The Beginnings of a European Remote Access Network

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Introduction

• The European “Data without Boundaries” project aims to improve the access to confidential microdata.

• Challenges:
  ➢ Data sources are scattered all over Europe
  ➢ In most cases data has to stay with the Data Provider
  ➢ Different data access points for every data source

• A European Remote Access Network (EuRAN) should ease data access.
  ➢ Starting point is a connection between UKDA and IAB.
UK Data Archive (UKDA)

- The UK’s largest collection of digital research data in the social sciences and humanities.
- Social and economic microdata including firm-level and individual-level as well as combined administrative and survey data -> confidential microdata.
- Access able via the Secure Lab using secure remote desktop solution.

- Currently only available to researchers based at a UK academic institution or an ESRC-funded research centre (UK).
Institute for Employment Research (IAB)

• Research Data Centre (FDZ) of the German Federal Employment Agency (BA) at the Institute for Employment Research provides documented microdata coming from the administrative processes of the BA and surveys carried out by IAB.

• Microdata on individuals/households and/or establishments with high sample sizes and detailed information -> confidential microdata.

• Access available via on-site stay and secure remote desktop solution using a Safe Centre as access point. Currently only access points in Germany and the United States of America.
Safe Centre access to IAB data
Connection & Achievements

- UKDA and IAB as part of the DwB work package “Improving Access to microdata” are about to set up a connection between each other to ease and improve access to research data.
Connection & Achievements

• By using the secure access environment of secured remote desktop in connection with a Safe Centre data can be accessed in a secure way.

• According to that:
  - UKDA data ("understanding society" in the first place) accessible from outside of the UK.
  - IAB data (all available data sets) accessible from a European location outside of Germany.

• Less traveling to work with confidential data => more research with European data.

• To achieve it: Need for cooperation between two partners.
Workflow, responsibilities & tasks

**Party A (Safe Centre Service)**
- Provide Workspace in a Safe Centre
- Provide Network Point for connecting to the internet
- Scheduling On-Site Visits
- Access control and monitoring of users
- local contact for researchers
- Maintenance of solution

**Party B (Data provider)**
- Providing Party A with a access device (thin client)
- Establish secure remote desktop connection to Party B servers
- Care about user application process and user support
- Do data preparation, documentation and disclosure control
- Maintenance of solution
Contract and Achievements

• More or less similar institution setting but finding common ground was not easy.
  ➢ Discovered different approaches, different ways of thinking and different cultures in giving access to microdata.
  ➢ Spoke to each other.
  ➢ Saw equivalences in how things are done (concept of ‘equivalence’, Paul Jackson).
  ➢ Found common understanding.

• Set up a contract which now can be used as a template for
  ➢ Other institutions that are willing to do the same
  ➢ further extension of the UKDA-IAB connection
Outlook one: achievements and next steps

• The shown solutions should be live this summer (sadly not before this IASSIST).
• Researcher and research teams are already waiting to use the solution.
• Extensions of this two-way connection are on the way:
  ➢ Additional connections to French and Dutch data
  ➢ Further extensions are possible
• Finding common ground and setting up the contract was a hard task.
• But now there is a basis for further cooperation in Europe.
Outlook two: the Eu-RAN

Moving from a two-way-connection to a European Remote Access Network:
Outlook two: the Eu-RAN

Moving from a two-way-connection to a European Remote Access Network:
Thank you for your attention!

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Demand

• Comparative research
  ➢ E.g. differences and similarities between UK and German labour markets
  ➢ Differences in firm productivity
  ➢ Policy relevant research across Europe

• Growing demand from UK researchers for German microdata, vice versa