A researcher accreditation model for access to Official micro-data

Paul Jackson
ONS and DwB

Tarragona, 28/10/2011
Outline:

1) What is ‘researcher accreditation’

2) What contribution does researcher accreditation make to risk management?

3) What makes a person ‘safe’?

4) What is the researcher experience? What is the NSI experience?

5) Prospects for a “Schengen agreement” for researcher access to data.

6) Making things better.
Toward a European Research Infrastructure

• A four-year EU-funded FP7-13 project (2011-2015)

• Aims:
  ➢ Linking the capacity of the research community with the important resources of the official micro data in Europe
  ➢ Enhancing researchers access to official micro data in Europe
    ▪ Surveys and administrative datasets, combined files
    ▪ Focus on confidential (highly detailed) data
    ▪ Focus on crossing national boundaries

• Mechanism = Coordination of existing infrastructures
  ➢ CESSDA Data Archives, and the ESS (NSIs coordinated by Eurostat, ECB)
  ➢ Based on volunteers
DwB Work Package 3

- Accreditation
  - Delivering a Researcher Accreditation Standard for the ERA
- Legal frameworks
  - Describe, explain, and publish material to encourage change.
- Information Security
  - Interpreting ISO27001 for future builders of RDCs
What is ‘researcher accreditation’?

- A “fit and proper” person
- Equivalence to official statistics staff
- Safe data = Safe person / safe project / safe place
What contribution does ‘safe person’ make?

The chart visualizes the contribution of ‘safe person’ in different access types.

- **ONS/GSS files**: The contribution is divided into data design (red), law/contract (yellow), governance (purple), and environment (blue).
- **VML files**
- **SDS files**
- **Archive files**
- **Public use files**

The chart indicates the proportion of each contribution type across different file types.
What makes a person ‘safe’?

• Their legal status?
• Their qualifications?
• Their experience?
• Their employment status?
• Their employer?
• Their country of residence/birth?
• Their attitude and demeanour?
• Threat of prosecution?

• ...their assurance they will bind themselves to a contract?
Current State-of-Play

• DwB survey of accreditation in practice

• Results to be published as a comprehensive discovery of ‘as is’.

• Many websites carry this information...

• But many do not. We have discovered what researchers already knew...

• Early thoughts – hundreds of ways of capturing basically the same thing.

• More similarities than differences.
How are NSIs deciding a person is ‘safe’?

- An application form
- Compulsory training
- Interview in person
- Registration
- External opinion

- Perhaps more variation on process than in application content.
A Schengen for researchers?

• First, harmonisation
  - agreement and adoption of equivalent criteria, conditions, process, etc.

• Second, integration
  - A decision of one is a decision for all.
  - Commonly held and shared evidence and outcomes, building a resource for confidence.
Won’t the ESS deliver a solution?

- New Regulation 831/2002
- NSI data held by Eurostat to be accessed through an *integrated* process and standard for researcher accreditation.
- If this is possible, it suggests national arrangements could adopt this model.
- But it is a model, not a solution, for access to national data sources.
Towards an Accreditation Standard

• DwB will:
  - Analyse current practice
  - Identify the essential common features
  - Map differences into equivalences
  - Propose a standard for content and process
  - Encourage adoption
  - Implement in particular where DwB is joining research infrastructures across boundaries.
Thanks for Listening

Contact details to follow