay out of its budget to cover overhead costs of the DIW.

The SOEP Department’s total income from allowances and subsidies in 2008 amounted to 4.244 million euros. Of these, 4.079 million euros were provided through the joint funding by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*, BMBF) and the *Länder* (German states). Two-thirds of the basic funding (i.e., of 4.073 million euros) is carried by the BMBF with one-third being contributed by the *Länder*. Of the latter amount, 25 % are

paid for by Berlin as the host state. In addition to the funding by the federal government and the *Länder*, the DIW Berlin contributed 165,000 euros to the SOEP Department's available funds. In 2008, funds from a peer-group competition organised by the WGL within the Pact for Research and Innovation (*Wettbewerbsverfahren im Pakt für Forschung und Innovation*) amounted to 6,000 euros (here the SOEP Department is a network partner of the ZEW). However, this is highly flexible – in the first such competition in 2006, 367,000 euros were acquired when the SOEP Department was successful with its own application.

In 2008, the bulk of the expenses were made up of personnel costs (approx. 1.284 million euros) and the fieldwork contract with TNS Infratest Sozialforschung (2.566 million euros). In addition, 271,000 euros in rent and for overheads were paid to the DIW – a 5.42-fold increase compared to the 50,000 euros paid in 2006 (however, the basic budget of SOEP was increased accordingly).

Appendix 4 summarises the third-party funds obtained by the SOEP Department in recent years. In 2008, a total of approximately 1.559 million euros was raised. When judging the grants received from the German federal government, it should be noted that approximately 500,000 euros in funding each year from the BMBF for the German Council of Social and Economic Data are counted as part of the SOEP Department's budget. However, these funds have no relevance at all to the SOEP Department's research or service tasks.

In 2008 about 85 % of the relevant third-party funds came from the German Federal Government with smaller funds (141,700 euros in total) being raised from the DFG, the EU, and private sector companies or foundations (e.g., Volkswagen Foundation and Hans-Böckler Foundation). However, the department reports that, in 2009, an amount of approximately 400,000 euros is certain to be obtained from these latter sources.

One disadvantage for the SOEP Department that arises from its status as an “independent department” of the DIW is that it is not in its own right an institution of the WGL. This implies that it cannot apply independently for special “competitive funding” under the Pact for Research and Innovation, which offers the chance to apply for funding for innovative and risky research or service improvements. Instead, the DIW

departments take turns applying for this fund which means that the SOEP Department only has the opportunity to apply on its own every seventh year.

### **IV.3. Personnel**

As of December 31, 2008, the SOEP Department employed 23 academic staff and five nonacademic support staff. Of the 23 scientists, six were doctoral students. Of the 16 academic staff possessing a doctoral degree, 75 % were male and 50 % were between 30 and 40 years of age (with the other 50 % falling within the 40 to 60 years age range). Ten of these employees have worked at the institution for less than ten years, four employees more than 15 years (three out of these four received a “Second Ph.D.” [*Habilitation*]). Appendix 2 shows that the majority of the scientific full-time equivalent positions are at the pay level of BAT Ib and BAT IIa. Two staff members hold joint appointments with universities in Berlin.

The table also reveals that, due to a mismatch between positions assigned to the department (*Stellenplan*) and actual funding, not all available positions can actually be filled. Appendix 3 details the distribution of the scientific staff across the two working groups of the department. In addition to the regular scientific positions, there are five permanent visiting fellows in the department.

It should be noted that – based on a personal decision of the President of the DIW – the DIW provides 165,000 euros for personnel to the SOEP Department. It thereby continues to deliver the same level of personnel support as it did during the time up until 2002 when the SOEP Department was still funded by the DFG. However, the DIW is under no legal obligation to do so.

The SOEP Department recruits its staff mainly from universities. The department mentions some difficulties recruiting new staff due to the fact that the actual time available for research is perceived as too short. Young researchers reportedly would like to spend at least 50 % of their time on research as compared to the 35 % that the department can actually offer. Also, the TVöD earnings scheme is perceived as inappropriate for the research sector as it impedes mobility of senior staff between universities and non-university research institutions. All hiring decisions are subject to the final approval by the President of the DIW Berlin.

The SOEP Department perceives a need for increases in the numbers of both its scientific and support staff. The former should particularly focus on service tasks and support for the department heads including communication with advisory boards and evaluation bodies. The latter would mainly be needed for web services and public relations.

#### **IV.4. Premises, Facilities, Consumables**

The SOEP Department rents 26 office rooms with a total of 45 desk spaces from the DIW Berlin. Given current staff and student numbers, this is perceived as a serious lack of space, due to a general shortage of office space at the DIW. The situation regarding small and medium sized seminar rooms is perceived to be good. However, there are no such rooms on the floor where the department sits, a fact which renders informal meetings impossible and requires a certain level of organisations even for events like coffee break meetings. The largest available room is the Schumpeter Hall with room for approximately 120 persons. Larger seminar and conference rooms are available outside the DIW in Berlin at rates that are perceived to be very reasonable.

IT facilities at the DIW are described as excellent. However, the SOEP Department observes that it has no control over planning of IT support nor has it influence on investment decisions in this area. The SOEP Department perceives its resources for consumables as sufficient.

The SOEP Department claims that the level and breakdown of overhead costs to be paid to the DIW and the allocation of rooms and technical and administrative support provided by the DIW are in need of clarification and written agreement.

#### **IV.5. Quality Assurance**

Apart from the seven-yearly evaluations by the WGL, the SOEP is under the oversight of the DIW Scientific Advisory Board. A subcommittee of this board is charged with giving scientific advice to the SOEP Department concerning its research performance. In addition, starting in 2009, there will be a SOEP Survey Committee of nine scientists appointed by the DIW Board of Trustees who will advise the SOEP Department in its data collection and service tasks. There is an agreement between the DIW Executive Board and the SOEP Department that meetings of the SOEP

Survey Committee will be organised by the SOEP Department with the intention of improving the institutional oversight procedures for the SOEP Department.

The SOEP Department usually conducts a biannual user survey to elicit user evaluations of its service function. Of 833 users contacted for the last survey in 2006, 147 users replied and, on average, rated their overall satisfaction with the SOEP as 7.7 on a scale from 0 (*not at all satisfied*) to 10 (*very satisfied*). However, the SOEP Department did not report any concrete consequences drawn from the survey results and believes that informal exchanges at conferences and policy forums can provide better insights into the desires of current and potential users.

The SOEP Department conducts annual surveys among the participants of its user workshops for national users at DIW Berlin and its workshops for international users at Cornell University (USA). The SOEP Department reports that participants have been reporting high levels of satisfaction and provided valuable recommendations for further improvements.

In terms of monetary incentives, a small part of the DIW budget is distributed to departments based on prior performance measured by publications in journals listed in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). Each of the seven departments contributes 30,000 euros to this competition. The SOEP Department reports a net gain of approximately 10,000 euros per year from this competition (a gross amount of 40,000 euros).

## **A.V. National and International Context**

### **V.1. Other National Panel Studies**

There exists a varied landscape of national panel studies under academic direction. Some of the major studies include the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), the National Educational Panel Study, the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), and the PAIRFAM study. The panel study on the “Labor Market and Social Security” (*Panel Arbeitsmarkt und soziale Sicherung*, PASS) and the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) are not under academic direction and are not designed as long-running panel studies.

Although each study has a particular focus that distinguishes it from the other studies, there are many methodological issues common to all of these studies. The

SOEP Department reports that in February 2009, it began to cooperate more closely with other major national panel studies under academic direction to establish a common project on "Panel Survey Methodology". The department also reports that it is planning a Data Service Center together with other providers and users of longitudinal data in Berlin (in particular together with the WZB and the Humboldt University Berlin).

## **V.2. International Household Panel Studies**

The SOEP Department considers the SOEP Study to be one of the leading international household panel studies. Other major studies of that kind include the US Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), the British Household Panel Study (BHPS) and the future UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA), and the Swiss Household Panel (SHP). It is these studies (plus the Canadian Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, SLID, which is not under academic direction) and the SOEP Study that contribute to the CNEF based at Cornell University. Its data are designed to support cross-national research by providing equivalently defined variables with a focus on income information, employment, demographics, household structure, health, and satisfaction in different life domains.

The SOEP Study also contributes data to the database of the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) and the Luxembourg Wealth Study (LWS), to the Consortium of Household Panels for European Socio-Economic Research (CHER) coordinated by CEPS/INSTEAD, and to the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), which ran from 1994 to 2001 and was directed by EUROSTAT.

## **V.3. Cooperations**

The SOEP Department has a broad range of formal and informal collaborations both at the national and the international level. Formal agreements have been signed between the SOEP Department and the German Centre of Gerontology (*Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen*, DZA) in Berlin and between the SOEP Department and the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences (BIGSSS). Collaborations based on joint research projects exist with a broad range of universities and non-university research institutions.

The collaborations with universities include the Humboldt University Berlin, the research group on geriatrics at the Charité Berlin, the University of Bonn, Cornell University, the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Essex University, the London School of Economics, Saarland University, and the University of Zürich. An application submitted for two subprojects within a DFG-funded special research unit (Sfb 882, “From heterogeneities to social inequality”) in Bielefeld is under review.<sup>36</sup>

Collaborations with non-university research institutions currently encompass projects with the Max Planck Institutes for Human Development and for Molecular Genetics (both in Berlin), the Center Marc Bloch in Berlin, the Research Data Center of the German Social Security Administration in Berlin, the WZB in Berlin, the Danish National Centre for Social Research in Copenhagen, the Luxembourg Income Study/Luxembourg Wealth Study, the Centre for European Economic Research (*Zentrum für Europäische Wirtschaftsforschung*, ZEW) in Mannheim, and the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (*Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften*, GESIS) in Mannheim.

Together with ten other European partners, the SOEP Department was involved in the AIM-AP (Accurate Income Measurement for the Assessment of Public Policies) project running from February 2006 to January 2009 and funded under the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission. It is also involved in EURO-MOD, a multi-country Europe-wide tax-benefit model, with renewed funding by the European Commission starting in 2009.

Further collaborations exist with the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin and CEPS/INSTEAD in Luxembourg, two not-for-profit organisations, as well as with the German and European Central Banks. Apart from the contract with TNS Infratest to conduct the SOEP Study fieldwork and a cooperation with STATISTA, an online portal providing statistical information, there are no collaboration agreements with private companies.

There are two joint appointments of professors – one with the Free University Berlin and one with the Technical University Berlin. Professors with joint appointments are regular professors at their universities, but with reduced teaching commitments. One honorary professorship is held at the Free University Berlin.

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36 Reference date: 1 April 2009.

## A.VI. The Future of the SOEP Department

Although the SOEP Department perceives little overlap between its own work and the work of the DIW, it regards this to be a strength of its current affiliation rather than a weakness. The perceived danger of close thematic fit to the host institution lies in a weakening of the multidisciplinary character of the SOEP Department when the host institution asserts too much influence. The SOEP Department believes the DIW should be a host and customer rather than facilitator of its work and, in principle, considers the DIW with its research-driven approach to policy advice to be a good host institution. Also, the department perceives the research environment in Berlin to be an asset. Cooperation contracts of the DIW exist with almost all universities in Berlin and Brandenburg (Free University Berlin, Technical University Berlin, Humboldt University Berlin, European University Viadrina, and Potsdam University). The SOEP Department has an additional cooperation agreement with the German Centre of Gerontology (*Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen, DZA*), Berlin. Finally, the SOEP Department holds that the stable organisational environment needed for a long-running study can be more easily achieved at a non-university research institution and believes that, after the establishment of the SOEP Survey Committee, the past governance problems noticed in past external evaluations have been resolved.

Still, as mentioned above, the SOEP Department perceives a need to clarify the mutual obligations and the status of the SOEP Department within the DIW Berlin.

The SOEP Department intends to play an increasing role in developing the research infrastructure in the German social and economic sciences. It is represented in the RatSWD and thus engaged in relevant discussions. The three heads of the department also serve on boards and committees overseeing other panel studies and other kinds of research infrastructures.

The department further recognises that large research infrastructures are increasingly planned and financed at the European level. In particular, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (*Europäisches Strategieforum für Forschungsinfrastrukturen, ESFRI*) is a relevant institution when it comes to creating the future infrastructure landscape serving research in the social and economic sciences. Although the SOEP Department supports the efforts of the RatSWD to engage in

such planning processes, the department believes that it will need additional funding to free enough personnel resources to actively engage in these processes.

## **A.VII. The Future Development of the SOEP Study**

The SOEP Department believes that the results of the SOEP Study will continue to be in high demand in the research and policy advisory community. The department proposes a number of methodological and content-related innovations and structural changes to adapt to the requirements of future scientific inquiry. It also highlights plans and developments regarding its service infrastructure. The department plans to discuss all of these changes with the SOEP Survey Committee in detail. It further intends to implement the modifications concerning data collection in close co-operation with the fieldwork company.

### **VII.1. Methodological and Content-Related Innovations**

#### **a) Survey Content**

Due to changes in society and, in particular, the effective legal framework, the SOEP Study questions need to be updated continually. At the start of the survey, there were no such things as “parental leave”, “early retirement”, or “part-time jobs”. Future revisions will, for example, have to adapt to changes in the educational system, especially with respect to tertiary education, where new degrees such as BA and MA have recently been introduced.

The SOEP Department believes that due to the increasing number of observations per individual and the availability of intergenerational biographies within the SOEP Study, analyses focusing on the life course as well as on intergenerational transmission processes are on the advance. Above and beyond analyses of the selectivity of fertility and longevity, the foetal phase of life and the early childhood of children born into the panel as well as late life and death will play an increasing role in the SOEP Study. For the former, questions about height and weight of newborns, their health status, breast feeding status, and care situation have been included in the SOEP Study since 2003. As far as the last phase of life is concerned, the department reports that questions and respective instruments (so-called “exit interviews”) asking, for example, who died in the past twelve months and whether the person lived in the same household are currently being tested. In addition, there are questions about the

closeness of the relationship to the deceased and the cause of death. At the end of the life course, the SOEP Department also believes that there is a need for better coverage of institutionalised elderly people and, in particular, the transition from living in a private household to living in a care institution. The department reports that the latter need has been identified in part due to recommendations by SOEP Study users.

The SOEP Department concludes that, in the middle of the life course, improved questions on income, savings, and wealth as well as psychological constructs will play a central role; especially specific questions on central life events such as marriage, divorce, and entry into and exit from unemployment (event-triggered questions) are expected to be increasingly relevant.

The SOEP Department considers the concept of “time use” as being of continuing high importance. In particular, time use in a broad sense is a predominant theme of the analyses for which international users request SOEP Study data. Recent developments in economics, sociology, and psychology will allow the concept of time use to be described in more detail and the SOEP Study will be adjusted accordingly.

In general, the increasing focus on people’s personal, family, and household networks is seen as a development to which the SOEP Study must adapt. These networks are not limited to the households themselves, but extend into the organisational environment. Independent of the main SOEP Study, the SOEP Department reports that it has successfully pretested concepts to collect supplementary data by carrying out its own surveys on contextual data. Starting in 2011, specific surveys can gather data on organisational contexts such as childcare centres, schools, and workplaces.

The SOEP Department also recognises an increasing demand for data at the individual level. This includes data on cognitive and non-cognitive skills, personal traits, and biological indicators, so-called biomarkers. In this context, the collection of saliva samples is currently being pretested. Although the SOEP Study is in no way intended to replace an independent health survey, the SOEP Department believes that biomarkers that supplement social and behavioural science analyses can be highly useful. The collection of biomarkers should, according to the SOEP Department, be seen

as a means of better understanding the social and economic behaviour observed within a survey like the SOEP Study.

Finally, the SOEP Department has laid the groundwork for surveying respondents who have moved abroad. Those who have left Germany since 2004 have been contacted, and surveys have been conducted in writing. The number of cases so far is minimal, but new study concepts are currently being tested with the intention of obtaining a clearer picture of emigrants' experiences abroad, their integration into the new host country, and their eventual re-immigration back into Germany.

### **b) Linking Panel Data to Other Data Sources**

The SOEP Department and its collaborators are currently testing whether data from the SOEP Study can be usefully linked to social security register data, remote sensing data, and organisational surveys. The department intends to provide linkage to data about surrounding institutions, neighbourhoods, the quality of the natural environment, and local weather or microclimate.

One area in which high-quality administrative data already exist is on the income of employees whose employers are paying social insurance contributions for them and on precise periods of employment and unemployment. Linking the indicators obtained by the SOEP Study with available administrative data would allow for new types of analyses, but such linkage requires establishing stable co-operations with external partners. In addition, whether respondents are willing to accept such linkage of their personal data is unclear. An alternative approach, which is currently being tested in collaboration with the Research Data Center of the German Pension Fund, consists of matching data at the level of statistical imputation of values rather than at the level of individual microdata.

### **c) New Survey Methods**

Tests concerning the use of new modes of data collection are also currently ongoing. In this context, the SOEP Department, together with the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, tests the potential use of web-based interviewing and the use of mobile phones as measurement devices. In terms of the type of data elicited from SOEP Study respondents, the SOEP Department expects that a combination of quantitative and, increasingly, qualitative interviews will emerge. In this context, the

department reports being open for collaborations with qualitatively oriented sociologists.

The department believes that event-triggered questions and especially experience sampling techniques posing questions before and after events like marriage, divorce, or unemployment will play an increasing role in the future. The same, according to the SOEP Department, would hold true for intervention studies which could, for example, be used to examine the effect of interventions in early childhood on later educational and occupational success.

According to the SOEP Department, such intervention studies should be conducted independently of the main SOEP Study with the main study serving as a well-documented control group representative of the population. Similar to intervention studies, the SOEP Department predicts a growing demand for the combination of surveys with behavioural experiments. In the latter context, one approach currently tested is vignette methodology.

The SOEP Department further believes that, in the area of fieldwork, matrix sampling and drop-off questionnaires will become more prevalent. This implies that not all questions are posed to every respondent, but that, in the case of matrix sampling, questions are randomly allocated to respondents in order to reduce the response burden. Missing values are then statistically imputed. The SOEP Department intends to await initial results of a feasibility study conducted by the UKHLS before making further decisions on this issue. The department predicts that dependent and tailored interviewing will allow further matching of questions to specific respondents to obtain a maximum amount of information.

In order to increase response rates, the SOEP Department believes that monetary incentives for participation in surveys will be more frequently used in the future. Researchers affiliated with the SOEP Department currently test the effects of such incentives. The department plans a pretest of the use of incentives in mid-2009.

#### **d) Oversampling of Specific Groups and Twin Sample**

The SOEP Department predicts that oversampling of groups of particular scientific or political interest will become a common feature of longitudinal surveys. The SOEP Study has repeatedly drawn samples of specific groups of interest in the past (see

subsamples B, D, and G). In most studies certain groups, immigrants or ethnic subgroups are oversampled. The department believes that, for example, the oversampling of twins and adopted children will also be of particular scientific interest because data from these groups allow addressing questions in the field of behavioural genetics. However, in the future, oversampling of specific groups of interest could, according to the SOEP Department be done in independent studies related to the SOEP Study rather than in the main study itself. The SOEP Study can then serve as a representative reference group. The SOEP Survey Group intends to provide such related studies with tailored support in data collection, documentation, and distribution.

**e) Paradata**

Paradata are empirical measurements about the process of creating survey data. They consist of visual observations or interviewer notes, administrative records of the survey institute, computer-generated measures about the process of data collection, or external supplementary data about sample cases. The SOEP Department intends to provide a broader range of such methodologically relevant data in the near future.

**VII.2. Structural Changes**

**a) Increase in Sample Size**

The SOEP Department reports that, in the short run, a sample size of 10,000 households is likely to be the minimum acceptable size for users of SOEP Study data. However, in the next few years, as household sizes decrease, the department estimates an absolute minimum number of 12,500 households to ensure a minimum of about 20,000 adult respondents.

In order to improve the statistical power of the SOEP Study, the SOEP Department believes that, ideally, a minimum case number of about 500 persons per birth and age cohort are required. This implies a cross-sectional sample size of about 20,000 households. Such an enlargement would also assure that, taking the effects of sample attrition into account, each cohort will remain large enough to conduct meaningful analyses even after considerable periods of time. A positive side-effect of such an enlargement, according to the department, would be an improved potential for analy-

ses of relatively small groups within the population like, for example, single parents or specific immigrant groups. It would also increase the potential for regional analyses.

**b) Innovation Panel**

Current plans for the SOEP Study include the addition of an “innovation panel” run as a long-term panel that is representative of the entire population in a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective. According to the SOEP Department, this should not only enable the testing of new survey content, but should allow to better address theory-driven research questions required for testing specific research questions of individual users or small groups of users. These questions may in addition require new measurement concepts (the surveying of biomarkers, qualitative surveys, and experiments). A similar approach has been used by UKHLS with a sample of 1,500 households and by the Dutch MESS (Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences) Project with its LISS (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences) Panel, which includes 5,000 households. The department suggests that the SOEP Study subsamples E and H be included in this innovation panel to allow exploiting the specific power of longitudinal studies with much prior information about respondents. Ideally, from the perspective of the SOEP Department, further samples should be added to reach a sample size for the innovation panel of 5,000 households. The SOEP Department believes that a Europe-wide innovation panel would be ideal for further advancing cutting-edge research in the social and behavioural sciences.

**c) Increased Sharing of Responsibility for Survey Planning**

To date, the research carried out by the members of the SOEP Department has largely matched the content of the SOEP Study. In the long term, however, the department believes that it will be unable to supply all the expertise needed in all additional research fields. Therefore, intensive cooperation between the SOEP Department, the fieldwork organisation, and other national and international bodies would become more important. The SOEP Department suggests that some collaborative centre would be helpful that would allow a wider circle to share the scientific responsibility for and provide expertise on particular parts of the SOEP Study. The department believes that a major step towards such increased collaboration could be an “Innovation Committee” consisting of SOEP Department members and collaborators

willing to invest time and possibly also funds in the further development of the SOEP Study.

### **VII.3. Development of Service Infrastructure**

The SOEP Department believes that there are a number of service-related changes that will improve the user perception of the SOEP Study. These include:

- *Improved remote access:* The SOEPremote system is under increasing demand and will be continually updated and developed in line with recommendations by a RatSWD working group dealing with issues of remote access.
- *Data format:* The so-called “long” data format (with observations from successive years written in the same column rather than in the same row as in the “wide” data format) is, according to the SOEP Department, becoming increasingly important. At the moment, the PanelWhiz software supports the set-up of this data format for one common software package, but a new database providing this format for all statistical software packages is perceived as necessary.
- *Data documentation:* The SOEP Department is a member of the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) Alliance and intends to further improve metadata on the SOEP Study. To this end, the department intends to continue to monitor the development of standards for technical documentation of social science data like DDI or Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) as well as outcomes of the work of the Open Data Foundation. The SOEP Department further aims to provide more detailed background information to researchers on the specific questions used in the study. Some indicators have been documented in the electronic Compendium of Social Science Items and Scales (*Zusammenstellung sozialwissenschaftlicher Items und Skalen*, ZIS) hosted by GESIS.
- *Data imputation:* The SOEP Department perceives increasing demand, in particular by educational researchers, for multiply imputed data and intends to further improve its service in this respect.
- *International harmonisation:* The SOEP Department aims to make its data increasingly more comparable and accessible at the international level.
- *Capacity-building:* There is reportedly an increased demand for “campus files” of SOEP Study data that can be used without privacy concerns to train students in the analysis of longitudinal data.

- *Provision of Advice:* The SOEP Department intends to meet an increasing demand for consultancy about the design and implementation of new panel studies. In particular, the department believes that the SOEP Study dataset will have an important future function in providing reference data or control samples for specialised surveys. To allow for optimal collaboration, the provision of advice on the implementation of such studies is needed.

The SOEP Department reports to be actively engaged in observing and developing these service-related improvements.

## **B. Statement and Recommendations**

### **B.I. Core Tasks and Work Areas**

In the 26 years of its existence, the SOEP Study has firmly established itself as one of the most prominent and important research infrastructures for the German social and economic sciences. As the longest running large-scale national data collection, the SOEP Study has become a highly valuable resource for diverse research fields ranging from economics, sociology, and political sciences to educational sciences, psychology, and health sciences. It has not only significantly improved the international visibility of German research in these areas but, from early on, has built an international user base making it a prime object of international collaborative research efforts. The large number of high-impact publications based on the SOEP Study speaks to its eminent value as a research tool. It also demonstrates that the SOEP Study can be considered one of the leading international household panels.

The SOEP Department has proven that it is able to maintain and further raise the high standard of the SOEP Study by meticulously and consistently developing the survey. The department managed to strike a good balance between introducing innovative elements while, at the same time, protecting the sensitive nature of the longitudinal dataset. The main plans for the future development of the SOEP Study include doubling the sample size and establishing an innovation panel run by the SOEP Department. These plans are overall well-founded and convincing. They will need to be considered in the context of the broader landscape of research infrastructures in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences.

Besides providing an essential service to the scientific community, the SOEP Department engages in self-directed research and has repeatedly demonstrated that it is capable of producing output of a very high quality. It thereby provides a positive example of a WGL institution that productively combines its service- and its research-related tasks. The SOEP Department is further engaged in teaching students and in training early career researchers.

Starting from this highly positive assessment of the SOEP Department's past performance, the current recommendations focus on considerations concerning the future development of the SOEP Study and Department.

## **I.1. Developing the SOEP Study**

The main service-related tasks of the SOEP Department include the continuous methodological and thematic development and the practical implementation of the SOEP Study as well as distribution of the data to scientific users. The planning of this large-scale longitudinal study is characterised by two fundamental tensions: one between breadth and focus and the one between innovation and continuity.

### **a) Breadth versus Focus**

Given the limited amount of information that can be gathered from respondents, survey studies have to face a trade-off between a broad multidisciplinary focus which risks research superficiality in any one area and a thematically more restricted focus with a higher level of scientific depth in the focal areas. The SOEP Study started out in the 1980s with a focus on socio-economic questions; in particular questions related to income dynamics within the household context. Since its establishment, it has continually broadened its focus to include questions relevant to a broad range of disciplines within the social and increasingly within the behavioural sciences. The current focus lies on questions of social and economic well-being in the individual life course within a household setting. Particular emphasis is placed on the tails of the life course and on analyses examining the individual in his or her familial and inter-generational context.

Compared to other national panel studies, the SOEP Study therefore has a relatively inclusive scope. Such an approach has its merits: The broad variable base can help to create new research questions that might not arise or would be impossible to address with a thematically more restricted study. It also invites researchers from a range of disciplines to pool their respective expertise and collaborate on research questions that cross disciplinary boundaries. On the other hand, there is also a possible problem of disciplinary overreach. As the SOEP becomes more relevant to researchers from the fields of, for example, psychology, educational sciences, or behavioural genetics, it might at the same time lose some of its appeal to its core user groups within sociology and economics.

To date, the SOEP Department has managed to strike a healthy balance between breadth and focus. However, the dynamic changes in scope, methodology, and content that can be expected in the near future call for additional efforts of the SOEP

Department to explicitly formulate their long-term goals for the SOEP Study and strategically reflect on how any tightening, broadening, or shift in focus will affect the overall identity of the study as well as its changing place within the national and international context. Doing this will enable the SOEP Study to retain its unique position within the research infrastructure landscape. The formulation of a mission statement and the further development of the governance structure recommended to sharpen and develop such an identity are discussed below.

### **b) Innovation versus Continuity**

In order to make full use of the longitudinal nature of a household panel study, there is a need to collect the same measures over extended periods of time. This conservatism has to be balanced against the requirement to remain open to both thematic and methodological innovations. This dilemma is usually resolved by maintaining a continuous set of core measures and another set of optional measures that is used to introduce innovative elements such as new survey items, behavioural measures, or genetic assessments.

The SOEP Department successfully managed to balance innovation and continuity in the past. To continue to do so, the further development of a more explicit identity of the SOEP Study set down in a mission statement as well as a governance structure supporting the careful development of the survey will again prove helpful.

### **c) Mission Statement**

The tensions between breadth and focus and between innovation and continuity should be addressed by additional efforts to formulate an explicit long-term strategy for the SOEP Study. This strategy should identify the unique features of the study compared to other national and international surveys such as the NEPS, PAIRFAM, SHARE, PSID, or the UKHLS.<sup>37</sup> In a national context, such identifying features particularly include the possibility to analyse long-term effects in a household and inter-generational setting. The SOEP Department should formulate the scientific goal structure of the SOEP Study, identifying the core research programmes and overarching societal questions (e.g., education, migration, work life, family life, demographic development) it primarily intends to address. Of course, such a mission statement should not preclude further change, but should serve as an orientation to

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37 See Appendix 6 for further international household panel studies.

both the SOEP Department and outside researchers when considering the range of questions that can be addressed using the SOEP Study.

Although the broad nature of the SOEP Study dataset is recognised, any detailed questions requiring additional measures that fall outside the remit of the mission statement should be addressed in related studies rather than in the main SOEP Study.

#### **d) Core Panel versus Related Studies**

“Related studies” share a number of survey items with the main SOEP Study and often use it as a reference sample. Examples of such studies include the gerontological studies COGITO and BASE II as well as “Pro Kind”, an intervention study in early childhood. The SOEP Study will also be used as a reference dataset for the NEPS and PAIRFAM (see section A.II.2 a for further details regarding related studies). Strong and productive collaborations of the SOEP Department are based on such studies.

Related studies are important tools to pretest methodological and thematic innovations before including them in the core study. For example, a related study that tests the viability of mobile phones for survey data collection is carried out at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. There is a high level of quality control for these studies because third-party funds need to be acquired to finance data collection. They therefore provide flexible tools that allow addressing innovative research questions without the same level of long-term commitment of resources as the main SOEP Study. In that sense, related studies partly fulfil similar functions to the proposed innovation panel. Some of the innovations coming out of such collaborative efforts (e.g., a measure of risk-taking) have been included in the main SOEP Study and have been adopted by other national and international surveys.

However, the unstable funding base of such related studies can also pose serious problems. In particular, some future plans such as, for example, the oversampling of twins or the longitudinal investigation of gene-environment interactions require high-trust funding arrangements. Also, the number of questions related studies can address and the number of external researchers they involve are relatively low. Related studies therefore cannot provide the same benefits as a more inclusive innovation panel.

### e) Twins and Genetic Markers

The SOEP Department follows three parallel strategies to become more attractive for researchers in behavioural genetics:

1. By their nature, longitudinal household panels include a large number of pairings of relatives such as parents and offspring, siblings, cousins, and others. Including the relevant pointers in the SOEP Study dataset will allow analysing the data with a focus on information on genetic similarity inherent in the existing information on familial relationships.
2. This opportunity will be strengthened by the addition of a larger twin sample than is currently available in the SOEP study. The proposal to do this in a related study that is under the academic direction of experts in this particular field and does not redirect resources from the core study, can only enhance the value of these much-needed data and analyses. As a first step, a convenience sample of twins has already been asked SOEP Study questions. Building up the related study will require recruiting a representative sample of twins based on register data. Such a related twin study would initially be of limited value because no longitudinal data would be available. If engaging in this, it will therefore be important to ensure comparatively long-term third-party funding. The DFG has excellent tools at its disposal to provide such funding.<sup>38</sup>
3. The SOEP Department collaborates with researchers at the Max Planck Institute of Human Development, Berlin, who have access to samples of participants who have provided their DNA. Using the SOEP Study questionnaire to collect data from these participants will benefit both collaboration partners. There are no immediate plans to collect saliva samples<sup>39</sup> from the entire SOEP Study sample. Instead, the SOEP Department intends to move in that direction in concert with other international household panels. This conservative approach is motivated by concerns about the financial costs of collecting DNA samples and about possible increases in panel attrition due to the request for saliva samples. However, initial pretest results do not support the fear of increased attrition as a consequence of saliva sample collection. The SOEP Department should therefore move forward

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38 Kämper, E.; Niessen, M.: Developing the research infrastructure in the social sciences. The role and contribution of the German Research Foundation, in: Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten: Working Paper, 50, Berlin 2008 ([http://www.ratswd.de/download/workingpapers2008/50\\_08.pdf](http://www.ratswd.de/download/workingpapers2008/50_08.pdf)).

39 Allowing DNA analysis.

with further tests to explore the feasibility of DNA collection for the entire SOEP Study along with a consideration of the scientific uses of these data. Conducting tests in further related studies, the innovation panel, or SOEP Study refresher subsamples that will be added in the future will not jeopardize the data that have been collected to date and will provide a testing ground to get a better picture of the costs and benefits of collecting DNA samples. Observing international developments cannot fully substitute these own tests.

The SOEP Department is aware that it requires external expertise and support in deciding how to further proceed in these areas. It has been successful in building a strong network of collaborators who possess the required knowledge and skills. A non-permanent advisory group on genetic elements in the SOEP Study could help to identify ways to move ahead in this domain.

**f) Geo-Coded Data**

An increased matching of SOEP Study data with geo-coded spatial data on social, institutional, cultural, and economic framework factors promises to generate a large number of new research questions. The SOEP Department should increase its promising efforts in this area.

**g) Imputed Values**

The provision of imputed data is only recommendable if there is complete and user-friendly documentation on their computation and if the raw data are easily available as an alternative, thereby allowing the user to make an informed decision on whether to use the imputed or raw values.

**I.2. Conducting the SOEP Study**

**a) Methodological Innovations**

In general, the SOEP Department is on top of new developments as far as modes of data collection are concerned. The department should continue to investigate possibilities to use new technologies (such as the internet or mobile phones) to collect data. These new possibilities are currently not fully exploited.

An important issue concerning data collection are the high demands placed on participants' time. The current time demand on respondents is approximately 40 min of individual response time plus 10 to 15 min on the household situation. Matrix sampling could be one way to lower the burden on respondents. However, it has not yet been applied to any major household panel study and should therefore be considered with utmost caution. A careful examination of test results by the group responsible for the UKHLS will only provide first indications on whether such a method can be successfully applied to household panels. Plans to apply matrix sampling should also be discussed and tested for acceptance with scientific users of the SOEP Study because appropriately handling the resulting dataset will require higher levels of skills on the side of users than more traditional datasets.

The feasibility of the use of dependent interviewing should be further explored. Answers from previous interviews could be fed forward and used to tailor the wording and routing of survey questions. Again, possible detrimental effects on attrition and technical problems when not using computer-aided interviewing should be carefully weighed against the significant advantages of a lower response burden.

Another possible way to decrease the number of items asked of participants that should not be prematurely excluded would be to move to biannual data collection for some of the variables. Again, both the effects on the respondents and on the users of the SOEP Study data need to be considered before introducing such a change.

The leadership of the SOEP Department carefully considers all of these innovations, and has consistently managed to take prudent decisions to the benefit of the SOEP Study. However, to guarantee stability and prudence in the long-term, an institutionalised form of peer guidance is essential. Therefore, reform of the SOEP Department's governance structure has a high priority (see B.II.3 for further details on the governance of the SOEP Department and SOEP Study).

## **b) TNS Infratest Sozialforschung**

The SOEP Department has a long-standing and productive cooperation with TNS Infratest Sozialforschung, its fieldwork agency. The history of this relationship can be considered a positive example of collaboration between a public and a private institution: User service, survey development, and research are carried out by the SOEP Department, whereas TNS Infratest Sozialforschung carries responsibility for the or-

ganisation and running of the fieldwork activities. Together, the partners have been able to jointly introduce a large number of methodological innovations posing challenges to the fieldwork such as, for example, behavioural studies, cognitive tests, and mother-child questionnaires.

However, a successful past should not imply a “free ride” for the future. Quality control of the fieldwork activities of TNS Infratest Sozialforschung will need to be continuously developed. Given increasing demand for fieldwork services by new panel studies such as NEPS or PAIRFAM and the small number of companies able to offer a high-quality service, those responsible for running academic studies will need to increase their efforts to ensure high data quality even under oligopolistic market conditions.<sup>40</sup>

### **I.3. Extending the SOEP Study**

#### **a) Increasing the Sample Size**

Apart from the general benefits of decreasing total survey error, four main arguments support the SOEP Department’s plan to gradually increase the sample size of the SOEP Study over the coming decade to around 20,000 households in a cross-section:

1. A minimum of 500 respondents per age cohort is advisable when investigating the effects of specific historic events (e.g., a change in retirement policies or a change in the educational system) on two neighbouring age cohorts for whom the event has different consequences (e.g., the last cohort to which a change in the educational system does not apply and the first cohort to which it does).
2. Longitudinal analyses of causal effects require a sufficiently large sample (in combination with low attrition rates) to retain a sizeable number of the original respondents even after extended periods of time.
3. A larger sample allows investigations targeting small subgroups of the population such as migrants or single parents. The SOEP Study has a long tradition of over-sampling such groups (e.g., migrants, high-income households). However, given

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40 For a detailed description of the market situation see: Mohler, P. P.; von Rosenblatt, B.: Infrastructure for large-scale survey measurement: Cooperation between academic research and private-sector agencies, in: Rat für Sozial und Wirtschaftsdaten: Working Paper Series, No. 69, 2009.

the fact that new societal developments are not foreseeable, a larger sample would allow a more flexible investigation of the history and current status of any group that moves into the focus of societal attention.

4. The SOEP Study is increasingly used as a reference sample for related studies. Stable estimates based on a large sample are particularly relevant in such a context.

The SOEP Department has made a strong case for an increase of the sample to 20,000 households. Given the recent upgrade of the BHPS to the UKHLS with a sample of 40,000 households, some level of expansion is also called for in terms of the international competitiveness of the SOEP Study.

There are, however, a number of important issues that need to be considered before implementing the increase in sample size.

First, the SOEP Department should further elaborate on the substantive research questions that its users will be able to address with a larger sample. This should be done in concert with the development of a mission statement and the identification of core research programmes for the SOEP Study.

Second, the SOEP Department should closely liaise with those responsible for other large-scale survey studies (ESS, GLES, NEPS, PAIRFAM, SHARE) about ways to ensure the availability of the increased demands for fieldwork capacity. Although the two to three commercial survey institutes able to offer the required services will likely build up the necessary infrastructure if they believe there is sustainable demand for it, this process will require some time. Also, the expansion of fieldwork capacity will carry particular threats to data quality (e.g., the involvement of a large number of inexperienced interviewers). Finally, there is a danger that the funding agencies will be faced with rising costs for data collection due to the high demand for and limited supply of these services. Promising initial steps to coordinate the approaches of the different studies should be further developed with high priority.

Third, given resource constraints within the SOEP Department there may be tensions between efforts targeted at increasing the sample size and working on a number of other issues for which further improvement is possible. The SOEP Department should continue working on maintaining or improving the response rate of the exist-

ing sample. The department should also further explore ways to collect more data from the existing participants using new incentive schemes and data collection techniques. In particular, web-based data collection might help to reduce attrition. Weighing the resources and attention devoted to these areas against each other will benefit from an institutionalised form of peer guidance. The demonstration of a sustainable governance structure will therefore greatly support the case for an increase in sample size.

In sum, an enlargement of the sample to 20,000 households is both reasonable and scientifically promising. On the basis of the above arguments, it can be expected that the investment will substantially increase the scope and precision of the analyses that can be conducted using the SOEP Study. This will benefit both basic social science research and applied research focusing on concrete policy-advice. The outlined considerations will help in ensuring maximum benefit from the sample expansion.

#### **b) Creating an Innovation Panel**

The SOEP Department is faced with an increasing number of requests from leading researchers in the social and behavioural sciences to collect measures that are not standard in a survey and that pose possible risks in terms of sample attrition. These include, amongst others, behavioural measures, personality scales, and genetic data. Also, there is an increasing number of requests for the inclusion of experimental elements that offer the advantage of the controlled examination of causal effects.

Further, the SOEP Department perceives a greater need to pilot methodological innovations before including them in the SOEP Study. This serves to significantly reduce the risk of high drop-out following the introduction of new measures.

The SOEP Department therefore proposes to establish a new innovation panel of 5,000 households. This study, if implemented as proposed by the SOEP Department, would be unique at an international level. The Dutch LISS panel<sup>41</sup> infrastructure consists of a sample of 5,000 households, but data are collected fully online. The US-based Time-Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences (TESS)<sup>42</sup> is also conducted online and focuses on individuals rather than households. TESS offers an internet panel for experimental research, but studies do not usually capitalise on the longitu-

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41 See <http://www.liissdata.nl/liissdata/> v. 09.09.2009.

42 See <http://tess.experimentcentral.org/> v. 09.09.2009.

dinal nature of the panel and are run relatively independently from each other without the coordinated development of the panel as such. The UKHLS includes a smaller innovation panel<sup>43</sup> of 1,500 households. However, this panel is solely used for methodological research directly feeding into the main panel and is not open to external research projects in the same way as the SOEP innovation panel would be.<sup>44</sup>

The establishment of an innovation panel therefore promises the creation of an internationally unique research infrastructure that is able to attract first-class basic researchers for either direct involvement or collaboration. Such a panel would allow investigating a host of hypotheses about human social and economic life that cannot be addressed in existing panels due to the justified concern that they might risk damage to the longitudinal data collection. Importantly, it can be expected that an innovation panel would provide a serious impulse for interdisciplinary research endeavours investigating human life, its genetic preparedness, and the influence of its social and economic environment across the full life span of individuals extending even to inter-generational dynamics. In addition to sociologists, political scientists, and economists, it would be of interest to researchers in behavioural genetics, education research, social geography, media research, psychology, behavioural economics, and others.

The SOEP Department is not the only institution that could host an innovation panel but, due to its unique longstanding experience in conducting large-scale longitudinal studies, it is exceptionally well-placed to do so.

The main condition for the success of an innovation panel is that it serves the social and behavioural sciences at large and not only already established collaborators or specific groups of researchers. Hence, a necessary prerequisite for an innovation panel is an independent steering committee representing the full range of disciplines with a vested interest in the panel. The steering committee would take all decisions regarding the measures that should be included and the research questions that should be addressed by the innovation panel. All researchers in the respective fields must have the opportunity to propose research questions for the panel and the gov-

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43 See <http://research.understandingsociety.org.uk/methodological-research> v. 09.09.2009.

44 Burton, J.; Laurie, H.; Uhrig, S. C. N.: Understanding society: Some preliminary results from the wave 1 innovation panel, in: Understanding Society Working Paper Series, 2008-03, 2008 (<http://research.understandingsociety.org.uk/files/working-papers/2008/usocwp-2008-03.pdf>).

ernance structure must ensure that proposals are solely judged according to scientific merit and suitability for a longitudinal panel design.

It should be emphasized that an innovation panel would be a new and unique research infrastructure for the social, economic, and behavioural sciences. Moreover, both the SOEP Study and a future innovation panel would gain from each other. Nevertheless, precautions need to be taken to ensure that one study does not detract attention from the other. A well-functioning governance structure will help to convince possible funding bodies that the theory-driven research challenges of the innovation panel do not draw expertise and academic excitement away from the core SOEP Study. A detrimental effect of the kind envisaged here would possibly be the inclusion of the SOEP Study subsamples E and H in the innovation panel in order to be able to address longitudinal questions from the outset of the study. Indeed, it would take a very strong argument to justify this material damage to the core SOEP Study in terms of expected benefits for the innovation panel. In any case, the support of an advisory body for any such argument would be crucial for it to succeed.

#### **I.4. Providing Data and Advice to External Users**

##### **a) Frequency of Use and Publications**

The frequency of use estimates provided by different major longitudinal household panels are difficult to compare. Whereas some studies count download figures, the SOEP Department counts active user contracts. Whereas the SOEP Department distributes time series of mean ratings that are often used in policy and media contexts, other studies might have significant download incidents from these areas.

The SOEP Study should further increase its efforts to provide a service to the full range of possible academic users rather than only a select number of top researchers in the respective fields. The main indicator of the frequency of use should, however, be publications that directly draw on SOEP Study data and, in particular, those in peer-reviewed journals. The SOEP Study, the PSID, and the BHPS as the leading international household panels are used in research publications in such outlets approximately equally often.

**a) Data Distribution and User Support**

In the context of the Leibniz Association, two distinct categories of tasks are both counted as “service”. First, there is the servicing of the survey itself including its development and implementation. This constitutes the core service task of the SOEP Department. In order to be able to competently and successfully provide this kind of service to the academic community, a share of approximately 50 % of the time needs to be devoted to its own research. This is essential to be able to stay on top of thematic and methodological developments in the respective area. Second, there is the servicing of external users of the SOEP Study data by distributing the data and providing user advice. The staff of the SOEP Department organise data distribution themselves (in-house solution) rather than distributing the data through a data archive. The fact that data are made publicly available with a delay of only approximately six months and the high level of openness to external requests for data are positive features of the SOEP Department’s data distribution policy. Still, there are concerns about the amount of resources bound by the distribution of the data and about the user-friendliness of the distribution.

The SOEP Department distributes the data on DVD claiming this was easiest to control and therefore preferable for legal reasons. However, alternative options such as distributing data via the internet might pose technical next to the legal problems. The SOEP Department might not be best placed to address such technical challenges by itself. Consultations with other data providers facing similar challenges and with data archives on how to continually improve the user-friendliness of the data distribution are recommended. Although the data providers will always be best placed to offer user support, they themselves might profit from collaboration and support in both technical and legal questions related to data distribution. The distribution by DVD only is unlikely to be able to fully satisfy user requirements in the foreseeable future.

The plans of the SOEP Department to provide users with more extensive metadata documentation, more detailed paradata on the data collection process, more detailed documentation of various measurement scales, and English language fieldwork reports are timely measures that demonstrate that the SOEP Department is responsive to user requirements.

## b) Data Storage and Long-Term Archiving

To date, there is no viable solution for the long-term storage of social science research data. The providers of such data need to cooperate with partners such as the GESIS central archive (*GESIS Zentralarchiv*), the scientific libraries (including the German National Library), and the German Federal Archives at Koblenz to find a stable solution for this long-term problem.

In terms of data documentation, the SOEP Department's strategy to observe developments in the US and the UK with regard to the feasibility of handling complex longitudinal datasets using DDI standards is appropriate.

## I.5. Research Activities

The research performance of the SOEP Department has recently been positively evaluated by the Leibniz Association<sup>45</sup> and has been rated as *excellent* by the German Council of Science and Humanities<sup>46</sup>. There is no doubt that this positive evaluation based on high-impact publications mainly in sociology and economics still holds. If anything, there is reason to believe that the research output of the SOEP Department has further improved. Strong collaborations with psychologists and education researchers have led to additional prominent publications in these areas.

The research performance of the SOEP Department is not only a prerequisite of good service and high data quality, but also crucial in attracting and retaining highly qualified staff.

The convincing research performance has been achieved in spite of a recent increase in service-related tasks, for example connected to geo-coded data, capacity-building, and the provision of remote data access. If plans for future development of the SOEP Study materialise, these service-related tasks will further increase. In order to maintain the required level of research activities, the SOEP Department should make strong attempts to restore the ratio between service-related and research tasks to be roughly equal. Freeing up resources by outsourcing specific low-level service-related tasks as well as collaborating with other data providers in finding solutions to service-related problems might set free some limited additional resources. If these possibilities have been fully exploited and the service tasks still dominate in relation

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45 Leibniz-Gemeinschaft: Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Berlin 2005.

46 Wissenschaftsrat: Pilotstudie Forschungsrating: Empfehlungen und Dokumentation, Cologne 2008, p. 506.

to its own research, there is a strong case for approaching the funding bodies for additional support.

## **I.6. Teaching and Capacity-Building**

After having been rated as average in the area of teaching and training of young researchers in the last evaluation by the German Council of Science and Humanities<sup>47</sup>, the SOEP Department has invested additional efforts in this area. The department was involved in the foundation of the DIW Graduate Center of Economic and Social Research and closely cooperates with graduate schools at other institutions such as the BIGSSS (Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences), the BGSS (Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences), and LIFE at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin.

Two members of the SOEP Department hold joint appointments with Berlin universities and almost all post-doctoral and senior members of the department are engaged in university teaching. The department trains students as student assistants (approx. 20 per year), student interns (approx. 10 per year), and in summer schools. Mentoring programmes for post-doctoral staff members are in place. The SOEP is uniquely placed to introduce students to actual survey production processes and should extend its efforts to do so in cooperation with TNS Infratest Sozialforschung. Given its unique position, the SOEP Department should consider offering a two to three year modular training programme in the nature of an extended apprenticeship to train people whose main expertise would be in the practicalities of survey design and implementation.

As the SOEP Study evolves to include a broader range of disciplines, the SOEP Department should also move towards a more diverse disciplinary make-up. This is already partly the case at the level of graduate students, but should also become more visible at the level of academic staff. Starting at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels, gender diversity management should be more actively pursued.

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47 Wissenschaftsrat: Pilotstudie Forschungsrating: Empfehlungen und Dokumentation, Cologne 2008, p. 506.

## **B.II. Resources, Organisation and Governance**

### **II.1. Budget and Personnel**

The core funding and staffing of the SOEP Department are generally adequate. The department functions efficiently and there is little obvious room for freeing up resources with the mentioned possible exception concerning some tasks in the area of data distribution. An increase in resources might be warranted if internal efforts to create a balance between service and research tasks do not fully manage to restore equal weight between the two core work areas.

Any new tasks assigned to the SOEP Department will require additional financial and personnel resources.

Although the long-term nature of the service-related tasks of the SOEP Department require stable institutional funding, a certain amount of third-party funding is necessary to provide quality control and ensure a sufficient degree of innovation. The department should further increase its efforts to attract peer-reviewed third-party funding.

One source of further funding could be the Pact for Research and Innovation of the Leibniz Association even though the ambiguous status of the SOEP Department as an “independent department” of the DIW is currently an obstacle in this context. Nevertheless, first, the sources of funding of the DIW and the SOEP are different and, second, the SOEP is a ‘service unit’ and has as such a status distinct from that of the DIW which is a ‘research institution’. Therefore, a strong case can be made for allowing the SOEP Department to submit an independent application for funding by the “pact”.

### **II.2. Premises and Facilities**

The premises and facilities of the SOEP Department within the DIW are generally adequate. However, any increases in personnel will necessitate a proportionate increase in available office space.

### II.3. The SOEP Department within the DIW

Before its institutionalisation in the Leibniz Association in 2003, the SOEP Study was a research project of the DIW. It then became an “independent department” with its own budget funded differently from the rest of the DIW (the federal contribution to the Leibniz Association funding is made by the BMWi in the case of the DIW and by the BMBF in the case of the SOEP). The SOEP Department is the only “independent department” within the WGL and there is room for further clarification about what this concept implies. The ambiguous nature of the term “independent department” already highlights the tension between interdependence and independence that has characterised the relationship between the SOEP and the DIW for a number of years. These tensions have mainly played out in the following two domains:

1. At an administrative level, there is a considerable lack of clarity about mutual entitlements and obligations. In particular, this concerns the level of compensation that the SOEP Department needs to pay the DIW for its administrative and technical assistance and the provision of office space as well as the precise benefits it can expect in return.
2. At the level of governance, the history of the advisory structure of the SOEP Study and the SOEP Department reflects the tension between integration and independence. In particular, the question is whether the SOEP Department should have independent scientific advisory bodies or whether it should be governed by the DIW Scientific Advisory Board. Unfortunately, past external evaluations have come to different conclusions on this topic and thereby have not helped to alleviate the tension.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, there are a number of positive reasons for the SOEP Department to stay at the DIW:

1. The DIW is strongly engaged in providing policy-advice, an area that is also of significant relevance to the SOEP Department and in which there has been successful cooperation in the past.

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48 Leibniz-Gemeinschaft: Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Berlin 2005, and Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel, in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Vol. II, Cologne 1995, p. 161-182.

2. The research being conducted at the DIW is sufficiently close to profit from hosting the SOEP Study, but the culture to date has been such that no undue influence has been exerted on the SOEP Department in terms of shaping the content of the SOEP Study.
3. In its data collection efforts, the SOEP Department can profit from the reputation of the DIW.
4. There is the potential for scientific collaboration as well as for joint scientific events. The close connection between a research institution in applied economics and a social science research instrument can be highly beneficial to both parties.
5. There is increasing cooperation at the level of graduate training as exemplified by the DIW Graduate Center.

In spite of these reasons to remain at the DIW, the location of the SOEP Department at the DIW is not without alternative. There are a number of other institutions both within the Leibniz Association and otherwise that would also be well-equipped to host the SOEP Department. However, the above-mentioned two basic problems would need to be addressed at a new host institution as well. In addition, there would be significant costs in time and money connected to such a move. A change within the WGL would also require significant political coordination. The worry here is that moving the SOEP Department to another institution would hamper the development of the SOEP Study at a time when significant changes are being planned or already under way.

On balance, there is not yet a need to identify an alternative location for the SOEP Department. However, the continued association between the SOEP Department and the DIW will depend on both partners resolving the core tension mentioned above as well as making the best possible use of the benefits of the association.

At the administrative level, resolving the tensions between the DIW and the SOEP Department requires an explicit statement of agreed upon mutual obligations and entitlements. At the practical level, this should ensure that the level of compensation paid by the SOEP Department for administrative and technical assistance as well as office space is determined. At the same time, the exact nature of the assistance provided by the DIW should be specified. These specifications should take into account

that the SOEP Department is currently the largest department of the DIW. As such, it will require some targeted support as far as the availability of meeting rooms and technical resources is concerned. In order to ensure that future tensions can directly be resolved, the head of the SOEP Department should become a member of the DIW Executive Board.

As far as the governance structure is concerned, a distinction should be made between peer guidance with regard to the development of the SOEP Study and scientific advice on research strategies and research performance.

In 2008, the DIW and the SOEP Department agreed to establish the SOEP Survey Committee, with nine members who are appointed by the DIW Board of Trustees (based on a consensual proposal of the DIW Executive Board and the SOEP Department) and report both to the executive board and the head of the SOEP Department. The task of the SOEP Survey Committee is to give advice on the future development of the SOEP Study. The committee consists of highly qualified individuals from a relatively large number of disciplines, although future appointments should consider representatives of the education and health sciences as well. The committee has been active since 2009 and it is too early to judge its performance and impact. Still, there is a good chance that this specific structure will strike the right balance between integrated and independent advice giving. One concern, however, is that user interests are not sufficiently represented in the advisory structure. As far back as 1994, external evaluations have recognised that the SOEP Department has preferred to elicit user feedback in a highly informal manner and, since then, the department has resisted calls to strengthen the influence of the users on the content of the questionnaire.<sup>49</sup> In general, this informal approach has not damaged the SOEP Study. However, this trust in the self-organising qualities of both the department and the users is highly dependent on the openness and scientific curiosity of those responsible for the SOEP Study. To make user involvement more sustainable, it would be helpful to include two members on the SOEP Survey Committee with the explicit role of representing the user perspective.

Scientific advice concerning the research programme of the SOEP Department is currently provided by the DIW Scientific Advisory Board. This body evaluates the re-

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49 Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Sozio-ökonomischen Panel, in Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 1994, Vol. II, Cologne 1995, p. 161-182.

search performance of all DIW departments. Reflecting the fact that the DIW is an economic research institution, the advisory board near-exclusively consists of economists. Given the disciplinary make-up of the SOEP Department and the disciplinary scope of its scientific collaborations, it is highly unlikely that the DIW Scientific Advisory Board in its current composition is able to provide helpful advice. In order to provide advice that takes into account the specific nature of the SOEP Department, the DIW Scientific Advisory Board should broaden its disciplinary scope to include at least two specialists relevant to central research areas of the SOEP Department's staff outside economics (e.g., sociology, psychology, education research). Alternatively, the DIW Scientific Advisory Board would need to involve external experts in these areas in its evaluations or a separate scientific advisory body for the SOEP Department reporting both to the head of the SOEP Department and the president of the DIW would need to be created. Both of these alternatives are less attractive than the broadening of the disciplinary scope of the advisory board: The former alternative solely focuses on the evaluation function of advisory boards and cannot provide adequate continuous peer guidance to the SOEP Department, the latter alternative might damage the integration of the SOEP Department in the DIW and should therefore only be a last resort.

The SOEP Department's status as an "independent department" generally calls for an adequate consideration of those issues specific to the department by internal and external evaluations. In its regular statements on the DIW, the Leibniz Association should devote sufficient attention to these issues.

#### **II.4. Innovation Panel**

The establishment of an innovation panel is strongly recommended. The SOEP Department would be very well-placed to host such a panel once an adequate governance structure for its current service and research tasks has been established.

Irrespective of who takes on responsibility for such a new panel, it should clearly be a multidisciplinary endeavour open to the highest-quality research proposals from these fields. It requires an autonomous governance structure that reflects this nature. The new innovation panel should therefore involve independent representatives of a broad range of scientific disciplines. Also, it should not only provide advice, but actually be a steering committee with a strong say on what is included in the innovation

panel. It will be crucial to ensure that the members of such a committee are not proposed by the same institution that is responsible for running the study, but rather has broad backing from the disciplines with a vested interest in the development of the innovation panel.

### **B.III. National and International Context**

#### **III.1. National Context**

The SOEP Department has developed a number of productive collaborations within the Berlin research environment. It established strong ties with both the surrounding universities (Free University, Technical University, and Humboldt University) and other research institutions (e.g., the Max Planck Institute for Human Development). The department also has a number of strong relationships with other German research institutions. Many of these collaborations cross disciplinary boundaries. The high level of intellectual curiosity of the current SOEP Department staff ensures sufficient openness to collaborate with other disciplines even if no members of the department have their core expertise in these areas.

The SOEP Study occupies a unique position in the German social science infrastructure. It is the only national large-scale household panel, it has a long-term perspective allowing it to interrelate different life phases, and it has a broad multi-disciplinary scope. Moreover, it is one of only few studies in Germany with a large international user base and a strong policy advice element.

On the other hand, there is significant and increasing overlap with other large-scale data collection efforts such as the NEPS, PAIRFAM, or SHARE. Although some overlap is unavoidable and also desirable, given the long-term financial implications of longitudinal surveys, these and other relevant studies need to sufficiently develop specific identities to avoid unnecessary redundancies. Increasing coordination between the different funding bodies in planning the social science research infrastructure landscape is therefore a relevant challenge for future policies in this area. The on-going working group of the German Council of Science and Humanities on “Infrastructure for research in the social sciences and the humanities” is currently preparing recommendations for such coordination that will also be relevant to the field of large-scale surveys.

With respect to the SOEP Study, the SOEP Department should particularly aim to increase its integration with the following elements of the infrastructure landscape:

1. Administrative and census data: The SOEP Department should integrate the SOEP Study data with administrative and social-security data. Besides pushing for the establishment of relevant legal frameworks (such as an Act on Research Data Confidentiality [*Forschungsdatengeheimnis*]) this will require increased collaboration with other Research Data Centers (RDCs; *Forschungsdatenzentren*) and the RatSWD.
2. Other large-scale surveys: Although the SOEP is unique in many aspects, there is considerable overlap with other large-scale studies in Germany. The SOEP Department should increase efforts to cooperate with the units responsible for running these studies in terms of thematic coordination, methodological development in the area of survey research, and training of students and early career researchers in the design and analysis of longitudinal studies.

Further, the SOEP Study and the innovation panel might play a role in closing three significant gaps in the current research infrastructure in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences:

1. The SOEP Study could provide a good starting point for creating links between biological and social factors in the area of health research.
2. Linking the SOEP Study data to social security register data could be a first preliminary step to creating a large-scale employer-employee dataset.
3. The innovation panel could be relevant in creating a large-scale panel study with mainly psychological variables.

Developing an explicit mission statement will place the SOEP Study even more firmly in the broader German research infrastructure landscape for the social, economic, and behavioural sciences.

### III.2. European and International Context

Socio-economic household panels are popular within Europe and around the world.<sup>50</sup> The result is both increased international collaboration and increased competition in providing data that researchers find attractive to use in their investigations.

Together with the PSID and the BHPS, the SOEP Study is one of the leading international household panel studies. Further investment into the SOEP Study is likely to be a good investment in the future competitiveness of the SOEP Study in particular and the German social, economic, and behavioural sciences more generally.

In spite of a certain degree of desirable competition between the different national studies, the main focus should be on international cooperation. Among the central areas of the current international activities of the SOEP Department is the participation of the SOEP Study in the CNEF as well as in the LIS and the LWS. Integrating the SOEP Study into the IALSA is currently under consideration. The SOEP Department should not only participate in these activities, but actively push their further development. Current plans to extend the CNEF to include additional variables on health behaviour and life satisfaction as well as further countries (in particular China and Russia) should be supported. Possibilities for the inclusion of Eastern European countries should also be explored. The close collaboration between different providers of panel data in the area of ex-post harmonisation of their data will simplify future ex-ante data harmonisation.

The intra-European collaboration between different household panel studies has not yet fully exploited its potential. Although it provides an important first step, EU-SILC is not sufficient in its scope to cover the long-term needs of the social and economic sciences within Europe. Further European integration should be spearheaded by the SOEP Department and those responsible for running the UKHLS/BHPS and the SHP. Such a large-scale cooperation between European household panels would be in a strong position to attract European-level funding and possibly enter one of the upcoming ESFRI roadmaps<sup>51</sup>.

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50 See Appendix 6 for a list of international household panel studies.

51 European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures: European roadmap for research infrastructures. Report 2006, 2006.  
European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures: European roadmap for research infrastructures. Report 2008, 2008.

#### **B.IV. Summary**

The SOEP Department's main service task includes planning and conducting the SOEP Study and distributing its data. The SOEP Study has become one of the most important research infrastructures in the social and economic sciences and is expanding its appeal to other disciplines. The SOEP Department has proven that it is able to maintain and further raise the high standard of the SOEP Study by meticulously and consistently developing the survey. There are some concerns about the efficiency and user-friendliness of the data distribution. Consultations with other data providers and with data archives on its continuous improvement are recommended. Collaboration with other institutions is also needed in identifying a viable solution for the long-term storage of social science research data. The SOEP Department has recently significantly improved its performance in the areas of teaching and capacity-building.

As the SOEP Study evolves to include a broader range of disciplines, the department should also move towards a more diverse disciplinary make-up. Gender diversity management should be more actively pursued.

Next to its service tasks, the department is engaged in self-directed research with an impressive output in both quantity and quality. In order to maintain the required level of research activities, the SOEP Department should attempt to restore the ratio between service-related and research tasks to be roughly equal. If service tasks then still dominate in relation to research activities, there is a strong case for additional financial support.

Two central trade-offs that all large-scale longitudinal studies have to face are (a) the tension between a broad appeal to many disciplines and a clear focus on a limited set of research programmes and (b) the tension between conserving the longitudinal character of the dataset and introducing innovative elements. In both cases, the SOEP Department has managed a good balance in the past. However, increasing user demand from a broad range of disciplines creates the need for further specification of a long-term strategy and the formulation of a mission statement for the SOEP Study.

Two areas in which future change should be actively pursued are the areas of geocoded data and of behavioural genetics. A non-permanent advisory group on genetic

elements in the SOEP Study could help to identify ways to move ahead with the latter.

The SOEP Department is generally on top of new methodological developments. It should increase its efforts to explore the feasibility of data collection using new technologies, the possibility of using dependent interviewing, and the advantages of moving to biannual data collection for some of the measures. Matrix sampling should only be introduced after careful consideration and consultation with data users.

The successful relationship with TNS Infratest Sozialforschung, the fieldwork agency, should remain open to continuous quality control. A significant increase in demand for the services of only a few private companies offering fieldwork services of sufficient quality has created oligopolistic market conditions that call for increased cooperation between large-scale studies and their funding bodies to ensure high-quality data collection at an acceptable price.

Although an increase of the SOEP Study sample to 20,000 households would add to this problem, it is associated with significant scientific advantages. Apart from the general benefits of decreasing total survey error, a gradual increase would allow more powerful cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses as well as targeted analyses of policy-relevant subgroups of the population. The international competitiveness of the study would be increased.

Although such a sample expansion is strongly recommended, a number of issues should be considered. First, the SOEP Department should further work out the substantive research questions that can be addressed with the larger sample. Second, it should liaise with other large-scale survey studies, the relevant funding bodies, and the commercial providers of fieldwork services about how to organise the necessary increase in fieldwork capacity. Finally, an effective governance structure with institutionalised peer-guidance would be instrumental in supporting the SOEP Department in finding a good balance between increasing the sample size and other relevant areas of development.

A second major proposal by the SOEP Department concerns the establishment of an innovation panel. This would create an internationally unique research infrastructure able to attract first-class basic researchers and to provide a serious impulse for interdisciplinary research. Given its unique longstanding experience in longitudinal data

collection, the SOEP Department would be a well-placed, though not the only possible, institution to run such a panel. Again, a stable governance structure would be crucial in supporting such an argument.

The establishment of an innovation panel is highly recommended. It would have to be open to serve the whole academic community in the social and behavioural sciences. A condition for the establishment of an innovation panel would therefore consist of an independent steering committee representing the full range of disciplines interested in working with the innovation panel.

Any new tasks assigned to the SOEP Department will require additional financial and personnel resources. An increase in staff will also necessitate a proportionate increase in office space. There is a strong case to be made for allowing the SOEP Department to submit applications for funding by the Pact for Research and Innovation of the Leibniz Association independent of the DIW.

The relationship between the SOEP Department and the DIW is not without tension. It is also not without alternative. However, the significant costs and efforts related to a move, the danger of hampering the development of the SOEP Study at a sensitive time, the lack of a clear indication that the current tensions would not simply re-occur at a different location, and the significant advantages of hosting the SOEP Department at the DIW are arguments against a transition to another institution. The existing tensions seem resolvable and both parties should work harder to do so.

At the administrative level, mutual entitlements and obligations should be defined in writing. To ensure that future tensions can be directly resolved, the head of the SOEP Department should become a member of the DIW Executive Board.

At the level of governance, the DIW and the SOEP Department have agreed to establish the SOEP Survey Committee responsible for providing peer guidance for the development of the SOEP Study. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this new body, but it would be helpful to include two members charged with representing the perspective of SOEP Study users. The DIW Scientific Advisory Board in its current composition is unable to provide sufficiently qualified advice on the full range of research undertaken by the SOEP Department. The committee should broaden its disciplinary scope and include at least two experts in research areas outside economics that are relevant to the SOEP Department. In its regular external evaluations of the

DIW, the Leibniz Association should devote adequate attention to issues related to the SOEP Department.

The main national funding bodies increasingly consider the strategic development of the social science research infrastructure as a whole. Although in many ways the SOEP Study occupies a unique position in this infrastructure landscape, there is also significant overlap with other large-scale data collection efforts. A working group of the German Council of Science and Humanities on “Infrastructure for research in the social sciences and the humanities” is currently preparing general recommendations for such coordinated development.

At the international level, both the intra-European and the international collaboration between household panel studies have yet to reach their full potential. Further European integration should be spearheaded by the SOEP Department and those responsible for running the UKHLS/BHPS and the SHP. The goal should be to attract European-level funding and to achieve entry to future ESFRI roadmaps.

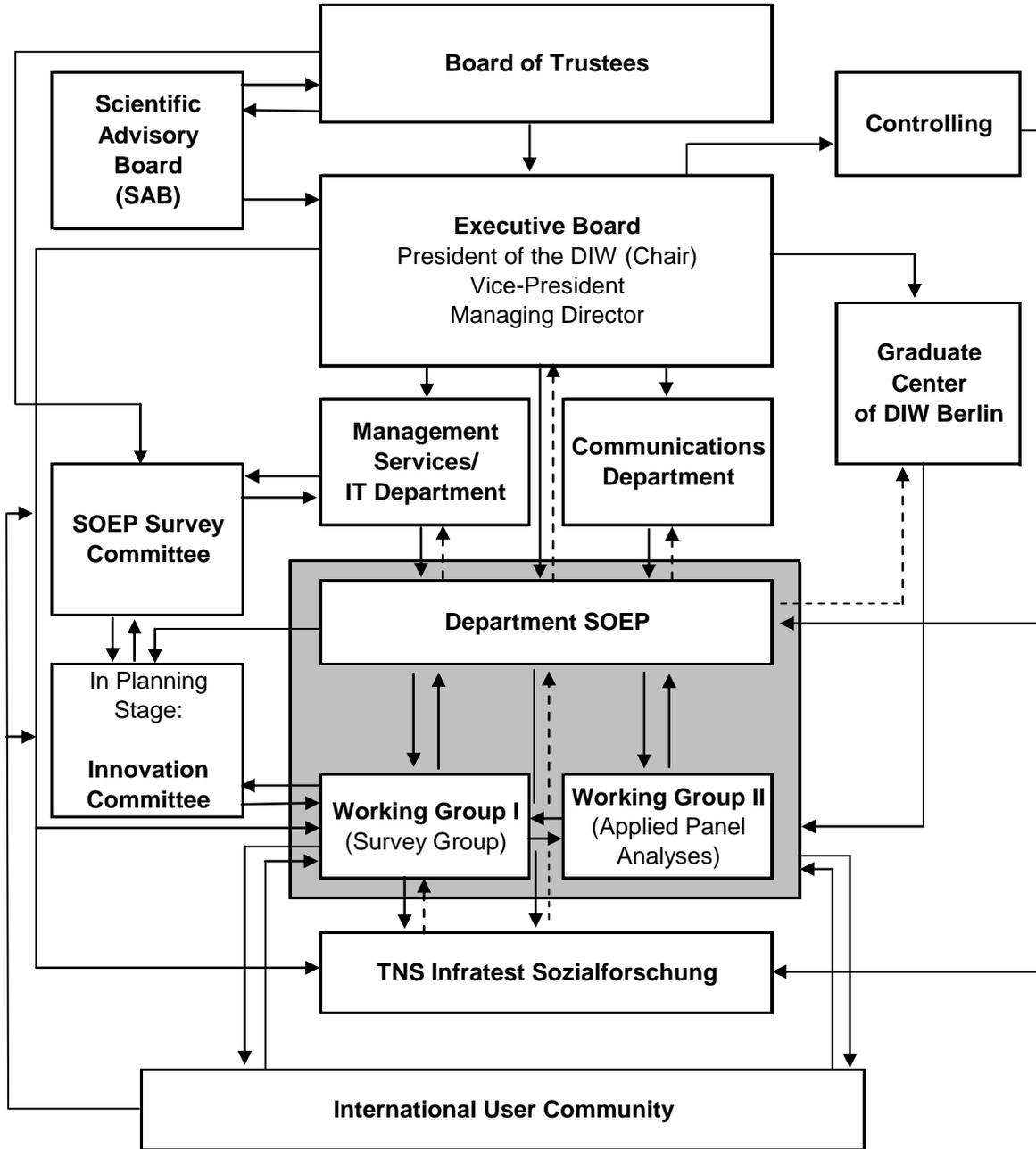
In sum, further investment in the SOEP Study is a promising investment in the future competitiveness of the German social, economic, and behavioural sciences.



## Appendices



### Appendix 1 Organisational Chart of the Socio-Economic Panel Department



Source: SOEP Department

## Appendix 2 Personnel Chart of the Socio-Economic Panel Department

### Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)

Reference date: 31 December 2008

Staff Categories	Level of Positions (Pay Scale)	Total Number of Positions (Target)	Positions Filled (Actual)
Scientific Staff	C4	1.0	1.0
	W3	1.0	0.5
	BAT I	1.0	2.0
	BAT I a	1.0	-
	BAT I b	5.0	5.3
	BAT II a	4.0	2.0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>13.0</b>	<b>10.8</b>
Nonacademic/ Support Staff	BAT IV a / III	1.0	2.0
	BAT V b / V c	1.0	1.0
	BAT V c	1.0	1.0
	BAT VI b	2.0	-
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>18.0*</b>	<b>14.8</b>

\* Budget does not allow to fill all positions.

### Number of Staff

Reference date: 31 December 2008

Staff Categories	Institutional Funding	Third-Party Funding	External Funding	Total
Scientists	12	4	-	16
Doctoral Students	-	5	2	7
Nonacademic/ Support Staff	5	-	-	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28</b>

Source: SOEP Department

**Appendix 3 Distribution of Scientific Staff Across the Different Working Groups of the Socio-Economic Panel Department**

Reference date: 31 December 2008

Working Group	Institutional Positions (in FTE) for Scientists or Doctoral Students		Third-Party Funded Positions (in FTE) for Scientists or Doctoral Students		Total Number of Positions (in FTE) for Scientists or Doctoral Students		For Information Only: Other Externally Funded Doctoral Students (Headcount)	
	Total	of Which Fixed-Term	Total	of Which Fixed-Term	Total	of Which Fixed-Term	Total	of Which Fixed-Term
Survey Group	5.4+5.4 *	5.5	0.0+0.1 *	0.1	5.4+5.5 **	5.6	-	-
Applied Panel Analyses Group	-	-	2.5+0.5 **	3.0	2.5+0.5 **	3.0	2.0	2.0
<b>T o t a l</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>

\* Total FTE are divided in 50 % basic research and 50 % service and policy advice. - \*\* FTE basic research + FTE service and policy advice

Source: SOEP Department

**Appendix 4 Summary of Third-Party Funds Obtained by the Socio-Economic Panel Department Within the Last Three Years (2006-2008) Broken Down by Funding Body**

Reference date: March 2009

Source	Third-party funds in T Euro (rounded)			Total
	2006	2007	2008	
German Research Foundation (DFG/NSF)	-	-	22.9	22.9
Federal Government	736.5	1,392.0	1,417.6	3,546.1
EU (Framework Program)	89.7	37.4	5,9	133.0
Private Sector	-	-	1.5	1.5
Foundations/Charities	42.9	92.3	71.4	206.6
Other	45.2	24.1	40.0	109.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>914.3</b>	<b>1,545.8</b>	<b>1,559.3</b>	<b>3,996.5</b>

Source: SOEP Department

## **Appendix 5    Appendix 5 List of Most Important Publications of Last Three Years**

### Substantial Research

D'Ambrosio, C.; Frick, J. R.: Income satisfaction and relative deprivation: An empirical link, in: *Social Indicators Research*, 81 (2007) 3, p. 497-519.

Ermisch, J.; Francesconi, M; Siedler, T.: Intergenerational mobility and marital sorting, in: *Economic Journal*, 116 (2006), p. 659-679.

Gerstorf, D.; Ram, N.; Estabrook, R.; Schupp, J.; Wagner, G.; Lindenberger, U.: Life satisfaction shows terminal decline in old age: Longitudinal evidence from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP), in: *Developmental Psychology*, 44 (2008) 4, p. 1148-1159.

Lohmann, H.: Welfare states, labour market institutions and the working poor: A comparative analysis of 20 European countries, in: *European Sociological Review*, 2009 (forthcoming).

Rainer, H.; Siedler, T.: Subjective income and employment expectations and preferences for redistribution, in: *Economics Letters*, 99 (2008) 3, p. 449-453.

Rammstedt, B.; Schupp, J.: Only the congruent survive: Personality similarities in couples, in: *Personality and Individual Differences*, 45 (2008) 6, p. 533-535.

Spiess, C. K.; Wrohlich, K.: The parental leave benefit reform in Germany: Costs and labour market outcomes of moving towards the Nordic model, in: *Population Research and Policy Review*, 27 (2008) 5, p. 575-591.

Spieß, M.: Estimation of a two-equation panel model with mixed continuous and ordered categorical outcomes and missing data, in: *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series C*, 55 (2006) 4, p. 525 -537.

### Survey Methodology

Frick, J. R.; Goebel, J.; Schechtman, E. et al.: Using analysis of Gini (ANoGi) for detecting whether two sub-samples represent the same universe: The German Socio-

Economic Panel Study (SOEP) experience, in: *Sociological Methods and Research*, 34 (2006) 4, p. 427-468.

Kroh, M.: Measuring left-right political orientation: The choice of response format, in: *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 71 (2007), p. 204-220.

#### Policy Papers

Frick, J. R.; Grabka, M. M.: Gestiegene Vermögensungleichheit in Deutschland, in: *DIW Weekly Report*, 4/2009, p. 54-67.

Kroh, M.; Siedler, T.: Die Anhänger der „Linken“: Rückhalt quer durch alle Einkommensschichten, in: *DIW Weekly Report*, 41/2008, p. 628-634.

## Appendix 6 Overview of International Household Panel Studies

Reference date: 11 August 2009

### BHPS

<i>Range:</i>	UK
<i>Name:</i>	British Household Panel Survey
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/survey/bhps">http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/survey/bhps</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The main objective of the BHPS is to further the understanding of social and economic change at the individual and household level in Britain and the UK.</p> <p>The BHPS is conducted at the University of Essex.</p> <p>The survey consists of a nationally representative sample of about 5,500 households recruited in 1991, containing a total of approximately 10,000 interviewed individuals. Extension samples of 1,500 households in each of Scotland and Wales were added to the main BHPS sample in 1999 to enable independent analysis of each country. In 2001 a sample of 2,000 households was added in Northern Ireland (NIHPS, see p. 114). The total sample size for the BHPS including the extension samples is now around 10,000 households in the UK.</p> <p>The BHPS will be replaced by and included in the UKLHS (see p. 119). The BHPS is part of the CNEF (<i>Cross-National Equivalent File</i>).</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	The BHPS is conducted annually. The first 17 waves of data for the years 1991-2007 are currently available to researchers. The fieldwork of wave 18 is approaching completion and associated data will be released in early 2010. The data are released through the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex in a variety of formats.

### DHS

<i>Range:</i>	Netherlands
<i>Name:</i>	DNB Household Survey
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.centerdata.nl/en/TopMenu/Projecten/DNB_household_study/">http://www.centerdata.nl/en/TopMenu/Projecten/DNB_household_study/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The DHS is a longitudinal household panel on psychological and economic aspects of financial behaviour with a sample size of 2,000 households.</p> <p>It is realised by CentERdata and comprises information on work, pensions, housing, mortgages, income, assets, loans, health, economic and psychological concepts, and personal characteristics.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	The DHS was launched in 1993.

## ECHP

<i>Range:</i>	EU
<i>Name:</i>	European Community Household Panel
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/echp">http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/echp</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The ECHP is an annual panel survey covering a wide range of topics concerning living conditions. They include information on income, the financial situation in a wide sense, working life, the housing situation, social relations, and health and biographical information of the interviewee. The SOEP Study data from 1994 to 2001 have been integrated into the ECHP.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households and individuals
<i>Status:</i>	The ECHP was run from 1994 to 2001. It consists of eight waves.

## HILDA

<i>Range:</i>	Australia
<i>Name:</i>	Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/">http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>HILDA is a household-based panel study collecting data on participants' economic and subjective well-being, on their work situation and family life.</p> <p>It was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). Responsibility for the design and management of the survey rests with the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (University of Melbourne). Data collection for waves 1 to 8 has been sub-contracted to The Nielsen Company, a private market research company. Data collection for waves 9 to 12 will be undertaken by Roy Morgan Research.</p> <p>The sample consisted of 7,682 households and 19,914 individuals in wave 1.</p> <p>HILDA is part of the CNEF (<i>Cross-National Equivalent File</i>).</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	Since the beginning in 2001, interviews have been conducted annually with all adult household members. Currently the data of waves 1 to 7 are available.

## HUS

<i>Range:</i>	Sweden
<i>Name:</i>	The Swedish Panel Study Market and Nonmarket Activities
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.nek.uu.se/faculty/klevmark/hus.htm">http://www.nek.uu.se/faculty/klevmark/hus.htm</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The study was conducted by the Department of Economics, Göteborg University. The fieldwork was contracted out to Sifo AB.</p> <p>All respondents were non-institutionalised residents of Sweden aged 18 to 74. On average 1.7 individuals were interviewed per household.</p> <p>The sample size was 2,619 persons in 1984.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Sampling units are individuals. A household is identified as the household to which this individual belongs. In each household one to three members were selected depending on household composition.
<i>Status:</i>	HUS was initiated in 1980. In 1982 a pilot study with several hundred respondents was conducted. The following waves took place in the years 1984, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1996, 1998. The waves in 1988 and 1991 did not cover all topics.

## MESS/LISS

<i>Range:</i>	Netherlands
<i>Name:</i>	Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences/Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.centerdata.nl/en/MESS">http://www.centerdata.nl/en/MESS</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The MESS project aims at promoting the Dutch knowledge society and the innovation climate in the Netherlands.</p> <p>The LISS online panel consists of 5,000 Dutch households. It is conducted by CentERdata and is based on a true probability sample of households drawn from the population register by Statistics Netherlands. Households that could otherwise not participate are provided with a computer and Internet connection. Universities, research schools, and individual academics are invited to submit research proposals.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	The LISS panel started data collection in autumn 2007.

## MxFLS

<i>Range:</i>	Mexico
<i>Name:</i>	Mexican Family Life Survey
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.ennvih-mxfls.org">http://www.ennvih-mxfls.org</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The Mexican Family Life Survey (MxFLS) is a multi-thematic and longitudinal database which collects a wide range of information on socio-economic indicators, demographics, and health indicators on the Mexican population.</p> <p>On the individual and household level, MxFLS provides information about the financial situation, education, employment, time use, recreational activities, health status, habits relating to health, biological indicators, retrospective health information, crime and victimisation, and others.</p> <p>Wave 2 also included a module measuring risk preferences, inter-temporary and altruistic preferences; a module on individual expectations, information on paternity and day-care centres, and additional biomarkers.</p> <p>Similar to the fieldwork conducted on households, MxFLS-1 carried out a community operative collecting data on schools, health centres, social programmes, economic and physical infrastructure, and level of local prices.</p> <p>The base-line sampling design was undertaken by the National Institute of Geography Statistics and Information (INEGI).</p> <p>The approximate sample size is 8,440 households with approximately 35,000 individual interviews.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	Wave 1 was conducted in 2002, wave 2 in 2005/2006. Waves 3 and 4 are scheduled for 2009 and 2012.

## NIHPS

<i>Range:</i>	North Ireland
<i>Name:</i>	Northern Ireland Household Panel Survey
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.ark.ac.uk/nihps/">http://www.ark.ac.uk/nihps/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The NIHPS is an extension of the long-running British Household Panel Survey.</p> <p>Wave 1 consisted of around 2,000 households and 3,500 individuals drawn from across Northern Ireland.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	The fieldwork for wave 1 of the NIHPS and wave 11 of the BHPS (of which it forms a part) took place in 2001.

## NLC

<i>Range:</i>	Australia
<i>Name:</i>	Negotiating the Life Course Survey, Australia
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://lifecourse.anu.edu.au/">http://lifecourse.anu.edu.au/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>Negotiating the Life Course is a longitudinal study undertaken by the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute (ANU) und School of Social Science (UQ) and funded by the Australian Research Council.</p> <p>NLC is designed to study the changing life courses and decision-making processes of Australian men and women as the family and society move from male breadwinner orientation in the direction of higher levels of gender equity.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households and individuals
<i>Status:</i>	Waves 1 to 4 took place in 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2006.

## PSELL

<i>Range:</i>	Luxembourg
<i>Name:</i>	Panel Socio-Economique „Liewen zu Lëtzeburg“ (The Luxembourg Household Panel Study)
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.ceps.lu">http://www.ceps.lu</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The Luxembourg Household Panel (PSELL), sponsored by the Luxembourg Government, is conducted by the Centre d'Études de Populations, de Pauvreté et de Politiques Socio-Économiques/International Networks for Studies in Technology, Environment, Alternatives, Development (CEPS/INSTEAD).</p> <p>The reference population covers anyone living in the Grand Duchy who is protected by social security; the basic sample represents 97 % of the population living in the country.</p> <p>The main purpose of the survey is to measure unemployment, poverty, labour force participation, income and family expenditure.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households and individuals
<i>Status:</i>	PSELL has been conducted every year since 1985.

## PSFD

<i>Range:</i>	Taiwan
<i>Name:</i>	Panel Study of Family Dynamics
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://psfd.sinica.edu.tw/">http://psfd.sinica.edu.tw/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The PSFD is hosted by the Institute of Economics, Institute of Sociology and Office of Survey Research of Academia Sinica.</p> <p>Topics include education experience, work experience, interaction among family members, family resource allocation, living arrangement and power division among family members.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	PSFD collects information on the core respondents and their families (parents, in-laws, children and siblings). Data collection of the other family members is through soliciting the information from the core respondents as well as directly interviewing their children.
<i>Status:</i>	Wave 1 of the PSFD was conducted in 1999. The sample of wave 1 consisted of a nationally representative sample of individuals aged 36 to 45. In the latest wave (wave 2), implemented in 2000, a nationally representative sample of individuals aged 46 to 65 was added.

## PSID

<i>Range:</i>	USA
<i>Name:</i>	Panel Study of Income Dynamics
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/">http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>PSID is a longitudinal study realised by the Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.</p> <p>The central focus of the study is in the areas of economy and demographics, with substantial detail on income, employment, family composition, and residential location. Content of a more sociological or psychological nature is also included in some waves of the study. Beginning in 1985, comprehensive retrospective fertility and marriage histories of individuals in the households have been assembled.</p> <p>The sample size has grown from 4,800 families in 1968 to more than 7,000 families in 2001.</p> <p>PSID is part of the CNEF (<i>Cross-National Equivalent File</i>).</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	U. S. individuals (men, women and children) and the family units in which they reside
<i>Status:</i>	From 1968 to 1996, the PSID interviewed and reinterviewed individuals from families in the core sample every year. In 1997 annual interviewing was changed to biannual data collection. There also was a reduction of the core sample and introduction of a refresher sample of post-1968 immigrant families and their adult children.

## RLMS

<i>Range:</i>	Russia
<i>Name:</i>	Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Study <sup>52</sup>
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms">http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	The RLMS is a series of nationally representative surveys conducted by the Carolina Population Center and the Russian Institute of Sociology. It is designed to monitor the effects of Russian reforms on the health and economic welfare of households and individuals in the Russian Federation. These effects are measured by detailed monitoring of individuals' health status and dietary intake, measurement of household-level expenditures and service utilisation as well as collection of relevant community-level data, including region-specific prices and community infrastructure data.
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households and individuals
<i>Status:</i>	16 waves of data have been collected since 1992.

## SHP

<i>Range:</i>	Switzerland
<i>Name:</i>	Swiss Household Panel (Schweizer Haushalts-Panel)
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.swisspanel.ch/">http://www.swisspanel.ch/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	The SHP aims to observe the social change and the living conditions of the population in Switzerland. Information based on indicators such as income, living conditions, events in life, social status, societal participation, etc. are supplemented by subjective judgements (satisfaction with various aspects of life, values, life style, etc.)  The sample size of the wave 1 (1999) was 5,074 households and 7,799 persons. Wave 8 (2006) covered 2,537 households and 4,091 persons.
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	The SHP was established between 1998 and 2003 as a structural measure of the focus programme SPP <i>Zukunft Schweiz</i> . It was first (from 1998 to 2007) a joint-venture project between the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research, the Swiss Federal Agency for Statistics and Neuenburg University. It is now run by FORS, the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences.

<sup>52</sup> Information on a former Russian Study, the Russian Socio-Economic Transition Panel (RUSSET), can be found at <http://users.fmg.uva.nl/wsaris/>.

## SLID

<i>Range:</i>	Canada
<i>Name:</i>	Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&amp;SDDS=3889&amp;lang=en&amp;db=imdb&amp;adm=8&amp;dis=2">http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&amp;SDDS=3889&amp;lang=en&amp;db=imdb&amp;adm=8&amp;dis=2</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The SLID is a longitudinal study on how the economic well-being of Canadians is related to the employment and family situation and to social transfers.</p> <p>The SLID sample is composed of two panels. Each panel consists of two LFS rotation groups and includes roughly 15,000 households. A panel is surveyed for a period of six consecutive years. A new panel is introduced every three years, so two panels always overlap.</p> <p>SLID is part of the CNEF (<i>Cross-National Equivalent File</i>).</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households and individuals
<i>Status:</i>	SLID has been conducted annually since 1993.

## SoFIE

<i>Range:</i>	New Zealand
<i>Name:</i>	Survey of Family, Income and Employment
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.stats.govt.nz/methods_and_services/completing-a-survey/individual-and-household-surveys/survey-of-family-income-and-employment.aspx">http://www.stats.govt.nz/methods_and_services/completing-a-survey/individual-and-household-surveys/survey-of-family-income-and-employment.aspx</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>SoFIE is a longitudinal survey that has been running for eight years. It has been collecting information on New Zealander's living conditions and lifestyles and the factors that influence these aspects of people's lives.</p> <p>The primary focus of SoFIE is to investigate the changes in individual, family, and household income and the factors that influence these changes, such as involvement in the labour force and family composition.</p> <p>The household questionnaire contains two sets of questions on the household and the standard of living. The personal questionnaire contains eight standard modules (demographics, child, education, family, labour market situation, income, contact).</p> <p>Data are collected from 22,200 individuals in 11,500 households and 7,500 children aged under 15 years.</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households and individuals
<i>Status:</i>	SoFIE started in October 2002 and is scheduled to run for eight years (until 2010).

## UKHLS

<i>Range:</i>	UK
<i>Name:</i>	UK Household Longitudinal Study („Understanding Society“)
<i>URL:</i>	<a href="http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk/">http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk/</a>
<i>Profile:</i>	<p>The UKHLS was launched by the Economic and Social Research Council. It is based at the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex. The fieldwork is conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).</p> <p>The UKHLS gathers information from all members over ten years of age of the 40,000 sample households. Additional data are collected from 3,000 ethnic minority households.</p> <p>The questionnaire for wave 1 of interviews (starting in 2009) will cover topics including demographic characteristics and changes, income and earnings, health, disability, education, origins and nationality, family and partnership history, wealth and savings, expenditures, current employment characteristics, transport and communication access, child care and other care responsibilities, life satisfaction, community, leisure activities, and political participation. These general core topics will be repeated annually but supplemented by additional modules of topical questions asked on a rotating or intermittent basis.</p> <p>UKHLS will include data on health indicators and biomarkers of health status (such as body measurements, blood pressure, and heart rate).</p> <p>UKHLS replaces and includes the smaller BHPS, as well as NIHPS, which is included in BHPS. UKHLS will become part of the CNEF (<i>Cross-National Equivalent File</i>).</p>
<i>Sampling unit:</i>	Households
<i>Status:</i>	The UKHLS is an annual study. The publication of the data of the wave 1 (2009) is planned for 2010.

## **Appendix 7 Documents Submitted by the Socio-Economic Panel Department**

- Answers to the questionnaire of the German Council of Science and Humanities
- Outline of the history of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP)
- Organisational chart
- DIW Annual Report 2007
- SOEP Wave Report 1-2008
- DIW Berlin Programme Budget 2009
- SOEP Budget 2006-2008
- Rules of organisation: Statutes of DIW Berlin
- Job chart and distribution of scientific staff across the working groups of the SOEP Department
- Chart of the level of staffing of each working group in the SOEP Department
- Two lists of scientific staff: without names, with job title, age and year of entry, gender, academic degree and pay scale grouping; index of names of scientists including their affiliation to working groups
- List of all SOEP Department staff members
- Summary of age structure of scientific staff and length of employment at the SOEP Department
- Summary of third-party funds obtained by the SOEP Department within the last three years (2005-2007) broken down by funding body; List of projects with external funding, indicating the amount and duration of funding (2006-2008)
- List of publications and summary of number of publications
- Diagram of the frequency of use of the SOEP Study
- List of dissertations and *Habilitationen* completed in 2006-2008
- List of university lectures and seminars given by the staff of the SOEP Department in the last academic year
- List of significant national or international scientific events organised by the SOEP Department
- List of further workshops, conferences, or other significant events
- List of visiting scientists staying at the SOEP Department during the last three years
- List of scientists of the SOEP Department who stayed as visiting scientists at other institutions in Germany or abroad

- List of members of the SOEP Department who were appointed to serve on scientific committees or advisory bodies
- List of members of the SOEP Advisory Boards 1983-2009
- Rules of Procedure for the Scientific Advisory Board of DIW Berlin; members of the scientific advisory board and responsibilities within DIW Berlin
- Summary of research awards received by members of the SOEP Department within the last five years
- List of SOEP awards
- List of SOEPpapers and SOEPnewsletters 1-4 2008, 1-2009
- SOEP 2008 Erhebungsinstrumente. Anlagenband zum Methodenbericht
- Brochures: DIW Berlin: A brief introduction; DIW Berlin Graduate Center of Economic and Social Research

## List of Abbreviations

AIM-AP	Accurate Income Measurement for the Assessment of Public Policies
BAT	Bundesangestellten-Tarifvertrag/Wage agreement for the public service
BGSS	Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences
BHPS	British Household Panel Study
BIGSSS	Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences
BLK	Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung/German Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung/German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
BMWi	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie/German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology
CEPS/ INSTEAD	Centre d'Etudes de Populations, de Pauvreté et de Politiques Socio-Economiques/International Network for Studies in Technology, Environment, Alternatives, Development
CHER	Consortium of Household Panels for European Socio-Economic Research
CNEF	Cross-National Equivalent File
DDI	Data Documentation Initiative
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft/German Research Foundation
DIW	Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung/German Institute for Economic Research
DZA	Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen/German Centre of Gerontology
ECHP	European Community Household Panel
ESFRI	Europäisches Strategieforum für Forschungsinfrastrukturen/European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
ESRC	British Economic and Social Research Council
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
GDR	German Democratic Republic

GESIS	Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften (vormals Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen e. V.)/Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (former German Social Science Infrastructure Services)
GLES	German Longitudinal Election Study
GWK	Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz/Joint Science Conference
HILDA	Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey
HWK	Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg/Hanse Institute for Advanced Study
IALSA	Integrative Analysis of Longitudinal Studies on Aging
ISER	Institute for Social and Economic Research
ISR	Institute for Social Research
IVS	Interdisziplinärer Verbund Serviceeinrichtungen/Interdisciplinary Network of Service Units
IZA	Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit/Institute for the Study of Labor
LIS	Luxembourg Income Study
LISS	Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences
LWS	Luxembourg Wealth Study
MESS	Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences
NEPS	Nationales Bildungspanel/National Education Panel Study
PASS	Panel "Arbeitsmarkt und soziale Sicherheit"/Panel Study "Labor Market and Social Security"
PAIRFAM	Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics
PSID	Panel Study of Income Dynamics
RatSWD	Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten/German Council for Social and Economic Data
RDC	Research Data Center/Forschungsdatenzentrum
SCI	Science Citation Index
SDMX	Data and Metadata Exchange
SFB	Sonderforschungsbereich/Collaborative Research Center
SHARE	Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe

SHP	Swiss Household Panel
SLID	Canadian Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics
SOEP	Sozio-oekonomisches Panel/German Socio-Economic Panel Study
SSCI	Social Science Citation Index
TESS	Time-Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences
TNS	Taylor Nelson Sofres
TVöD	Tarifvertrag für den öffentlichen Dienst/Wage agreement for the public service
UKHLS	UK Household Longitudinal Study
WGL	Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz/Leibniz Association
WZB	Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung/Social Science Research Center Berlin
ZEW	Zentrum für Europäische Wirtschaftsforschung/Centre for European Economic Research
ZIS	Zusammenstellung sozialwissenschaftlicher Items und Skalen/Compendium of Social Science Items and Scales