

## The Bundesbank's Research Data and Service Center (RDSC): Gateway to Treasures of Micro-Data on the German Financial System

### Topic 4 – Getting the statistics out

Keywords: Micro data, research data center, data provision, finance

#### Introduction

The Deutsche Bundesbank collects monetary, financial and external sector statistical data, comprehensive sets of indicators and seasonally adjusted business statistics. Aggregated data which are relevant for macroeconomic analysis are published in its macroeconomic time series databases.

The Bundesbank is one of the largest data producers in Germany and the data are of high quality because they are quality-tested administrative micro data. Due to legal requirements and in order to meet data protection requirements, individual data can be made available only under certain restrictions.

Until 2014, the research center of the Bundesbank provided limited services for internal and external researchers to get on-site access to confidential micro data of monetary financial institutions, securities, companies and households. In July 2014, the Research Data and Service Center was founded in order to improve the access to high quality confidential micro data of the Bundesbank.

#### Methods / Problem statement

Disseminating confidential administrative micro data under the legal restrictions of the European and German law system is challenging. In order to be granted access to confidential micro data by the Deutsche Bundesbank, certain criteria must be fulfilled:

1. Micro data access may only be granted for research purposes.
2. Non-anonymized micro data may not leave the premises of the Deutsche Bundesbank.
3. Provided confidential micro data may not allow researchers to identify single statistical units.
4. The researcher may not use his results for commercial benefits.
5. Results must fulfil confidentiality standards to assure the anonymity of single statistical units.

Once the criteria are made clear, the infrastructure of a secured access to this micro data must be delineated and implemented. On the data supplier side, not only confidential micro data must be made available, also a comprehensive documentation of the micro data, namely meta data, has to be provided in order to enable researchers to an improved understanding the micro data they want to analyze.

Until the establishment of the RDSC, meta data for collected micro data was more or less a black box. Also, the linkage between different micro data sources must be created in order to enlarge the available information.

#### Results / Proposed solution

The Research Data and Service Center (RDSC) was established in July 2014.

Its tasks are:

- Responsibility for the methodological improvement, physical provision and comprehensive documentation of high-quality microdata sets.
- Consultancy and support services to prospective and existing data users inside and outside of the Bundesbank.
- Provision of standardized linked micro data sets containing multiple data sources, not only from internal Bundesbank micro data but also from external data providers.
- Review of incoming re-quests for access to microdata according to legal requirements.
- Establishing a global RDC network in order to coordinate micro data access across different countries and different research areas.

For the physical provision of micro data, the RDSC is establishing a state-of-the-art house of micro data in the Bundesbank. In order to create useful and comprehensive meta data for the provided micro data, global standards like SDMX and DDI are used. For the linkage of different micro data sources, a record linkage group creates high quality master data sets that enable the linkage not only between multiple Bundesbank micro data but also micro data provided by external services like company data or else.

Furthermore, the consultancy and support services are provided by experienced data and research experts in the areas of economics, finance and social studies. A scientific advisory board consults the RDSC with the req

## Conclusions

With the establishment of the RDSC, the Bundesbank is offering a unique access to confidential micro data in the area of finance.

The Center is thereby acting as the mediator between the restrictions that limit the access and the research community that demands comprehensive information to maximize research results. As for the internal infrastructure of data provision, the Center gathers input of which micro data is suitable for research purposes, how the micro data must be physically provided and how much meta data must be supplied.

The methods used always aim to be eligible as a standard for later enlargement of the micro data supply. By offering a comprehensive portfolio of data access to confidential micro data and transferring knowledge about running a high quality research data center, the RDSC is aiming to set a best-practice example for any other institution that wants to provide data services for the research community as well as internal researchers.