



Proposals for improving data access for researchers

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Overview

- ❖ Main purpose of the GGP: to be a source of data for policy-relevant research
- ❖ Data therefore need to be readily available to researchers: minimum amount of time and effort required to obtain them; encourage wide use
- ❖ However, other considerations:
 - maintaining confidentiality
 - ensuring quality of research
- ❖ Need to balance these requirements to ensure GGP's place at the centre of high-quality, timely, relevant research.



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Current Data Application Process

- ❖ Applicant creates user account with basic information (essentially checking legitimacy of email addresses) which is instantly accepted
- ❖ User follows link in email and is then able to access online data analysis tool and create applications to access microdata
- ❖ UNECE staff member reviews application (very basic review: check for correctly filled-in fields, supervisor, institutional representative, reasonable abstract, etc.)





Current Data Application Process

continued

- ❖ UNECE sends acceptance message with downloadable documentation attached
- ❖ Applicant prints documents, obtains signatures, returns in the mail
 - Statement of affiliation
 - Institutional co-operation agreement
 - Confidentiality pledge
- ❖ UNECE marks documents as complete, sends message to user with instructions for accessing data files, and returns copies of each document for users' records
- ❖ Users are supposed to create a new application (without additional paperwork) for each new research project—however, links to downloadable data files do not expire.





Rationale for Changing the Process

- ❖ Time taken to access the data
- ❖ Differences in paperwork requirements compared to other 'competitor' data sources
- ❖ Workload involved in processing applications
- ❖ Special cases
 - e.g. genuine researchers who are not formally affiliated with research institutions
 - teachers wishing to use data with whole classes of students





Provisions of current data provider contracts

- ❖ “The data can be disseminated to *bona fide* researchers after the corresponding cooperation agreement with the Co-ordination Centre and the organization with which the researcher is affiliated is signed, and after the researcher has signed the confidentiality pledge.”
- ❖ “A researcher applies for data use by submitting a research proposal to the Co-ordination Centre. The proposal must include the applicant’s personal and institutional details and specify the data applied for. Proposals from students (either undergraduate, graduate or doctoral) must include the approval of their supervisor”



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Provisions of current data provider contracts continued

- ❖ “bona fide researcher (researcher)” shall identify an individual who can provide proof of affiliation with Research Organization and who intends to use the data for scientific purposes”
- ❖ “Data in possession of the Research Organization will be used exclusively by the researchers affiliated with the Organization who have signed the confidentiality pledge”.





Data access procedures for other surveys

- ❖ ESS (European Social Survey)
<http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>
- ❖ “The data are available free of charge and without restrictions, for not-for-profit purposes “
- ❖ Requires online registration
- ❖ Under ‘Conditions of use’ there is a requirement to acknowledge ESS and to deposit bibliographic records of published work with them.





Data access procedures for other surveys continued

- ❖ EU-SILC European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/eu_silc
- ❖ No direct access to data for individuals
- ❖ Standard contracts for universities, research institutes, national statistical institutes, central banks inside the EU, European Central Bank: 10 weeks
- ❖ Estimated 6 months for other (e.g. non-EU) organizations to access data
- ❖ Requires very detailed applications: many layers of agreement, even which variables will be used.





Data access procedures for other surveys continued

- ❖ SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing & Retirement in Europe) <http://www.share-project.org>
- ❖ Requires users to download and complete a [statement](#) with personal details, affiliation, undertaking to use the data for scientific research only and to not share the data
- ❖ Includes requirement to provide SHARE with details of all publications & to include an acknowledgement in their work.
- ❖ Proviso that legal action can be taken if users are found to use data for non-scientific purposes





**STATEMENT CONCERNING THE USE OF RELEASE 2.4.0
FROM SHARE WAVES 1 & 2 or SHARELIFE RELEASE 1**

The undersigned (*please use capital letters*):

(name).....

(position)

(affiliation)

hereby undertakes to carry out work on data of the SHARE project in accordance with the following conditions:

(1) He/she undertakes not to distribute data of the SHARE project to any other user.

(2) He/she undertakes to use the data for scientific research only.

The undersigned will provide a **reference of all publications** based on the data to the SHARE co-ordination team and will include the following disclaimer and acknowledgement:

“This paper uses data from SHARELIFE release 1, as of November 24th 2010 or SHARE release 2.4.0, as of march 17th 2011. The SHARE data collection has been primarily funded by the European Commission through the 5th framework programme (project QLK6-CT-2001- 00360 in the thematic programme Quality of Life), through the 6th framework programme (projects SHARE-I3, RII-CT-2006-062193, COMPARE, CIT5-CT-2005-028857, and SHARELIFE, CIT4-CT-2006-028812) and through the 7th framework programme (SHARE-PREP, 211909 and SHARE-LEAP, 227822). Additional funding from the U.S. National Institute on Aging (U01 AG09740-13S2, P01 AG005842, P01 AG08291, P30 AG12815, Y1-AG-4553-01 and OGHA 04-064, IAG BSR06-11, R21 AG025169) as well as from various national sources is gratefully acknowledged (see <http://www.share-project.org> for a full list of funding institutions).”

When new releases become available the same disclaimer and acknowledgement apply, except for a new reference to the release number.

(user signature)

(e-mail address *in capital letters*).....

(date)..... (place)

Please return this statement to:
CentERdata, P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands;
or fax to number + 31 13 466 2764.



Suggestions for improvement

- ❖ Ease restrictions on institutional affiliation
- ❖ Hence do away with requirement for institutional co-operation agreement and statement of affiliation
- ❖ Incorporate personal statement of affiliation and pledge of confidentiality into one document
- ❖ Allow application document to be downloaded straight away (doesn't require proposal to be reviewed and accepted *first*)
- ❖ Accept any form of handwritten signature: mail, email of scanned copies, fax, electronic signature.





Pros & Cons

- ❖ + Data will be more easily accessed, so will be used more widely
- ❖ + Private individuals such as retired persons will be able to access the data
- ❖ - Less control over who uses the data and what they use it for
- ❖ - Harder to report numbers of users and projects? But still possible
- ❖ - Perhaps more difficult to keep track of research conducted using the data? But if people comply with terms of agreement, they should inform us of their published research



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Necessary steps to implement changes

- ❖ UNECE will circulate an email 'questionnaire' to existing signatory countries, including a draft of a new application form
- ❖ Countries' comments and suggestions will be incorporated (both existing and future signatories)
- ❖ For those countries which agree to the changes, an amendment will be prepared to be added to the existing contract
- ❖ The online system will be altered with the help of NIDI's software developer.
- ❖ **For those countries which do not agree, the current system will remain in place.**





Discussion

❖ Existing signatories

- Are you/your authorities willing to make these amendments?
- What provisos would you need to ensure the new system is acceptable?

❖ Future signatories

- Will this alter your ability to take part in the GGP and/or to hand over the data to the GGP co-ordinators?



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