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de la formation et de la recherche DEFR

**Conseil suisse de la science et de l'innovation CSSI**

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# **Evaluation de la Fondation suisse pour la recherche en sciences sociales (FORS)**

Rapport de synthèse du Conseil suisse de la science et de l'innovation  
à l'attention du Secrétariat d'Etat à la formation, à la recherche et à l'in-  
novation

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## **Résumé**

Le Conseil suisse de la science et de l'innovation (CSSI) a été mandaté par le Secrétariat d'Etat à la formation, à la recherche et à l'innovation (SEFRI) de réaliser l'évaluation de la Fondation pour la recherche en sciences sociales (FORS), basée à Lausanne. L'évaluation s'est déroulée entre décembre 2013 et décembre 2014. Conformément au mandat, une approche à la fois rétrospective et prospective a été privilégiée. Il s'est agi, d'une part, de porter un jugement global sur les premières six années d'existence de la fondation et, d'autre part, d'analyser les perspectives de développement de FORS.

Le CSSI a constaté que FORS a pleinement atteint les objectifs fixés au moment de sa création, et que la qualité de ses performances est très bonne. Les services offerts par la Fondation s'avèrent pleinement utiles pour les chercheurs en sciences sociales, tandis que l'institution mène des projets d'enquêtes en accord avec les standards européens et s'intègre dans le réseau international des spécialistes.

Pourtant, un certain nombre de défis méritent l'attention soit de la Fondation, soit de la Confédération:

FORS devrait définir des orientations stratégiques d'une manière plus proactive. Cette tâche revient en premier lieu au Conseil de fondation.

De même, le rayonnement national de l'institution profiterait d'une mise en réseau plus systématique avec les chaires et les instituts de recherche basés dans les différentes hautes écoles suisses, ainsi que de la prise en compte des besoins de disciplines aujourd'hui peu représentées parmi les utilisateurs de FORS.

Le profil de l'institution devrait être clarifié en se positionnant comme une infrastructure au service des chercheurs plutôt que comme un centre de compétences – ce que certains utilisateurs potentiels de FORS peuvent interpréter comme une situation de concurrence. Pour ce faire, FORS devrait, dans ses recherches, accorder une priorité aux questions de méthodologie.

Le défi le plus important concerne les institutions aujourd'hui responsables de la majeure part du financement de FORS, soit le Fonds national de la recherche scientifique (FNS) et le SEFRI. Le CSSI passe en revue plusieurs options susceptibles d'assurer la durabilité de l'institution. Il recommande en priorité de créer une ligne de budget fédérale dédiée aux besoins des infrastructures, dont le SEFRI et la Conférence des hautes écoles assureraient la responsabilité politique, tandis que le FNS assurerait le contrôle de la qualité scientifique.

# **Rapport de synthèse**

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Présentation de l'objet de l'évaluation**

La Fondation pour la recherche en sciences sociales (FORS) produit des données scientifiques dans le cadre d'enquêtes nationales et internationales; elle rassemble, conserve et distribue les données produites par d'autres sources; elle mène des activités de recherche notamment méthodologiques et fournit divers services à l'adresse des chercheurs en sciences sociales au sens large.

FORS peut être considérée comme le produit d'une fusion entre le programme prioritaire de recherche «Demain la Suisse» (1996-2004)<sup>1</sup> et le Service suisse d'information et d'archivage de données pour les sciences sociales (SIDOS), basé à Neuchâtel et soutenu par l'Académie des sciences sociales et humaines (ASSH) (1992-2007). L'institution qui résulte de cette fusion est une fondation parrainée par l'Office suisse de la statistique (OFS), le Secrétariat d'Etat à l'éducation et à la recherche (SER)<sup>2</sup>, le Fonds national suisse de la recherche scientifique (FNS) et l'ASSH, lesquels annonçaient le 11 mai 2007, suite à un appel d'offres et sur la base des recommandations d'un groupe d'experts, le choix de l'Université de Lausanne (UNIL) comme site d'établissement et la date du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 2008 pour le début des opérations<sup>3</sup>. Le premier président de FORS était le recteur de l'UNIL Dominique Arlettaz; il a transmis la présidence à sa vice-rectrice Franciska Krings au 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 2012. Le directeur de FORS Peter Farago, précédemment directeur de «Demain la Suisse», quittera ses fonctions actuelles pour raison d'âge en 2016. Le Conseil de fondation prépare pour la fin 2014 le lancement d'une procédure de sélection pour lui trouver un successeur.

### **1.2 Objectifs de l'évaluation**

L'article 15 de la Loi sur l'encouragement de la recherche et de l'innovation (LERI) autorise la Confédération à soutenir de façon subsidiaire des institutions extra-universitaires, notamment des services auxiliaires tels que FORS. L'ordonnance du Département de l'économie, de la formation et de la recherche relative à la LERI attribue au CSSI la charge d'évaluer les institutions encouragées au titre de l'article 15. Le mandat du SEFRI relatif à l'évaluation de FORS a été transmis au CSSI en décembre 2013.

Le mandat vise deux principaux objectifs. Premièrement, le CSSI est chargé de dresser le bilan des premiers pas d'une institution encore récente sur le plan des performances, de l'utilité et de l'adéquation des structures. Deuxièmement, il lui est demandé d'esquisser des perspectives de développement et des options pour le financement durable de l'institution. En effet, à l'occasion de plusieurs réunions, le FNS a émis le vœu de ne plus devoir assumer le financement des grandes enquêtes à partir de la période de planification 2017-2020. Le mandat préconise la consultation de nombreux acteurs concernés. Les résultats de l'évaluation sont destinés à servir de base pour l'arrangement d'une nouvelle convention de prestations entre FORS et le SEFRI, et pour la mise en place ou l'optimisation du mode de financement de l'institution.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Communiqué de presse FNS du 5 mars 2004. Le budget global du programme «Demain la Suisse» s'est élevé à 45 millions CHF sur sa durée d'existence.

<sup>2</sup> Le SER est devenu Secrétariat d'Etat à l'éducation, à la recherche et à l'innovation (SEFRI) lors de la réorganisation départementale effective au 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Communiqué de presse conjoint du SER et de l'OFS du 11 mai 2007.

### 1.3 Base documentaire et démarche d'analyse

Les professeurs Wolf Linder et Franz Schultheis, membres du CSSI, ont assuré la conduite du projet et rapporté les progrès de l'évaluation devant le plénum. Le secrétariat du CSSI a coordonné les travaux et rassemblé la documentation.

L'évaluation du CSSI a comporté les trois phases de l'autoévaluation, de l'évaluation externe et de la synthèse finale. Le rapport d'autoévaluation, dont la structure générale a été définie à l'occasion d'un premier entretien avec FORS, a été adressé au CSSI le 14 avril 2014<sup>4</sup>.

La phase d'évaluation externe a pris en compte les éléments suivants:

- (i) Le FNS a fait part de son analyse relative aux performances de FORS lors d'une rencontre avec le CSSI, puis par le biais d'un rapport écrit;
- (ii) Le CSSI a constitué un panel de trois experts internationaux issus de cultures scientifiques nationales et disciplinaires diverses, qui ont réalisé une expertise de l'institution sur la base de la documentation écrite et d'une *site visit* tenue à Lausanne les 1<sup>er</sup> et 2 septembre 2014;
- (iii) Un mandat d'étude comparative a été confié à GESIS, une institution allemande remplissant un rôle similaire à celui de FORS, afin de mettre en perspective les missions et les performances respectives.

FORS a été invitée à se prononcer sur chacun des trois rapports externes.

Pour l'élaboration de sa synthèse finale, le CSSI a analysé la documentation fournie par FORS ainsi que les rapports d'évaluation externes. Le CSSI a également consulté l'ASSH, onze sociétés disciplinaires, plusieurs chercheurs en sciences sociales et en politologie, les rectorats des universités de Lausanne, Zurich, Berne, Bâle et Genève, ainsi que la CRUS, la KFH, la COHEP et l'OFS.

Un rapport intermédiaire a été adressé au SEFRI en octobre 2014 pour rendre compte des travaux réalisés et des résultats préliminaires.

Le rapport final se compose, d'une part, d'une analyse globale et, d'autre part, de réponses circonstanciées aux questions du mandat. Les recommandations du CSSI à l'adresse des principales parties intéressées figurent à la fin du document.

Le rapport a été discuté au Conseil lors de la séance plénière du 10 novembre 2014 et entériné par voie de consultation le 12.12.2014.

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<sup>4</sup> Annexe 2.

## 2. Analyse globale

Afin de présenter les résultats de son évaluation, le CSSI décrit d'abord les faits qu'il constate («findings», chapitre 2.1). Il livre ensuite son appréciation de ces faits en s'appuyant, en partie, sur les jugements portés par le groupe d'experts externes, sur la comparaison de FORS avec l'institution allemande GESIS, sur les entretiens menés avec les *stakeholders* ainsi que sur l'expérience des membres du Conseil.

### 2.1 Constats

#### 2.1.1 Ressources et structures

FORS dispose de collaborateurs compétents et qualifiés, de composition diversifiée sur le plan des langues, origines géographiques et parcours disciplinaires. Sur les 35 collaborateurs actuels, seuls 6 ne sont pas directement actifs en tant que chercheurs ou gestionnaires de données. En quelques années d'existence, FORS est parvenue à atteindre une masse critique et à augmenter la proportion de collaborateurs qualifiés, notamment les titulaires d'un doctorat<sup>5</sup>. Sur leur demande, les experts internationaux ont pu s'entretenir avec de jeunes collaborateurs scientifiques. Ils ont constaté que ceux-ci émettent un jugement positif sur leurs conditions de travail. FORS encourage ses collaborateurs à entreprendre des thèses en leur octroyant un temps de recherche protégé de 20% en principe. Ce n'est pas le cas des collaborateurs déjà au bénéfice d'un titre de docteur. Une minorité d'entre eux sont actifs en tant que chercheurs à plein temps, mais les experts ont gagné l'impression que la plupart ne seraient pas en mesure de trouver le temps nécessaire pour mener un projet de recherche à côté de leurs obligations professionnelles.

Les revenus de FORS reposent sur un financement mixte. La majeure partie est assurée par le FNS, qui finance la conduite des grandes enquêtes nationales et européennes dans le domaine des sciences sociales et politiques. Pour les années 2014 à 2016, cette contribution s'élève à une moyenne annuelle de 4,5 millions CHF<sup>6</sup>. L'évaluation des différentes étapes des enquêtes est assurée par la division I du FNS. De plus, la Confédération soutient FORS à raison de 2,5 millions CHF en moyenne annuelle au titre de l'article 15 LERI; ce financement est destiné à couvrir les coûts centraux, les activités de services – y compris l'archivage de données – ainsi que la mise sur pied d'un programme de recherche méthodologique. L'UNIL met à disposition les locaux et les infrastructures informatiques; elle apporte un soutien à la gestion du personnel (notamment assurances sociales) et permet la participation de plusieurs de ses chercheurs et enseignants aux travaux de FORS. Cette contribution *in-kind*, évaluée à 0,8 million CHF selon les rapports annuels adressés au SEFRI, n'est pas comptabilisée au budget de l'institution, mais repose sur une convention entre FORS et l'UNIL<sup>7</sup>. Par ailleurs, l'UNIL attribue à FORS une garantie de déficit de 0,25 million CHF, pour autant que les fonds propres de FORS n'excèdent pas 10% du total des revenus annuels.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Moyenne 2008-2013
SEFRI art. 15 LERI	1,8	2,1	2,2	2,0	2,4	2,5	2,2 (32%)
FNS Infrastructures <sup>8</sup>	3,9	3,3	3,8	4,3	4,0	4,8	4,0 (60%)
UNIL garantie de déficit						0,3	
Autres revenus <sup>9</sup>	0,3	0,2	1,1	1,0	0,3	0,2	0,5 (8%)
Total revenus	6,1	5,5	7,1	7,3	6,7	7,3	6,7 (100%)

**Tableau 1: Revenus annuels de FORS en millions CHF selon rapports annuels adressés au SEFRI**

Les infrastructures mises à disposition par l'UNIL sont pleinement satisfaisantes. FORS est abritée dans un nouveau bâtiment regroupant notamment la Faculté des sciences sociales et politiques ainsi que le NCCR

<sup>5</sup> Entre 2008 et 2013, le nombre de collaborateurs est passé de 19 à 35, et celui des détenteurs d'un doctorat de 4 à 16 (source: Rapport annuel FORS 2013, p. 79).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Rapport de synthèse du FNS, Annexe 3.1.

<sup>7</sup> Convention entre l'UNIL et FORS, version originale du 31.12.2007, modifiée le 24.09.2012, art. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Cette rubrique comprend uniquement les contributions du FNS pour le financement des grandes enquêtes.

<sup>9</sup> Les «autres revenus» incluent les moyens de tiers compétitifs (projets UE, mais aussi un projet FNS), les mandats de services ainsi que le produit de la Summer School.

LIVES. Les équipements informatiques, dont l'importance est évidente pour la gestion de grandes quantités de données, sont également fournis par l'UNIL à la satisfaction de FORS (les ordinateurs personnels sont achetés par FORS).

L'organigramme actuel reflète l'origine des deux volets principaux de la mission de FORS, la conduite d'enquêtes et les services rendus aux chercheurs (voir 2.1.3).

Les organes de la fondation sont évoqués plus en détail au point 3.4. Le Conseil de fondation fonctionne, selon l'impression qu'a eue le CSSI lors de sa rencontre avec une délégation de cet organe à l'occasion de la *site visit*, essentiellement comme une plateforme de discussion entre partenaires. La définition d'une orientation stratégique pour l'institution est souvent déléguée à la direction et, dans une moindre mesure, au Conseil scientifique. Il en résulte le développement au sein de la direction d'une liste assez riche de possibles projets, sans postériorisation dont l'existence serait, pour le CSSI, le signe d'une stratégie au sens propre du terme.

### 2.1.2 Positionnement et collaborations

Les liens de FORS avec les hautes écoles reposent sur la mise en place de guichets pour la représenter, dont la plupart sont des membres du corps intermédiaire académique. Ces guichets sont relativement peu actifs. En revanche, FORS entretient une relation étroite avec l'UNIL, impliquant de nombreux chercheurs de la Faculté des sciences sociales et politiques, dont les professeurs Dominique Joye et Caroline Roberts.

FORS est un partenaire officiel du NCCR LIVES, démarré en 2011, et dont Lausanne abrite la *leading house*. Certaines collaborations de moindre ampleur existent avec d'autres acteurs suisses. Par exemple, si FORS n'apparaît pas comme partie prenante du NCCR Democracy, elle fait fonction de centre d'expertise pour la gestion des données au sein du NCCR On the Move<sup>10</sup>.

Les coopérations dans les services et l'enseignement sont plus développées. FORS est en relation avec de nombreux groupes de chercheurs et d'individus qui utilisent les données archivées par FORS et qui profitent de sa compétence méthodologique. FORS continue d'organiser avec l'Université de Lugano la Swiss Summer School, qui existait déjà du temps de SIDOS, à laquelle des chercheurs de toutes les disciplines de sciences sociales apprécient de pouvoir envoyer leurs doctorants<sup>11</sup>. Elle participe à l'organisation d'un cursus de master en méthodologie d'enquête et opinion publique, conjoint aux universités de Lausanne, Neuchâtel et Lucerne, et démarré à l'automne 2013. Enfin, FORS assure le *lead* du projet ORD@CH visant le développement d'une infrastructure interinstitutionnelle de métadonnées dans le cadre du programme CUS P-2 dédié à l'accès à l'information scientifique.

### 2.1.3 Enquêtes et services

FORS identifie comme ses utilisateurs les chercheurs, enseignants et étudiants dans le domaine des sciences sociales au sens large. Cela représente, dans l'estimation effectuée par FORS elle-même en octobre 2007, quelques centaines de personnes au niveau suisse, nombre qui n'est pas susceptible de beaucoup augmenter dans les années qui viennent. Les services de FORS sont jugés utiles par les chercheurs, et ses données sont demandées dans chacune des universités suisses pour lesquelles les sciences sociales jouent un rôle majeur (voir 3.3.1).

FORS produit elle-même les données de deux enquêtes nationales, soit le Panel suisse des ménages (PSM) et les Etudes électorales suisses (SELECTS), ainsi que celles de quatre enquêtes internationales: International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) / Measures and Sociological Observation of Attitudes in

<sup>10</sup> De plus, à partir de décembre 2014, soit après la fin de la période sous examen, Andreas Perret, collaborateur de FORS, est devenu Data Manager à 50% du NCCR On the Move.

<sup>11</sup> Le FNS a déclaré en 2013 ne plus vouloir attribuer de bourses pour encourager la participation de doctorants à la Swiss Summer School.

Switzerland (MOSAIC), European Social Survey (ESS) et European Value Survey (EVS). FORS est également le partenaire principal pour la réalisation de SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe), pour lequel l'Institut d'économie et de management de la santé, affilié à l'UNIL et au CHUV, est responsable.

En plus de proposer les données fournies par ses propres enquêtes, FORS assume les tâches suivantes: archivage de données, offre de conseil aux utilisateurs, tenue d'un inventaire des projets de recherche, mise en place d'un portail pour faciliter l'accès des scientifiques aux microdonnées nationales de statistiques fédérales et rédaction du Rapport Social.

#### 2.1.4 Recherche

FORS est la récipiendaire de plusieurs crédits européens dans le 7<sup>e</sup> programme-cadre et s'est portée candidate pour d'autres projets dans le cadre de Horizon 2020. Au plan national, et depuis qu'elle existe, FORS a adressé quatre requêtes au FNS, dont la première, datée de 2008, a été acceptée. Plusieurs interlocuteurs du CSSI ont laissé entendre que les sommes conséquentes que le FNS alloue aux enquêtes à titre d'infrastructure de recherche entreraient en concurrence avec d'éventuels crédits de recherche, quand bien même elles seraient financées sur une ligne de crédit spécifique et évaluées par un panel dédié aux infrastructures en sciences sociales et humaines. De plus, les chercheurs de FORS ont gagné l'impression que les projets à dominante méthodologique ne sont pas jugés comme relevant du domaine de la recherche fondamentale par le FNS. Pourtant, le contrat de prestations signé avec le SEFRI stipule que FORS est censée mener des activités de recherche méthodologique, et ce, sur financement de tiers compétitif.

### 2.2 Appréciation

En accord avec l'analyse des experts externes, le CSSI estime que l'existence de l'institution ne doit pas être remise en cause. FORS a pleinement atteint les objectifs fixés au moment de sa création et rend des services inestimables à la communauté scientifique. Son importance est reconnue par la majorité des acteurs, particulièrement ceux qui utilisent le plus ses services.

Toutefois, les principaux partenaires et utilisateurs de FORS montrent peu d'empressement à contribuer à son financement. Pour le CSSI, la responsabilité d'assurer la durabilité de l'institution incombe prioritairement à la Confédération.

Le financement durable des enquêtes représente la question la plus urgente. Il s'agit notamment, d'une part, d'assurer un contrôle scientifique de la qualité et, de l'autre, de veiller à la continuité longitudinale des enquêtes. Le FNS souhaite, pour de bonnes raisons, se concentrer sur un rôle de soutien dans la phase initiale de tels projets et être libéré de la tâche de les accompagner et de les subventionner d'une manière répétitive et routinière<sup>12</sup>. En outre, les critères qui ont été employés à la division I du FNS s'apparentent aux principes établis pour des projets de recherche fondamentale et ne sont pas adaptés au caractère d'infrastructure des enquêtes<sup>13</sup>. Le CSSI préconise par conséquent soit de transférer cette tâche par exemple à la division IV, conformément aux recommandations formulées dans son évaluation de l'encouragement des infrastructures par le FNS<sup>14</sup>, soit de considérer une autre des options évoquées au point 3.5.4.

Sur le plan de l'internationalisation, FORS a réussi à établir un lien crucial entre la recherche suisse et européenne. De l'avis des experts, le fait que les données fournies par FORS soient validées et utilisées par les partenaires européens est un gage de la bonne qualité du travail effectué.

<sup>12</sup> SWIR. Evaluation des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds in Bezug auf die strategische Förderung von Forschungsinfrastrukturen und Fachgebieten. Schlussbericht. Vom Rat am 16 September 2014 verabschiedet. (Transmis au SEFRI le 30 Septembre 2014.)

<sup>13</sup> Pour les critères appliqués à la division I, le CSSI se base, entre autres, sur les exemples que l'on trouve dans le rapport du SNF sur FORS à l'Annexe 3.1, voir aussi note 31 p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> SWIR. Evaluation des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds in Bezug auf die strategische Förderung von Forschungsinfrastrukturen und Fachgebieten. Schlussbericht. Vom Rat am 16 September 2014 verabschiedet. (Transmis au SEFRI le 30 Septembre 2014.)

De façon générale, les utilisateurs des enquêtes pourraient être consultés d'une manière encore plus systématique qu'aujourd'hui en ce qui concerne le design des questions des enquêtes.

La vocation nationale de l'institution a déjà été réalisée et mérite d'être encore renforcée. Il n'est pas nécessaire que FORS soit utilisée avec une égale intensité par toutes les hautes écoles, ni qu'elle recouvre l'ensemble des activités de recherche en sciences sociales. Le CSSI est cependant convaincu que nombre d'utilisateurs potentiels ne semblent pas être sensibilisés à l'avantage d'utiliser les services de FORS, voire informés de son existence (voir 3.3).

En accord avec les experts, le CSSI identifie, d'une part, la conduite d'enquêtes et, d'autre part, l'archivage de données sur le long terme comme les missions les plus importantes de FORS. La gestion de données empiriques est une mission délicate, et FORS a su s'en acquitter tout en garantissant les standards de qualité scientifique.

Pour les experts, les défis auxquels FORS est maintenant appelée à répondre sont (i) la nécessité d'évaluer la qualité des données fournies par des tiers non seulement sur le plan de la qualité technique, mais aussi sur celui de leur potentiel scientifique pour une analyse secondaire; (ii) la réflexion sur ce qu'il convient de faire des nouveaux types de données; (iii) la nécessité de faciliter l'accès aux données afin de convaincre encore plus de chercheurs d'utiliser les services de FORS.

Le CSSI retient notamment les propositions des experts afin d'inciter les chercheurs à l'utilisation secondaire des données<sup>15</sup>. Il reste conscient de la difficile balance devant être assurée par FORS entre facilité d'accès aux données et protection de la sphère privée.

Le CSSI partage l'opinion des experts concernant la productivité scientifique de FORS. Il est remarquable que le nombre de publications en *peer review* par année et par EPT tienne la comparaison avec celui de GESIS.

Tout en relevant le caractère imparfait de toute entreprise de mesure de la qualité, les experts sont plus critiques en ce qui concerne le renom des revues dans lesquelles FORS publie la plupart de ses articles, et sur le fait qu'un petit nombre de collaborateurs de FORS est à l'origine de la majorité des publications. Ils mentionnent aussi la stabilité des thèmes de recherche méthodologique et un certain éparpillement des sujets de recherche substantielle.

L'équilibre entre recherche méthodologique et recherche thématique ainsi que la possible concurrence entre les missions de recherche et de services sont des enjeux importants (voir 3.5.2). Pour aider l'institution à augmenter sa capacité de recherche, le groupe d'experts externes recommande la pratique des *joint appointments*, qui serait probablement difficile à réaliser dans le contexte suisse. FORS en tant que telle n'a pas de mission d'enseignement ni le droit de former des doctorants, mais elle a néanmoins besoin de collaborateurs pour la carrière desquels ces aspects jouent un rôle essentiel. FORS est bien consciente de ce problème et s'efforce d'y répondre en renforçant la collaboration avec l'UNIL (mais aussi avec d'autres hautes écoles où ses collaborateurs enseignent sur une base volontaire) et en offrant du temps de recherche à ses collaborateurs en cours de doctorat. Un même arrangement paraît souhaitable à l'égard des collaborateurs détenteurs d'un doctorat.

Pour faciliter la transition entre la phase de construction et celle de consolidation de l'institution, FORS devrait repenser certains aspects de son organisation. La cohésion entre les deux principales sections doit être renforcée. La mise en place d'une véritable orientation stratégique au sein du Conseil de fondation représente un défi pour la durabilité et l'autonomie de l'institution (voir 3.4.1).

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<sup>15</sup> Annexe 4.1 p. 82.

### 3. Réponses aux questions du mandat SEFRI

Dans le présent chapitre de son rapport, le CSSI offre des réponses détaillées à chacune des questions posées par le SEFRI dans son mandat. Celles-ci sont placées en tête de chaque paragraphe et mises en italique. Le CSSI traduit ces questions de l'allemand pour homogénéiser le texte du rapport. La version originale se trouve en Annexe 1.

#### 3.1 Appréciation des performances de l'institution FORS

*3.1.1 SEFRI: Comment faut-il juger les performances de FORS au regard des ressources à disposition, de la durée d'existence et des conditions-cadre définies par le mandat de prestation?*

Durant l'année 2013<sup>16</sup>, FORS a reçu 4,8 millions CHF du FNS pour la conduite des six enquêtes nationales et internationales. Le FNS payait aussi la cotisation annuelle pour l'accès au LIS ainsi que les coûts de rédaction du Rapport Social. Toujours en 2013, FORS a consacré 2,5 millions CHF reçus de la Confédération au titre de l'art. 15 aux missions suivantes, listées dans le contrat de prestations entre FORS et le SEFRI: services de données et d'information sur la recherche (DARIS); tenue d'un inventaire de projets de recherche menés en Suisse; acquisition de données de projets menés en Suisse; préparation des données et métadonnées selon des standards internationaux; facilitation de l'accès et distribution de données (y compris microdonnées de la statistique publique); promotion et support pour des analyses secondaires; valorisation des données à disposition chez FORS; initiation et participation à des projets de recherche en réseau avec les hautes écoles; représentation de la Suisse dans le cadre du CESSDA. Ces missions étaient déjà dévolues dans une certaine mesure à SIDOS, tandis que le contrat avec le SEFRI y a ajouté la mise sur pied d'un programme de recherche méthodologique.

Ce contrat de prestations 2008-2012 entre FORS et le SEFRI demande à la fondation de mettre en place un programme de recherche méthodologique en collaboration avec des groupes de recherche et des institutions actives dans le domaine, et de poursuivre des activités de recherche méthodologique financées par des fonds tiers. Il s'agit donc là de prestations pour lesquelles le financement au titre de l'art. 15 est prévu comme *seed money*. Selon sa planification pluriannuelle, FORS s'est engagée à consacrer 10% de son temps à des activités de recherche.

De l'avis du CSSI, FORS remplit son mandat d'une manière judicieuse, excepté sur le point de la recherche. Pour les raisons mentionnées au point 2.1.4, néanmoins, la mission de recherche semble dans les circonstances actuelles, notamment l'absence de moyens spécifiques, presque impossible à mener à bien.

*3.1.2 SEFRI: Quelles institutions étrangères se prêtent-elles à une comparaison? Comment apprécier les prestations de FORS par rapport à ces institutions?*

Seul GESIS (Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften) se prête à une comparaison au plan européen, car il cumule les tâches d'archivage et de services aux chercheurs en sciences sociales avec celles de collecte de données empiriques ainsi que des activités de recherche<sup>17</sup>. GESIS est cependant sensiblement plus grand que FORS; il emploie 280 collaborateurs (244 EPT) contre 35 (28 EPT) pour FORS. On peut relever que GESIS a un caractère académique plus marqué, avec des professeurs universitaires pour diriger ses cinq départements selon le modèle du *joint appointment* et la possibilité de former des doctorants (43 en 2013), tandis que les collaborateurs de FORS sont tous engagés à titre permanent, avec un salaire plutôt comparable à celui d'un collaborateur scientifique dans une HES. Certains collaborateurs de FORS sont également des doctorants affiliés à diverses universités (4 en 2013), mais ils n'ont pas la possibilité de se

<sup>16</sup> Les données chiffrées varient d'année en année selon les rythmes spécifiques des enquêtes (voir Tableau 1 p. 6). L'année 2013 a été choisie comme année de référence notamment pour assurer la comparabilité avec les données du rapport GESIS.

<sup>17</sup> La principale différence étant que GESIS poursuit également des recherches dans le domaine de l'informatique appliquée et des technologies de la connaissance (voir Annexe 5).

qualifier académiquement auprès de FORS. Finalement, la centralisation des enquêtes est moins marquée en Allemagne qu'en Suisse: la réalisation de nombreuses enquêtes d'importance nationale, notamment financées par la Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft (DFG), n'est pas confiée à GESIS, mais à un consortium d'institutions académiques suite à un appel d'offres.

Le budget de GESIS pour l'année 2013 s'élève à 30 millions CHF<sup>18</sup>, contre 7,2 millions CHF pour FORS. GESIS consacre 66% de ses ressources aux charges salariales et 33% aux charges de fonctionnement. De son côté, FORS consacre 54% aux charges salariales et 44% aux charges de fonctionnement. Les charges salariales moyennes de GESIS sont inférieures (80'000 CHF par EPT) par rapport à FORS (139'000 CHF par EPT). La comparaison des charges de fonctionnement est importante en raison des remarques du FNS dans son rapport de synthèse relatives aux coûts élevés des enquêtes de FORS, notamment en raison de l'externalisation du travail de terrain à des prestataires privés<sup>19</sup>. L'externalisation permet d'éviter l'engagement de nombreux collaborateurs dont la charge de travail varierait fortement selon les phases des différentes enquêtes. On peut supposer que la collecte des données soit moins compétitive, donc plus chère en Suisse qu'en Allemagne, en raison de la taille réduite du marché ainsi que du plurilinguisme.

En l'absence de comptabilité analytique et au regard des différences dans l'organisation interne, il est très délicat de pousser la comparaison plus loin en terme de productivité. FORS conduit ses enquêtes sur des budgets spécifiques, selon les requêtes soumises au FNS, tandis que GESIS ne comptabilise pas séparément les moyens engagés dans chacune de ses enquêtes. Tout au plus peut-on comparer les coûts de l'enquête GLES (German Longitudinal Election Study) avec ceux de SELECTS. En effet, la DFG finance la réalisation de GLES, confiée à quatre institutions académiques dont GESIS, lequel reçoit 1,6 million CHF pour les années 2012-2014. La répartition entre frais de recherche internes et externes n'est pas connue, mais on sait que GESIS y consacre environ 5 EPT. Durant la même période, le FNS finance SELECTS à hauteur de 1,3 million CHF, dont 0,5 million CHF pour les salaires et charges sociales, et 0,8 million de frais de recherche externalisés pour la conduite des interviews. La coexistence des langues et des cultures augmente ici aussi la complexité et requiert de réaliser à peu près le même nombre d'interviews en Suisse qu'en Allemagne en dépit de la grande différence de taille.

En conclusion, les données disponibles, bien que très partielles, n'apportent pas d'éléments supportant l'idée que les enquêtes FORS coûteraient trop cher.

L'utilisation des services respectifs de FORS et de GESIS dépend du nombre de destinataires potentiels. Dans une première approximation, les deux institutions se sont accordées pour comparer une fraction semblable de leurs usagers, soit le nombre de chaires de professeurs dans les domaines des sciences sociales et politiques<sup>20</sup>. GESIS recense ainsi 791 chaires en sciences sociales et politiques en Allemagne, alors que FORS identifie 109 chaires en Suisse, ce qui laisse conclure à un rapport d'ordre de grandeur de 7,3 entre les deux pays. Si l'on accepte de considérer le nombre de chaires professorales comme un facteur de normalisation valable entre les deux pays, on constate que les données produites par GESIS sont tendanciellement plus demandées que celles de FORS, sauf en ce qui concerne les études électorales SELECTS, resp. GLES.

<sup>18</sup> Dans le contexte de ce rapport, tous les montants en € sont exprimés en CHF selon la formule  $1 \text{ €} = 1,2 \text{ CHF}$ .

<sup>19</sup> Annexe 3.1 p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> Il faut cependant noter que les disciplines concernées par ces catégories ne sont pas exactement congruentes dans les deux pays (cf. Annexe 5, note 5).

Noms des enquêtes FORS	Moyenne <i>downloads</i> FORS (± écart-type)	Noms des enquêtes GESIS	Moyenne <i>downloads</i> GESIS	Moyenne <i>downloads</i> FORS normalisée <sup>21</sup>	Moyenne <i>downloads</i> GESIS normalisée
PSM	322,5 (± 64,4)	ALLBUS	9568,3 (± 1061,0)	3,0 (± 0,6)	12,1 (± 1,3)
MOSAIC/ISSP	272,5 (± 114,6)	ISSP GESIS	5784,5 (± 1629,0)	2,5 (± 1,1)	7,3 (± 2,0)
SELECTS	260,8 (± 101,1)	GLES	2481,75 (± 931,6)	2,4 (± 0,9)	3,1 (± 1,2)

**Tableau 2: Demandes d'ensembles de données produites *in house* au cours des années 2010 à 2013 auprès de FORS et de GESIS selon étude GESIS**

Les services de consultation des deux institutions ont aussi été comptabilisés pour l'année 2013. Ils reflètent une utilisation proportionnellement plus intensive des services de FORS.

Nombre de consultations FORS	Nombre de consultations GESIS	Nombre de consultations FORS normalisé	Nombre de consultations GESIS normalisé
456	2'334	4,2	3,0

**Tableau 3: Services de consultations fournis par FORS et GESIS au cours de l'année 2013 selon étude GESIS**

Finalement, la productivité scientifique des deux institutions peut être abordée d'une manière approximative par le nombre d'articles publiés en *peer review* par année et par EPT, en ne considérant que le personnel scientifique. Durant les années 2010 à 2013, les collaborateurs de GESIS ont publié une moyenne annuelle de 0,44 article scientifique par EPT tandis que les collaborateurs de FORS en ont publié 0,53 par EPT.

Une telle productivité, qui serait jugée faible pour un institut universitaire, semble justifiée par le poids prépondérant de la mission de services pour FORS et GESIS.

### 3.2 Analyse de la perspective des utilisateurs, sur un plan systémique et institutionnel

*3.2.1 SEFRI: Quelle est la valeur ajoutée de l'existence de FORS en tant que centre national de données et de méthodes, sur un plan systémique et institutionnel (notamment la valeur ajoutée indirecte pour le FNS, en comparaison de l'encouragement de projets de recherche individuels, et pour les universités individuelles)?*

Pour les hautes écoles, la perte de mémoire institutionnelle est importante après seulement quelques années, de sorte qu'il ne paraît pas justifié de laisser à ces seules institutions le soin de rassembler et de conserver leurs données sur leurs serveurs informatiques. La valeur scientifique de certaines données ne se révèle souvent que des décennies plus tard. Il faut donc qu'un acteur spécifique, en l'occurrence la fondation FORS, veille à la continuité du système à travers la conservation des données et cherche à garantir des standards de qualité relatifs à ces mêmes données.

De façon générale, il faut constater que la conduite des enquêtes ainsi que l'archivage des données par FORS rendent possibles surtout des projets de recherche à vocation nationale ou internationale qui, sinon, ne pourraient simplement pas être mis sur pied, ou bien seulement au prix d'un lourd investissement des hautes écoles ou du FNS. Dans son autoévaluation, FORS rappelle à juste titre qu'une seule étude longitu-

<sup>21</sup> La normalisation est effectuée selon le nombre de professeurs en sciences sociales et politiques recensés en 2013.

dinale d'ampleur et de qualité suffisante est susceptible de remplacer un grand nombre d'études transversales, et que les coûts de réalisation des projets de recherche sont significativement baissés par la pratique du partage des données<sup>22</sup>.

### 3.2.2 SEFRI: Quels avantages et inconvénients pourraient résulter d'une concentration plus forte au sein de FORS des projets de récoltes de données en sciences sociales encouragés par le FNS?

Le FNS joue un rôle principal dans le financement de SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe)<sup>23</sup> et de TREE (Transition de l'Ecole à l'Emploi)<sup>24</sup>, et un rôle subsidiaire dans celui de COCON (Competence and Context, l'enquête suisse sur l'enfance et la jeunesse)<sup>25</sup>. La DFG en Allemagne ou l'ESRC au Royaume-Uni attribuent également la conduite des enquêtes à différentes institutions ou groupes d'institutions. Aux yeux du CSSI, une éventuelle concentration auprès de FORS de toutes les études financées par le FNS aurait surtout des effets négatifs qui pourraient décourager les chercheurs et les hautes écoles de considérer FORS comme un partenaire ou de lancer leurs propres initiatives, y compris en accédant à des fonds privés et à d'autres sources de cofinancement local. Les avantages d'une telle concentration au niveau de l'échange de savoir-faire et d'expérience pourraient être obtenus au moyen d'une mise en réseau.

## 3.3 Analyse de la perspective des utilisateurs, sur le plan des activités scientifiques

### 3.3.1 SEFRI: Comment, par qui et dans quel but les services offerts par FORS, les méthodes développées et les données générées par FORS sont-ils utilisés?

Un entretien avec les sociétés disciplinaires concernées a permis au CSSI d'apprendre que les chercheurs des disciplines les plus proches, tels que les sociologues et les politologues, utilisent une majorité des services de FORS, notamment les données des grandes enquêtes. Une partie des chercheurs en économie ont récemment pris conscience que l'utilisation des données de FORS leur ouvrait l'accès à de nouveaux thèmes et perspectives de recherche. D'autres chercheurs, rattachés à des domaines disciplinaires plus périphériques (sciences de la communication, linguistique, sciences administratives), connaissent peu l'existence de FORS ou bien n'en utilisent que certains services liés au développement méthodique, tels que les workshops, la Summer School ou l'offre de consultation.

Selon les données de FORS contenues dans le rapport d'autoévaluation, les chercheurs en sociologie (29%) et en économie (26%) utilisent les données du PSM, ainsi qu'une minorité de chercheurs en sciences politiques (7%). Ces derniers sont en revanche beaucoup plus nombreux (32%) à demander des données issues de l'archive de FORS.

Sur demande du CSSI, FORS a fourni des informations supplémentaires relatives à la question de l'utilisation des données produites ou archivées par FORS<sup>26</sup>. Bien que le *reporting* soit encore très incomplet – ne permettant pas de différencier entre l'utilisation à des fins de recherche ou d'enseignement, ni d'estimer combien d'ensembles de données sont nécessaires à la tenue d'un seul projet de recherche –, les informations disponibles permettent à tout le moins de relever que les utilisateurs des données de FORS ne se

<sup>22</sup> Beagrie N. and Houghton J. The Value and Impact of Data Sharing and Curation. A synthesis of three recent studies of UK research data centres. ESRC 2014.

<sup>23</sup> L'Institut d'économie et de management de la santé rattaché à l'UNIL et au CHUV a la responsabilité du volet suisse de SHARE. Le volet suisse est financé majoritairement par le FNS, avec quelques sources de financement local. Depuis la quatrième vague, la réalisation des enquêtes se fait en collaboration étroite avec FORS.

<sup>24</sup> Le projet TREE mené par l'Institut de Sociologie de l'Université de Bâle porte sur les parcours de formation et les parcours professionnels après l'école obligatoire. Durant les années 2000 à 2007, le projet TREE a été piloté et cofinancé par les cantons de Berne, de Genève et du Tessin, ainsi que par des crédits du FNS, de l'OFS et de l'Office fédéral de la formation professionnelle et de la technologie (OFFT). Depuis 2008, il est cofinancé par le FNS et l'Université de Bâle, et confié à la direction du Prof. Manfred Max Bergman, lequel avait notamment été Directeur de recherches Projets et Méthodologie au SIDOS entre 2000 et 2004. La collaboration entre FORS et l'équipe de TREE est limitée à des discussions méthodologiques.

<sup>25</sup> Le FNS cofinance partiellement COCON, basé à l'Institut de Sociologie de l'Université de Zurich. Les sources principales de financement sont la Fondation Jacobs et l'Université de Zurich. Les deux premières vagues ont été réalisées dans le cadre du Programme national de recherche 52.

<sup>26</sup> Annexe 6.

trouvent pas tous concentrés dans la région lausannoise; au contraire, des chercheurs affiliés aux universités de Berne et Zurich figurent parmi les utilisateurs les plus nombreux, au même titre que les chercheurs de l'UNIL. L'Université de Neuchâtel fait un usage consistant des données de FORS dans un but d'enseignement.

Ces premières indications, qui devront être étayées par l'introduction d'un meilleur *reporting* dès l'introduction de la nouvelle plateforme FORSbase, démontrent que FORS est bel et bien une infrastructure de dimension nationale.

### *3.3.2 SEFRI: Comment juger de la contribution de FORS à une recherche en sciences sociales de haute qualité? Dans quelle mesure les prestations et l'expertise des utilisateurs et utilisatrices laissent-elles penser qu'une recherche de haute qualité est rendue possible par l'existence de FORS?*

Les données que FORS rend disponibles ne donnent presque aucune information sur les qualifications des chercheurs, encore moins sur la qualité de leur travail. Au cours de ses entretiens, le CSSI s'est adressé à quatre chercheurs suisses de renom pour connaître leur perspective sur le développement de leurs disciplines et quel rôle FORS devrait y jouer. Ces personnes se considéraient plutôt comme des contributeurs livrant des données à FORS que comme des utilisateurs directs.

Avant la création de FORS, au cours des années 1990, de nombreuses voix ont plaidé pour un renforcement des conditions de recherche pour les sciences sociales, qui étaient alors perçues comme en retard par rapport au niveau international. Il est bien possible d'affirmer que FORS contribue, parmi d'autres facteurs, au fait que les conditions d'existence et les performances de quelques disciplines de sciences sociales se soient améliorées par rapport à cette période. Il faut toutefois limiter la portée de cette constatation aux approches quantitatives.

Par exemple, pour la période 2008 à 2013, FORS a recensé 400 articles scientifiques utilisant les données du PSM, 200 articles citant les données de MOSAiC et 150 celles de SELECTS. La participation aux enquêtes européennes assure que les publications de chercheurs étrangers ont la possibilité d'inclure les données suisses dans leurs travaux, ce qui contribue à renforcer les échanges scientifiques entre les chercheurs suisses et leurs collègues. Enfin, de l'avis du rectorat de l'UNIL, l'existence de FORS était un des facteurs influant la décision de l'attribution du NCCR LIVES à Lausanne.

### *3.3.3 SEFRI: Comment faut-il apprécier la coopération entre FORS et les chaires ou groupes de recherche dans les hautes écoles suisses? Quelle est l'intensité des liens entre FORS et ces chaires ou groupes de recherche? FORS est-elle systématiquement consultée en tant que centre de référence pour les données et les méthodes au moment de conceptualiser et d'exécuter des projets de recherche dans les thématiques correspondantes?*

Les collaborations existant entre FORS et les hautes écoles suisses sont mentionnées au point 2.1.2. Le CSSI juge les liens actuels pas suffisamment étroits. Certains guichets mis en place initialement sont restés relativement inactifs et se concentrent dans une majorité de cas sur des chercheurs issus du corps intermédiaire. Certains des interlocuteurs listés sont des professeurs ordinaires; cependant, le CSSI a pu constater au cours de ses consultations que le fait qu'une personne figure sur la liste des guichets ne signifie pas qu'elle entretienne des liens réguliers avec la fondation. D'autre part, FORS a entrepris une seule fois (en 2012) de faire le tour des universités suisses consacré à un échange avec les différents recteurs. FORS entretient surtout des relations avec un nombre important de chercheurs à travers le pays, lesquels utilisent les données et profitent des conseils offerts par la Fondation. Selon l'appréciation du CSSI, FORS aurait un intérêt à adresser non seulement ces deux niveaux, mais aussi à se rendre encore plus visible auprès des titulaires de chaires.

Pour ce faire, et en raison de l'autonomie particulière des professeurs et instituts académiques dans la plupart des hautes écoles suisses, le CSSI recommande l'établissement de relations aussi au niveau des chaires et des groupes de recherche, à l'image des liens qui existent actuellement avec l'UNIL. En accord

avec l'avis du Conseil scientifique de FORS lors de l'évaluation interne de 2012, le CSSI suggère d'initier une politique de prise de contacts personnels systématique et régulière, et d'établir des liens de coopération selon les compétences présentes dans les différents lieux.

Au cours de ses entretiens, le CSSI a gagné l'impression que FORS n'était pas systématiquement citée en tant que centre de référence, encore moins consultée au moment de conceptualiser des projets de recherche dans les thématiques correspondantes. Il s'avère aussi que la visibilité par exemple du PSM, qui a son propre logo, est relativement indépendante de celle de FORS aux yeux de certains utilisateurs.

*3.3.4 SEFRI: Comment identifier la demande pour des données relevant des sciences sociales de façon régulière et prospective? Qui peut le faire? Comment vérifier de façon régulière, effective et efficiente si une recherche de haut niveau est menée en utilisant des données récoltées, préparées, documentées et disséminées par FORS?*

Aux yeux du CSSI, la demande en données ou services ne peut se déterminer sur une base prospective. Le CSSI se réfère ici à sa récente évaluation du FNS et à la question de la *foresight*<sup>27</sup>. En tous les cas, l'expérience a démontré que les Académies – conformément à leur mandat dans la LERI – sont les mieux à même de jouer un tel rôle. C'est en effet au sein de l'ASSH que la nécessité de créer un centre tel que FORS a commencé à être discutée, notamment avec le Conseil de politique des sciences sociales.

La vérification régulière de la qualité et de la quantité de la recherche en sciences sociales telle qu'évoquée ici ne saurait se concevoir sans un système de *monitoring* lourd et coûteux, que le CSSI juge contre-productif de mettre en place. Il renvoie notamment à ses thèses relatives à la mesure des performances scientifiques<sup>28</sup>.

### 3.4 Adéquation des structures

*3.4.1 SEFRI: Comment le Conseil de fondation exerce-t-il son rôle de garant et d'intermédiaire pour le positionnement et la mise à profit de FORS sur un plan national? Où est le potentiel d'optimisation?*

Conformément aux statuts de FORS, le Conseil de fondation réunit des personnalités nommées par les institutions suivantes: l'UNIL (trois nominations, dont la présidente), la CRUS (deux), la KFH, l'OFS et l'ASSH. Le SEFRI et le FNS, en tant que bailleurs de fonds, envoient chacun une représentante à titre d'auditrice. Le CSSI a eu l'impression que certains membres maintiennent un échange étroit avec l'institution qui les a nommés – cela semble être le cas pour l'UNIL et l'OFS – alors que d'autres agissent d'une manière plus détachée.

L'avantage de ce mode de nomination des membres du Conseil de fondation est qu'il peut encourager les échanges entre FORS et ses partenaires; mais l'absence de prise de décision sur un véritable plan stratégique, laquelle semble être déléguée à la direction et, dans une moindre mesure, au Conseil scientifique, en est la conséquence.

Du point de vue du CSSI, cette tâche incomberait prioritairement au Conseil de fondation en tant que garant de la crédibilité de l'institution. Celui-ci doit encore mieux assurer que FORS garde une capacité d'initiative, même dans le cas où le financement actuel ne devait pas augmenter. Il doit également développer une stratégie de recherche pour l'institution, de concert avec le Conseil scientifique, et en encourageant les synergies entre les différents projets de recherche. Le Conseil devrait refléter le mieux possible la vocation nationale de FORS.

<sup>27</sup> SWIR. Evaluation des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds in Bezug auf die strategische Förderung von Forschungsinfrastrukturen und Fachgebieten. Schlussbericht. Vom Rat am 16 September 2014 verabschiedet. (Transmis au SEFRI le 30 septembre 2014.)

<sup>28</sup> CSST. La mesure de la performance et l'assurance qualité dans le domaine de la science. Pour une utilisation raisonnée de la mesure de la performance et de l'évaluation dans le domaine de la science – Dix thèses. Document CSST 3/2013.

Le CSSI recommande donc, d'une part, de sensibiliser tous les membres à leur responsabilité pour l'avenir de FORS et, d'autre part, de ne pas réserver la présidence du Conseil de fondation à l'UNIL. La consultation des utilisateurs et la réflexion sur l'adéquation entre offre et demande peuvent être assumées par la direction.

#### *3.4.2 SEFRI: Comment le Conseil scientifique exerce-t-il son rôle de conseiller scientifique auprès du Conseil de fondation et de la Direction? Où est le potentiel d'optimisation?*

Le Conseil scientifique dans son ensemble est clairement engagé dans son rôle. Il se réunit régulièrement pour assurer le suivi scientifique. En 2012, une délégation de trois de ses membres a réalisé une évaluation interne globale de l'institution, adoptant notamment une perspective critique sur le manque de contacts directs entre FORS et les chercheurs des hautes écoles suisses. De telles évaluations internes gagneraient à être répétées tous les quatre ans.

Du point de vue du CSSI, le nombre de 14 membres pour le Conseil scientifique est trop élevé, car il renforce automatiquement l'influence de son président, scientifique de grand renom dont les conseils ont beaucoup profité à FORS dans sa période de constitution et de consolidation. Une composition idéale serait d'environ 8 membres, avec un mélange équilibré entre les personnalités déjà bien établies et celles qui sont plus proches des besoins de la jeune génération de chercheurs. Les groupes d'accompagnement des NCCR mis sur pied par le FNS pourraient fournir un possible modèle pour le recentrage du Conseil scientifique.

#### *3.4.3 SEFRI: Des étapes supplémentaires sont-elles nécessaires afin d'établir FORS comme un centre national pour les données et les méthodes en sciences sociales? Si oui, lesquelles?*

Le CSSI constate que FORS s'est déjà bien établie comme un centre national. Pour encore mieux remplir ce rôle, il suggère que FORS:

- (i) Renforce les relations avec les chaires et instituts des hautes écoles suisses;
- (ii) Etablisse encore plus de coopérations scientifiques sur le modèle de la participation à LIVES;
- (iii) Renforce son profil de recherche méthodologique;
- (iv) S'efforce d'aller à la rencontre des disciplines scientifiques encore peu engagées dans l'utilisation des services de FORS.

### **3.5 Options de développement futur et modèles alternatifs de financement**

#### *3.5.1 SEFRI: Quelle perspective de développement futur FORS doit-elle viser? Entre autres options, les éléments suivants doivent être pris en considération:*

- Croissance au moyen d'enquêtes en sciences sociales longitudinales (cohortes) nouvelles ou nouvellement intégrées;
- Amélioration continue ou interruption de collectes de données existantes et basées à FORS;
- Expansion ou diminution des services dans la préparation, la documentation et la dissémination de données, ainsi que le réseautage international (p. ex. programme de résidence pour chercheurs invités);
- Expansion ou diminution des développements méthodologiques (methodological standard setting).

Le CSSI se réfère ici à l'expertise des experts internationaux, lesquels n'ont pas soulevé la nécessité de changements substantiels.

En principe, le lancement de nouvelles enquêtes serait souhaitable, par exemple sur le modèle des *innovation panels* existant en Allemagne et au Royaume-Uni – l'amélioration continue des enquêtes aujourd'hui en cours allant naturellement de soi.

De même, aucune enquête aujourd'hui sous la responsabilité de FORS ne semble superflue aux experts. Certains doublons existent bel et bien, notamment parmi les enquêtes internationales, mais dans des limites qui semblent tout à fait acceptables.

La position du CSSI relative à une plus grande concentration des enquêtes est évoquée au point 3.2.2.

Le plus important semble donc qu'une stratégie et des processus soient mis en place pour décider d'une telle éventualité en fonction des priorités.

Sur le plan des services, les experts différencient entre les tâches prioritaires (archivage de données quantitatives) et celles qui le sont moins: inventaire des projets de recherche, archivage de données qualitatives sur un mode proactif, réalisation du Rapport Social.

Le développement de standards méthodologiques fait partie des missions prioritaires de FORS, dans la mesure où la communauté des chercheurs dans son ensemble y est intéressée, mais que les offres manquent. La Confédération pourrait spécifier dans son contrat de prestations qu'une partie de son financement, par exemple une certaine proportion du temps de travail des collaborateurs scientifiques de FORS, doit y être consacrée. Quant à la recherche méthodologique fondamentale, FORS devrait soumettre des requêtes adressées à la division I du FNS, pour autant que celle-ci ne les refuse pas par principe.

La mise en place d'un programme de résidence pour chercheurs invités ne semble pas une priorité majeure, non pas que la collaboration avec des partenaires internationaux ne soit pas importante en soi, mais parce que FORS est déjà très bien intégrée dans les réseaux de services et de recherche européens. Comme les données empiriques sont en principe accessibles à distance, l'intérêt scientifique des chercheurs étrangers eux-mêmes à se rendre sur place est moins évident. Le CSSI recommande donc de se limiter à poursuivre la pratique actuelle d'invitation conjointe à FORS et à l'UNIL.

*3.5.2 SEFRI: FORS devrait-elle concevoir et mener des recherches thématiques de manière indépendante, c.-à-d. sans collaborations avec des chaires ou des groupes de recherche dans les hautes écoles suisses, comme le recommande son Conseil scientifique? Quels en seraient les avantages et les inconvénients?*

Dans le domaine des sciences sociales, la spécialisation sur des objets de recherche méthodologiques, malgré son utilité indéniable pour l'ensemble du système scientifique, reste encore aujourd'hui identifiée avec une légitimité scientifique diminuée par rapport à la recherche thématique ou substantielle. Les agences de moyens sont également peu enclines à la financer. La conduite d'activités de recherche thématique permet donc à FORS d'attirer et de retenir des collaborateurs compétents et qualifiés, dans la mesure où ceux-ci jouissent à la fois d'une liberté assez grande pour définir leur sujet de recherche et d'un accès optimal aux données empiriques qui leur sont nécessaires.

Toutefois, c'est précisément l'impression répandue auprès d'une partie des chercheurs suisses consultés que les collaborateurs de FORS auraient un accès privilégié aux données empiriques qui peut constituer un problème pour le positionnement de FORS en tant qu'infrastructure de recherche. Les mêmes personnes peuvent être perçues par les utilisateurs potentiels comme des collaborateurs sur le plan des services, et des compétiteurs sur le plan de la recherche. Ce double message est renforcé par l'autoprésentation de FORS, notamment sur son site internet, en tant que «centre de compétences», alors que la dimension d'infrastructure est mise au second plan<sup>29</sup>. Une telle ambivalence nuit à la capacité d'atteindre et de convaincre l'ensemble des chercheurs suisses de collaborer avec FORS.

Pour ces raisons, le CSSI recommande de développer plus encore les activités centrées sur la recherche méthodologique et de ne pas augmenter le poids de la recherche thématique ou substantielle.

<sup>29</sup> En français, FORS utilise l'expression «centre de compétences», et en allemand celle de «Kompetenzzentrum». En anglais, cependant, FORS se présente la plupart du temps comme un «Centre of Expertise».

### 3.5.3 SEFRI: Quelles adaptations des structures organisationnelles seraient nécessaires aux différentes options de développement?

Les recommandations du CSSI relatives à l'optimisation des structures sont exposées aux points 3.4.1 et 3.4.2.

### 3.5.4 SEFRI: Comment assurer le financement durable de FORS à partir de 2017 tout en prévoyant un réexamen périodique des enquêtes individuelles nationales ou internationales, résultant dans des prises de décision claires sur la continuation ou l'interruption de ces enquêtes?

Le CSSI a apprécié différentes options susceptibles d'assurer un financement durable à l'institution à partir de 2017, notamment en ce qui concerne le financement des enquêtes aujourd'hui assumé par le FNS. Les options sont présentées en listant les principaux arguments en leur faveur ou défaveur. Dans les cas où le CSSI estime qu'une option est clairement défavorable, il met en évidence l'argument qui a amené à sa décision.

#### A. FNS (LERI, art. 10, al. 3, let. c)

L'option la plus simple consisterait à ne pas changer substantiellement le mode de financement actuel. Une telle éventualité a été proposée par plusieurs des interlocuteurs consultés par le CSSI, notamment pour éviter les risques attachés à tout changement de système, et aussi parce que les 4,5 millions CHF annuels dévolus par le FNS aux différentes enquêtes ne représentent qu'une somme modeste comparée aux dépenses de la division I, par exemple pour des projets (95 millions CHF en 2013). Selon ce que le CSSI a pu constater pendant l'évaluation<sup>30</sup>, les processus décisionnels concernant les infrastructures pourraient être encore améliorés et systématisés sur le modèle de l'instrument de la DFG relatif aux études longitudinales («Langfristvorhaben»<sup>31</sup>), le rythme de soumission des enquêtes pourrait être espacé, et les critères d'évaluation mieux adaptés aux besoins<sup>32</sup>.

##### Avantages:

- Assurance qualité et compétitivité du mode d'évaluation;
- Proximité avec les enjeux scientifiques;
- Absence des risques associés à l'incertitude d'un changement de système.

##### Inconvénients:

- Compartimentalisation des requêtes entraînant un manque d'efficacité dans l'organisation des enquêtes;
- Critères d'évaluation de la division I mal adaptés au caractère d'infrastructure;
- Désaccord avec la conception actuelle du FNS relative à l'encouragement des infrastructures de recherche basé sur la notion de moyen terme (*Aufbaufinanzierung*) – à l'image de la conception de la DFG pour les études longitudinales. Continuité sur le long terme pas garantie;

<sup>30</sup> La situation de l'encouragement des infrastructures pour les sciences sociales et humaines au FNS a évolué au cours de la période concernée. Dès 2011, le FNS mentionne des sommes substantielles dépensées à titre d'infrastructures pour les sciences humaines et sociales, en l'occurrence 22,4 millions CHF (Rapport annuel 2013); 0,9 million CHF (2012), 12,5 (2011); 2010 et auparavant, aucune rubrique «infrastructures» ne se trouvait dans ces rapports. De plus, un panel spécifique dédié à l'évaluation des infrastructures de recherche en sciences sociales et humaines a récemment été mis en place.

<sup>31</sup> Les «Langfristvorhaben» de la DFG sont destinés depuis plusieurs décennies aux études longitudinales des sciences humaines (éditions, fouilles archéologiques). Leur domaine d'action a été élargi en 2005 pour englober les enquêtes dans les disciplines sociales. Ils sont limités à un maximum de 12 années et évalués tous les 3 ans selon un procédé jugé rigoureux. Jusqu'à présent, aucune étude n'a encore dû être interrompue suite à une évaluation. La poursuite de l'encouragement de la DFG au-delà des 12 années est exclue. Les solutions envisagées pour le long terme sont un institut ou un consortium d'instituts académiques, ou bien un ministère de l'Etat. Les «Langfristvorhaben» sont sous la responsabilité de la division II correspondant aux projets de recherche libre disciplinaires, mais gérés en collaboration étroite avec la division III correspondant aux programmes.

<sup>32</sup> P. ex., le rapport du FNS sur FORS (Annexe 3.1 p. 101-102) mesure l'*output* des enquêtes de FORS au niveau des publications scientifiques comme s'il s'agissait de projets de recherche proprement dits, alors que ces enquêtes visent plutôt à rendre possibles un grand nombre de publications scientifiques par le fait de chercheurs affiliés à d'autres institutions.

- Situation de concurrence entre encouragement des enquêtes et financement de projets de recherche;
  - Perte de temps pour les deux parties due à la soumission et à l'évaluation des requêtes;
  - **Ambivalence et confusion des rôles pour le FNS: partagé entre les intérêts proprement scientifiques, managériaux et politiques, le FNS se trouve dans une situation de quasi-impossibilité de refuser le financement d'une enquête FORS<sup>33</sup>.**
- *Le CSSI déconseille fortement l'option du statu quo, qui ne satisfait ni le FNS ni FORS. Le cas échéant, les améliorations évoquées devraient à tout prix être mises en pratique.*

### ***B. Ligne budgétaire fédérale dédiée aux infrastructures avec rôle clarifié du FNS dans le processus de décision***

Le CSSI se réfère ici à l'analyse développée dans le cadre de l'évaluation du FNS sur le plan des infrastructures<sup>34</sup>: la décision finale concernant des infrastructures de recherche devrait résider au niveau politique, sur recommandation du FNS en ce qui concerne l'évaluation de la qualité scientifique. Un mandat explicite de la Confédération au FNS serait alors nécessaire afin de garantir la transparence des processus. Pour marquer cette nouvelle clarté, la sélection des requêtes d'infrastructures serait transférée soit par exemple à la division IV, qui serait élargie aux aspects stratégiques, soit à une nouvelle division.

#### *Avantages:*

- Contrôle qualité et compétitivité conservée;
- Proximité avec les enjeux scientifiques;
- Adéquation des critères et processus avec la nature de l'infrastructure;
- Expérience de la division IV avec le lancement du PSM et le financement des enquêtes européennes durant l'existence de «Demain la Suisse»;
- Cohérence institutionnelle pour le FNS;
- Cohérence avec le processus de Roadmap.

#### *Inconvénients:*

- Fonds ou ligne budgétaire spécifique n'existe pas encore;
  - Désaccord avec la conception actuelle du FNS relative à l'encouragement des infrastructures de recherche basé sur la notion de moyen terme (*Aufbaufinanzierung*).
- *Le CSSI recommande cette option en priorité.*

Un aspect de détail est à prendre en compte dans le cas où l'une des options C/I était préférée à A ou B: les enquêtes menées par FORS peuvent aujourd'hui être réalisées sur la base du registre d'échantillonnage de l'OFS en raison du soutien par le FNS<sup>35</sup>. Le CSSI considère cependant que cette question technique ne doit pas peser dans la décision de modifier le mode de financement actuel.

<sup>33</sup> A titre de comparaison, au Royaume-Uni, l'Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) consacre une part substantielle de son budget au financement d'enquêtes longitudinales sur une base compétitive. Par exemple, la British Election Study a été financée par l'ESRC depuis sa création en 1965, mais confiée à plusieurs organisations de recherche successives. Des évaluations ont lieu tous les cinq ans au minimum.

<sup>34</sup> SWIR. Evaluation des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds in Bezug auf die strategische Förderung von Forschungsinfrastrukturen und Fachgebieten. Schlussbericht. Vom Rat am 16 September 2014 verabschiedet. (Transmis au SEFRI le 30 septembre 2014.)

<sup>35</sup> Ordonnance concernant l'exécution des relevés statistiques fédéraux RS 431.012.1: «Les données relatives aux personnes et aux ménages contenues dans le registre d'échantillonnage ne peuvent être transmises que si elles sont nécessaires pour réaliser [...] des projets de recherche réguliers, financés et considérés comme étant d'importance nationale [...] par le FNS.»

### C. OFS (LERI, art. 16 et lois spéciales)

La LERI prévoit la possibilité pour les offices fédéraux de financer une recherche extra-muros sur mandat. Or, la conduite des enquêtes correspond assez bien au caractère de *Ressortforschung*. Il existe également un précédent à une échelle plus petite, puisque TREE a été encouragé en partie par l'OFS entre les années 2000 à 2007.

#### *Avantages:*

- Continuité;
- Meilleure coordination avec les activités et méthodes de l'OFS. Synergies entre les enquêtes longitudinales menées par les deux institutions en parallèle et pour l'instant non coordonnées;
- Constitution de FORS en tant que fondation garante de l'indépendance de l'institution.

#### *Inconvénients:*

- Absence d'article réservé à la recherche dans la loi sur la statistique fédérale;
- Crédit actuel de volume très limité pour la *Ressortforschung* à l'OFS;
- Difficulté politique à transférer un crédit entre deux départements;
- Manque de flexibilité dans le fonctionnement de l'office, qui se reflète dans l'ordonnance sur les relevés statistiques;
- Modèle *top-down* convenant mal aux besoins académiques;
- **Risque de tensions entre la mission politique de l'OFS et la mission scientifique de FORS.**

- *Le CSSI déconseille cette option.*

### D. ASSH (LERI, art. 11, al. 6)

FORS pourrait être intégrée au sein du cahier des charges de l'Académie des sciences sociales et humaines (ASSH), à l'image de l'Année politique suisse ou des projets d'éditions. Il est probable que l'assurance qualité serait, le cas échéant, déléguée au FNS.

#### *Avantages:*

- Continuité;
- Existence de précédents, à plus petite échelle;
- Proximité avec les communautés disciplinaires concernées.

#### *Inconvénients:*

- Taille de l'ASSH (12 millions CHF en 2013);
- Déplacement du profil actuel de l'ASSH vers les sciences sociales, peut-être au détriment des sciences humaines, par ailleurs assez peu visibles dans le système FRI suisse;
- Capacité stratégique de l'ASSH peu développée et intérêt peu clair pour FORS;
- Nécessité d'adapter les structures de gestion actuelles et de définir un processus d'assurance de la qualité.

- *Le CSSI pourrait imaginer cette solution, mais la juge difficile à réaliser.*

### ***E. Conseil des EPF (LERI, art. 17)***

Plusieurs instituts membres du Domaine EPF peuvent être considérés comme des services auxiliaires ou des infrastructures de recherche dans le domaine des sciences naturelles. L'EPFZ a déjà commencé à mettre en place un programme de recherche en sciences sociales – ce qui ne veut pas forcément dire que le Domaine EPF, dans son autonomie par rapport au SEFRI, serait intéressé à reprendre FORS. Il est clair que le profil actuel de FORS s'en trouverait modifié, devenant plus académique et plus proche des sciences dures. Néanmoins, cette option a été qualifiée par plusieurs acteurs consultés par le CSSI de «pas la pire des solutions» envisagées.

#### *Avantages:*

- Stabilité du financement dans le cadre du budget global du domaine EPF;
- Capacités stratégiques du Conseil des EPF;
- Elargissement de la perspective EPF à des domaines disciplinaires encore peu représentés.

#### *Inconvénients:*

- Statut de la recherche empirique en sciences sociales relativement faible dans le domaine EPF;
- Absence de contacts jusqu'ici entre FORS et les EPF;
- **Message négatif à l'attention des hautes écoles: une telle solution laisserait assez clairement entendre qu'à la différence du domaine des EPF, les universités cantonales ne sont pas en mesure d'endosser des responsabilités pour le système FRI dans son ensemble.**

- *Le CSSI déconseille cette option.*

### ***F. Intégration à l'UNIL en tant qu'institut académique à part entière***

L'art. 15 LERI insiste sur la nécessité de justifier régulièrement pour quelles raisons un institut doit être créé ou maintenu à l'état extra-universitaire. L'UNIL a déjà incorporé plusieurs instituts de recherche ou fondations autrefois indépendants.

#### *Avantages:*

- Responsabilité claire;
- Opportunité de développement académique de l'institution, avec possibilité d'élargir la mission.

#### *Inconvénients:*

- Désaccord avec la stratégie actuelle de l'UNIL;
- **Rôle national de l'institut en danger.**

- *Le CSSI déconseille cette option.*

### ***G. Consortium de hautes écoles (LEHE, art. 47, al. 3)***

En Allemagne, la politique de la DFG consiste à transférer les enquêtes longitudinales à des institutions académiques, après une période de mise en place soutenue par la DFG elle-même. Il s'agit souvent d'instituts affiliés à des associations telles que la Leibniz Gemeinschaft, qui n'ont pas d'équivalent direct en Suisse.

Les consultations du CSSI l'ont amené à la conclusion qu'une contribution substantielle au budget de la fondation de la part des hautes écoles est relativement peu probable: l'UNIL ne se déclare en mesure d'envisager une élévation que très modeste de sa contribution actuelle, tandis que les autres hautes écoles consultées montrent peu d'empressement à participer au financement d'une tâche qu'elles estiment relever de la compétence fédérale.

*Avantages:*

- Renforcement du caractère autonome des hautes écoles;
- «Preuve» de l'utilité des services de FORS pour les hautes écoles;
- Adéquation avec le fédéralisme;
- Opportunité de développement académique de l'institution, avec possibilité d'élargir la mission.

*Inconvénients:*

- Absence de compatibilité entre l'encouragement selon l'art. 47 LEHE et l'art. 15 LERI;
  - Désaccord avec la conception de la CRUS, qui considère que le rôle de la Confédération pour les *grandes* infrastructures de recherche doit être prépondérant plutôt que subsidiaire;
  - Risques de perte de stabilité au gré des changements dans les rectorats;
  - Difficulté de réalisation: une fois que l'institution est déjà mise en place et fournit à tous des services gratuits, il devient très difficile de motiver des tiers à participer, notamment dans les circonstances actuelles de financement dans les cantons;
  - Capacité stratégique du Conseil des hautes écoles encore incertaine.
- *Le CSSI pourrait imaginer cette solution, mais la juge difficile à réaliser.*

**H. Contributions liées à des projets (LEHE, art. 59)**

La CUS soutient déjà aujourd'hui des institutions ayant un caractère d'infrastructure au moyen des projets de coopération et d'innovation<sup>36</sup>.

*Avantages:*

- Un financement fédéral sur décision des organes de tutelles des hautes écoles renforcerait leur caractère autonome et «prouverait» l'utilité des services de FORS;
- Meilleure intégration au paysage universitaire;
- Responsabilité du futur Conseil des hautes écoles comme lieu naturel de telles décisions;
- Absence de règle de subsidiarité, qui permettrait de renoncer à l'art. 15 LERI.

*Inconvénients:*

- Financement sur le long terme pas en adéquation avec l'esprit de l'instrument. Caractère de «projet» injustifié;
  - Capacité stratégique du Conseil des hautes écoles encore incertaine;
  - Caractère «onéreux» probablement peu convaincant pour les cantons, qui associent généralement ce caractère aux domaines des sciences naturelles, techniques ou médicales;
  - **Risque de reporter simplement de quatre années le problème actuel, avec péjoration de la situation.**
- *Le CSSI déconseille cette option.*

<sup>36</sup> Quelques exemples de la période 2013-2016 incluent: Albert Einstein Center for Fundamental Physics; Centre de droit des migrations; Centre pour la religion, l'économie et la politique; Center for Advanced Surface Analysis; Swiss Non-Human Primate Research Competence Center; Centre de compétence en sciences du sport.  
(Source: <http://www.cus.ch/wFranzoesisch/beitraege/2013-2016/KIP/index.php>, consultée le 22.10.2014.)

## ***I. Soutien privé***

Les fondations ou mécènes suisses qui s'intéressent à la recherche en sciences sociales existent, mais ils sont rares, ce qui rend une telle option assez hypothétique.

### *Avantages:*

- Adéquation avec l'esprit de l'art. 15 LERl;
- Meilleur ancrage local et plus grande visibilité de l'institution.

### *Inconvénients:*

- Difficulté à convaincre un tiers privé une fois que l'institution est déjà en place;
  - **Influence d'intérêts privés sur la recherche publique, dans un domaine politiquement délicat (cf. VOX).**
- *Le CSSI déconseille cette option en tant que financement majoritaire de FORS.*

## **Recommandations du CSSI**

Les recommandations portent sur les points du rapport que le Conseil juge les plus essentiels.

### ***A l'adresse de la Confédération, le CSSI recommande que***

- a) La pérennité de FORS soit assurée. Les tâches principales de FORS, soit la conduite des enquêtes et l'archivage de données, doivent être considérées comme d'intérêt public et ne pouvant être accomplies par des instituts académiques isolés;
- b) La division I du FNS soit libérée de la responsabilité d'assurer le financement des enquêtes de FORS, que la Confédération devrait considérer comme relevant de sa propre responsabilité. La contribution fédérale sera allouée selon les principes suivants: le financement des enquêtes ne peut pas entrer en concurrence avec l'attribution compétitive de crédits pour des projets de recherche; un contrôle externe doit continuer d'assurer la qualité, l'utilité et l'efficacité des activités; la proximité avec les hautes écoles et la liberté académique doivent être préservées;
- c) La Confédération demande de FORS un *reporting* permettant de rendre visible l'accomplissement de la mission nationale, également sur un plan géographique;
- d) Les fonds fédéraux disponibles continuent d'être assurés au moins dans le même ordre de grandeur qu'actuellement, en prenant en compte le renchérissement. Le financement de la Confédération doit comprendre une contribution de base à la recherche au niveau du salaire des collaborateurs de FORS.

### ***A l'adresse du FNS, le CSSI recommande que***

- a) Les projets de nature méthodologique jouissent des mêmes chances de succès que les projets thématiques, pour autant qu'ils remplissent les standards de qualité internationaux;
- b) Pour le cas où la Confédération chargerait le FNS d'encourager les infrastructures de recherche au sein, par exemple, de la division IV ou d'une (sous-)division supplémentaire, l'encouragement de FORS par ce biais n'ait pas de conséquences sur l'évaluation de requêtes soumises par FORS à la division I;
- c) Le FNS continue d'obliger ses bénéficiaires à coopérer avec FORS, tant au niveau de la conception de projets et de l'utilisation de données FORS que de la transmission des données produites dans le cadre des projets de recherche. Le FNS n'a cependant pas vocation à devenir une instance de contrôle; il est plus judicieux qu'il informe FORS en lui transmettant les coordonnées de ses bénéficiaires.

### ***A l'adresse de l'UNIL, le CSSI recommande que***

L'UNIL maintienne les bonnes relations qu'elle entretient déjà avec FORS. Il est néanmoins nécessaire qu'un effort de clarification rende plus transparente la contribution de l'UNIL dans la comptabilité de FORS. Une augmentation de la contribution actuelle de l'UNIL est souhaitable dans la mesure du possible.

***A l'adresse de FORS, le CSSI recommande que***

- a) La Fondation clarifie son profil tel qu'affiché dans ses présentations et sur son site web:
  - i. FORS devrait définir la conduite des enquêtes ainsi que l'archivage de données de tiers comme ses activités centrales. En complément, FORS serait active dans la recherche méthodologique relative à la conduite d'enquêtes, à la gestion de données et aux statistiques;
  - ii. FORS devrait continuer à se concevoir comme la courroie de transmission entre les enquêtes nationales et internationales, ainsi qu'entre les statistiques fédérales et les chercheurs. Dans son autoprésentation, FORS se positionnerait comme une infrastructure destinée aux sciences sociales empiriques plutôt que comme un centre de compétences;
- b) FORS renforce ses relations avec les chaires et les instituts concernés dans les HEU, les HES et les HEP, à travers des contacts personnels directs qui résultent si possible en projets de coopération. En collaboration avec le FNS, FORS doit s'engager à soutenir un changement culturel auprès des chercheurs, en leur montrant notamment quels avantages découlent de l'archivage des données et de l'utilisation de ses autres services;
- c) FORS développe une stratégie propre, qui inclue la priorisation et la postériorisation. Une telle stratégie doit prendre en considération particulière les intérêts des hautes écoles;
- d) La mission nationale de FORS se traduit également dans la composition du Conseil de fondation qui devrait assumer la responsabilité de choix stratégiques, en conformité avec les missions prioritaires de la fondation. Le Conseil scientifique gagnerait en efficacité à devenir plus restreint et plus rapproché des intérêts des jeunes générations de chercheurs.

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## MANDAT

des Eidgenössischen Departements für Wirtschaft, Bildung und Forschung WBF

vertreten durch das **Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation SBF**

an den

**Schweizerischen Wissenschafts- und Innovationsrat SWIR**

betreffend

**Evaluation der Schweizer Stiftung für Forschung in den Sozialwissenschaften FORS**

## I Auftrag und Grundlagen

Das Eidgenössische Departement für Wirtschaft, Bildung und Forschung, vertreten durch das Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation (SBFI), beauftragt den Schweizerischen Wissenschafts- und Innovationsrat (SWIR), FORS einer Evaluation zu unterziehen.

Diese Evaluation stützt sich auf das Forschungs- und Innovationsförderungsgesetz (FIFG; SR 420.1), und auf die Forschungs- und Innovationsförderungsverordnung (V-FIFG; SR 420.11).<sup>1</sup>

## II Vorgehen

Das SBFI erteilt dem SWIR ein Mandat zur Evaluation von FORS. Die Evaluation wird gemäss den SEVAL-Standards durchgeführt.

Das SBFI orientiert FORS, den SNF und die Universität Lausanne offiziell über das Evaluationsvorhaben.

Das methodische Vorgehen ist Sache des Mandatnehmers, im Einvernehmen mit dem Schweizerischen Nationalfonds (SNF). Es wird im Abschlussbericht erläutert und muss Gewähr bieten, dass

- die im Abschnitt III genannten Ziele und Fragen berücksichtigt werden;
- die Positionen und Stellungnahmen des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds eingeholt werden;
- relevante institutionelle Akteure, namentlich die Rektorenkonferenz der Schweizer Universitäten CRUS, die Schweizerische Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften SAGW und die Universität Lausanne angehört werden ;
- Fachgemeinschaften der Sozialwissenschaften angehört werden.

Der SWIR bzw. die von ihm eingesetzte Expertengruppe hat Zugang zu allen für die Durchführung der Evaluation notwendigen Dokumente, die im SBFI verfügbar sind. Der SNF stellt seine Beurteilung in Form eines kleinen Syntheseberichts zur Verfügung. Im Anhang 2 zum Mandat werden bereits folgende Dokumente zur Verfügung gestellt:

- Final report of the group of experts „Meta-evaluation of the models *Facility for Social Science Infrastructure and Social Science Research Centre and their potential location*“, 15 March 2007;
- EDI-Verfügung vom 27. November 2007;
- Leistungsvereinbarung SBF-FORS für die Jahre 2008-2011/2012;
- Begutachtung durch den SWTR, Bericht vom 31. März 2011;
- EDI-Verfügung vom 14. November 2012;
- Bericht des FORS Scientific Board vom 14. März 2013;
- Leistungsvereinbarung SBFI-FORS für die Jahre 2013-2016;

<sup>1</sup> Die Angaben zum FIFG in den folgenden Abschnitten beziehen sich auf die Version vom 14. Dezember 2012, die per 1. Januar 2014 in Kraft treten wird (BBI 2012 9657).

- Selbstevaluationsbericht von FORS über die bis anhin erbrachten Leistungen (nach Mandaterteilung durch SBFI direkt durch SWIR einzuholen).

FORS kann zum Bericht der Expertengruppe Stellung nehmen. Die FORS-Stellungnahme wird im Anhang zum Schlussbericht des SWIR (siehe unten) wiedergegeben.

Der SWIR nimmt in seinem Schlussbericht abschliessend Stellung zu den Ergebnissen der Evaluation (Expertenbericht) und stützt seine nach Akteurguppen (Bund/SBFI, SNF, Hochschulen und ggf. deren Träger, FORS) differenzierten Empfehlungen darauf ab.

Das SBFI wird FORS, den SNF und die Universität Lausanne über die Ergebnisse der Evaluation unterrichten.

Expertenbericht, Schlussbericht und Empfehlungen des SWIR werden dem SBFI übergeben. Der SWIR kann die Berichte und Empfehlungen anschliessend veröffentlichen.

### **III Ziel und Zweck der Evaluation inkl. spezifische Evaluationsfragen**

#### **1. Ziel und Zweck der Evaluation**

Das Ziel der Evaluation ist es, nach dem Abschluss der ersten Betriebsphase von FORS (2008-2012) eine allgemeine Leistungsbeurteilung vorzunehmen, die Nutzung von FORS auf systemischer/institutioneller und auf wissenschaftlicher Ebene zu analysieren sowie die Zweckmässigkeit der aufgebauten Organisationsstrukturen für die Erfüllung des Leistungsauftrags zu beurteilen. Auf der Basis von Konsultationen mit den verschiedenen sozialwissenschaftlichen Fachgemeinschaften in der Schweiz und unter Berücksichtigung der internationalen Entwicklungen sollen zudem mögliche Entwicklungsperspektiven für FORS erarbeitet und beurteilt werden. In diesem Zusammenhang sind auch alternative Finanzierungsmodelle für die Gesamteinrichtung zu entwickeln, unter Berücksichtigung der Bestimmungen des totalrevidierten Forschungs- und Innovationsförderungsgesetz, das per 1. Januar 2014 in Kraft tritt, sowie der etablierten Zuständigkeiten.

Die Resultate der Evaluation sollen dem SBFI Entscheidungsgrundlagen betreffend Ausgestaltung der Leistungsvereinbarung mit FORS und der Finanzierung von FORS als Gesamteinrichtung ab der BFI-Periode 2017-2020 vermitteln.

#### **2. Spezifische Evaluationsfragen**

- *Leistungsbeurteilung (Gesamteinrichtung FORS)*
  - o Wie sind die Leistungen von FORS im Verhältnis zu den eingesetzten Mitteln, der Existenzdauer und den Vorgaben gemäss Leistungsauftrag zu beurteilen?
  - o Welche Institutionen im Ausland eignen sich als Benchmark? Wie sind die Leistungen von FORS im Vergleich mit diesen Institutionen zu beurteilen?

- *Analyse der Nutzerseite*

Systemische/institutionelle Ebene:

- Wie ist der Mehrwert, der aufgrund der Existenz von FORS als nationalem Daten- und Methodenzentrum auf systemischer/institutioneller Ebene erzielt wird, zu beurteilen (namentlich indirekter Mehrwert für den SNF bei der Einzelprojektförderung sowie für einzelne Hochschulen)?
- Welche Vor- und Nachteile könnten sich aus einer stärkeren Konzentration der vom SNF finanzierten sozialwissenschaftlichen Datenerhebungsprojekte bei FORS ergeben?

Wissenschaftliche Ebene:

- Wie, für was und von wem werden die FORS-Dienstleistungen, die von FORS entwickelten Methoden und die durch FORS generierten Daten genutzt?
- Wie ist der Beitrag von FORS für eine qualitativ hochstehende sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung zu beurteilen? Inwieweit legen Leistungsausweis und Fachkompetenzen der Benutzerinnen und Benutzer nahe, dass aufgrund von FORS qualitativ hochstehende Forschung gemacht wird?
- Wie sind die Kooperationen von FORS mit Lehrstühlen und Forschungsgruppen der verschiedenen Schweizer Hochschulen zu beurteilen? Inwieweit bestehen Verbindungen zwischen Lehrstühlen/Forschungsgruppen und FORS resp. wird FORS konsequent als Referenzzentrum für Daten und Methoden bei der Konzeptualisierung und Durchführung von entsprechenden thematischen Forschungsprojekte beigezogen?
- Wie kann regelmässig und zukunftsgerichtet der Bedarf an sozialwissenschaftlichen Daten eruiert werden? Durch wen? Wie kann regelmässig, effektiv und effizient überprüft werden, ob mit den durch FORS erhobenen, aufbereiteten, dokumentierten und vertriebenen Daten qualitativ hochstehende Forschung gemacht wird?

- *Zweckmässigkeit der Organisation:*

- Wie nimmt der Stiftungsrat seine Rolle als Garant und Vermittler für die nationale Positionierung und schweizweite Nutzung von FORS wahr? Wo gibt es Optimierungspotential?
- Wie nimmt der wissenschaftliche Beirat seine Rolle als wissenschaftlicher Berater von Stiftungsrat und Direktorium wahr? Wo gibt es Optimierungspotential?
- Müssten weitere Schritte unternommen werden, um FORS als übergeordnetes nationales Daten- und Methodenzentrum für die Sozialwissenschaften zu etablieren? Wenn ja, welche?

- *Entwicklungsperspektiven und alternative Finanzierungsmodelle*
  - o Welche Entwicklungsperspektive ist für FORS anzustreben? Zu berücksichtigen sind dabei u.a. folgende Elemente:
    - Wachstum durch neue oder neu bei FORS anzusiedelnde sozialwissenschaftliche längsschnittliche Studien (Kohorten),
    - kontinuierliche Weiterentwicklung / Abbruch von bestehenden, bei FORS angesiedelten Datenerhebungen
    - Ausbau / Abbau von Leistungen im Bereich der Aufbereitung, Dokumentation und Dissemination von Daten sowie im Bereich der nationalen / internationalen Vernetzung (z.B. programme for research fellows)
    - Ausbau / Abbau der Methodenentwicklung (methodological standard setting)
  - o Soll FORS unabhängig, d.h. ohne Kooperation mit Lehrstühlen/Forschungsgruppen an Schweizer Hochschulen, thematische Forschungsprojekte (substantive research) konzipieren und durchführen, wie es der wissenschaftliche Beirat von FORS empfiehlt? Was spricht dafür? Was spricht dagegen?
  - o Welche Anpassungen der Organisationsstrukturen wären für die verschiedenen Entwicklungsperspektiven notwendig?
  - o Wie kann FORS ab 2017 nachhaltig im Hinblick auf die verschiedenen Entwicklungsperspektiven und unter Berücksichtigung einer periodischen Überprüfung von einzelnen (national oder international organisierten) Datenerhebungen mit klaren Weiterführungs- resp. Abbruchentscheiden finanziert werden?

#### **IV Stellungnahme des SWIR**

Unter Berücksichtigung des Expertenberichts soll die abschliessende Stellungnahme des SWIR zu allen Punkten gemäss Abschnitt III Aussagen enthalten.

#### **V Finanzierung**

Das SBFI beteiligt sich mit höchstens CHF 20'000.00 (inkl. MWST) an den Kosten, die dem SWIR durch die Erfüllung dieses Mandats entstehen.

#### **VI Expertinnen und Experten**

Die externen Expertinnen und Experten werden durch den SWIR ernannt. FORS steht das Recht zu, in begründeten Fällen die Nomination einer Expertin resp. eines Experten abzulehnen. Der SNF kann sich zur Zusammensetzung des Panels äussern.

Seitens des SBFi wird grundsätzlich die Vertraulichkeit bezüglich Identität der Expertinnen und Experten und/oder Inhalt der Expertenberichte gewahrt.

## VII Fristen

Das Evaluationsverfahren wird im Dezember 2013 eröffnet und soll mit der Übermittlung von Bericht und Empfehlungen bis Ende 2014 abgeschlossen werden.

Auf Oktober 2014 wird dem SBFi ein kurzer Zwischenbericht vorgelegt, welcher über die wesentliche Stossrichtung des Schlussberichtes Auskunft gibt.

**Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation SBFi**

G. Haefliger

Dr. Gregor Haefliger

Leiter Abteilung Nationale Forschung und Innovation

Bern, den 17. 12. 2013

## Anhang 1: Informationen zu Gründung, Finanzierung und Auftrag von FORS

### Gründung

Am 27. September 2007 wurde die Schweizer Stiftung für die Forschung in den Sozialwissenschaften (gemäss Art. 80 ff. ZGB) durch die Universität Lausanne gegründet. Die Zusammensetzung des Stiftungsrats (Art. 7 der Statuten) soll sicherstellen, dass die wesentlichen Akteure resp. Nutzer von FORS direkt im entsprechenden Entscheidgremium vertreten sind und so die Aktivitäten von FORS und deren fortlaufende Weiterentwicklung aufgrund der sich wandelnden Bedürfnisse der betroffenen wissenschaftlichen Fachgemeinschaften direkt mitgestalten können.

Mit der Gründung von FORS wurde ein Forschungsinfrastrukturzentrum für Sozialwissenschaften errichtet, im Sinne der entsprechenden Empfehlung aus dem Schwerpunktprogramm „Domain la Suisse“ (1996-2004). FORS führt folgende Aktivitäten unter einem institutionellen Dach zusammen:

- (ii) Aufbereitung, Dokumentation und Dissemination von Daten sowie Forschungsinventar (Aufgaben des ehemaligen Schweizerischen Informations- und Datenarchivdienstes SIDOS);
- (iii) Nationale Datenerhebungen und Schweizer Beteiligung an internationalen Datenerhebungen;
- (iv) Methodenentwicklung.

FORS wurde an der Universität Lausanne angesiedelt. Dies erfolgte aufgrund eines von der Schweizerischen Akademie für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften SAGW organisierten und durchgeführten Evaluationsverfahrens im Jahr 2006 sowie aufgrund einer Metaevaluation organisiert und durchgeführt anfangs 2007 durch das damalige Staatssekretariat für Bildung und Forschung unter Mitwirkung des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds.<sup>2</sup>

### Finanzierung

Die Finanzierung von FORS ist seit 2008 wie folgt geregelt:

- (v) Grundfinanzierung via Art. 15 Forschungs- und Innovationsförderungsgesetz (FIFG) sowie Sach- und Geldleistungen der Universität Lausanne: die Grundfinanzierung deckt namentlich die Aufwendungen für Aufbereitung, Dokumentation und Dissemination von Daten sowie der Methodenentwicklung.
- (vi) Finanzierung der Erhebung von Daten zur Dauerbeobachtung der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung durch jeweils dreijährige Infrastrukturbeiträge des SNF (namentlich Swiss Household Panel (SHP), European Social Survey, Measurement and Observation of Social Attitude in Switzerland (MOSAiCH/ISSP), Schweizer Wahlstudie (Selects), European Values Study (EVS), LIS-the Cross-national Data Center in Luxembourg, Sozialbericht).

<sup>2</sup> Final report of the group of experts „Meta-evaluation of the models *Facility for Social Science Infrastructure and Social Science Research Centre* and their potential location“, 15 March 2007.

Das Bund unterstützt FORS in den Jahren 2013-2016 mit einem durchschnittlichen Jahresbeitrag von 2.5 Mio. Franken. Die Universität Lausanne unterstützt FORS mit jährlichen Sachleistungen im Wert von rund 800'000 Franken sowie mit einem jährlichen Geldbeitrag von 250'000 Franken, falls die ungebundenen Reserven von FORS weniger als 10% der Gesamteinnahmen des entsprechenden Jahrs betragen.

Der SNF finanziert die sieben Infrastrukturvorhaben in den Jahren 2014-2016 mit einem jährlichen Gesamtbeitrag von 4.5 Mio. Franken.

#### *Leistungsauftrag von FORS*

Gemäss dem Final report of the group of experts „Meta-evaluation of the models *Facility for Social Science Infrastructure and Social Science Research Centre* and their potential location” (15 March 2007) hat FORS folgenden Leistungsauftrag erhalten:<sup>3</sup>

1. *Support, enhance and contribute to social science research in Switzerland:*
  - o Prepare, document and provide data of all kinds, such as are needed to conduct studies and secondary analysis in the social sciences;
  - o Provide services: advising researchers and other interested parties on the collection and use of data;
  - o Conduct methodological research: study and recommend methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing data;
  - o Produce data that can advance and deepen understanding of Swiss society;
  - o Conduct substantive research projects that address the needs of organisations and researchers.
2. *Strengthen the social sciences in Switzerland by creating linkages and facilitating synergies between researchers and institutions within the country and internationally.*
  - o Establish collaborative links and stimulate debate and scientific exchange with and between researchers and institutions that pursue similar objectives, both within Switzerland and abroad.

<sup>3</sup> Siehe dazu auch die Leistungsvereinbarungen des Bundes mit FORS für die Jahre 2008-2011/2012 und 2013-2016.

**Anhang 2: Dokumente**

- Final report of the group of experts „Meta-evaluation of the models *Facility for Social Science Infrastructure* and *Social Science Research Centre* and their potential location”, 15 March 2007;
- EDI-Verfügung vom 27. November 2007;
- Leistungsvereinbarung SBF-FORS für die Jahre 2008-2011/2012;
- Begutachtung durch den SWTR, Bericht vom 31. März 2011;
- EDI-Verfügung vom 14. November 2012;
- Bericht des FORS Scientific Board vom 14. März 2013;
- Leistungsvereinbarung SBFI-FORS für die Jahre 2013-2016;
- Selbstevaluationsbericht von FORS über die bis anhin erbrachten Leistungen (nach Mandaterteilung durch SBFI direkt durch SWIR einzuholen)

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## Content

- **Key information**
  - Mission, rationale
  - Activities, outreach
  - Institutional setting, funding
- **Strategic goals**
  - Ensure a high level of service quality
  - Intensify research
  - Extend collaborative networks
  - Improve visibility
  - Enhance third-party funding
  - Support staff development
  - Construct stable institutional and funding arrangements

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## Rationale

- **Combine forces:**
  - Data production
  - Data documentation, access, and distribution
  - Research information
- **Grow competences:**
  - Methodological research
  - Substantive research
  - Publications
- **Create synergies:**
  - Social Report
  - Research partnerships
  - Swiss Summer School on social science methods, Lugano
  - Scientific events
  - Networking



# FORS

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## Mission

**FORS is ...**

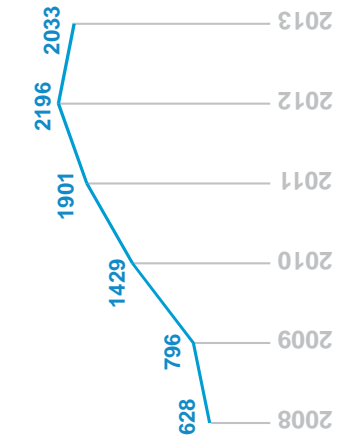
- ... a research-based infrastructure institution
- ... at the service of the social science research community in Switzerland and abroad
- ... a national centre of expertise aspiring to the highest scientific standards
- ... well integrated in relevant national and international networks

### Activities

- **Monitoring social and political change**
  - Swiss Household Panel
  - International surveys on attitudes, opinions and values: ISSP, ESS, EVS, SHARE
  - National election study SELECTS
  - Swiss Social Report
  - Luxembourg Income Study LIS
- **Services and consultation**
  - Data archive
  - Inventory of research projects
  - Access to national statistical microdata
- **Research on methodological and substantive topics**
- **Research and teaching collaboration with universities**
  - Swiss Summer School, Lugano

### Outreach

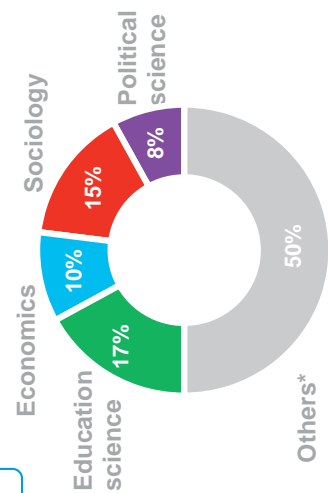
Total number of datasets disseminated by FORS data services DARIS



■ Average growth rate per year: + 26%

### Outreach

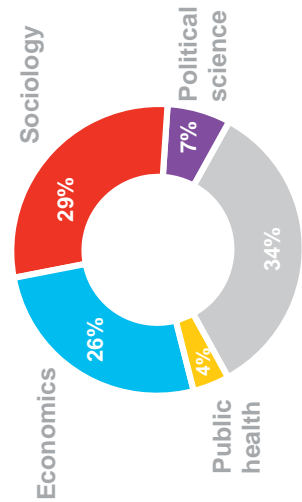
Project descriptions in FORS database according to disciplines



(\*e.g., psychology, communication and media, demography, social and preventive medicine, urbanism and planning) (N=9588)

### Outreach

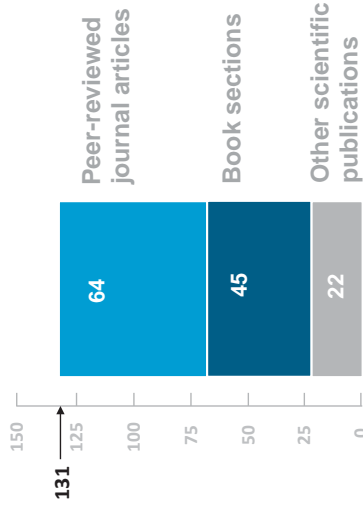
Disciplinary background of SHP users



(\*e.g., psychology, education science, demography, media and communication) (N=1404)

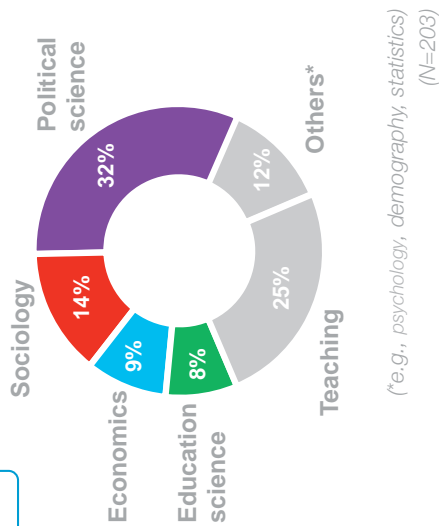
Outreach

Total number of scientific publications by FORS staff, 2008-2013



Outreach

Disciplinary background of DARIS data recipients, 2013



Institutional setting

- National centre, hosted by the University of Lausanne
- Legal form: foundation
- Foundation Board: universities (6, incl. the president); Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences (1); Swiss Federal Statistical Office (1); SNSF and SERI as permanent guests
- Scientific Board: internationally renowned scholars from the social sciences (14, elected *ad personam*)

Funding

- Subsidy by SERI: 2.5mCHF per year for the period 2013-16
- Infrastructure contributions by SNSF: 4.5mCHF per year for the period 2014-16
- Matching funds by University of Lausanne: 800kCHF per year in kind, 250kCHF per year cash (*conditional*)
- Third-party funds (EU, mandated projects): 247kCHF per year (6 year average for the period 2008-13)

## Strategic Goals

### Overview

- Ensure a high level of service quality
- Intensify research
- Extend collaborative networks
- Improve visibility
- Support staff development
- Enhance third-party funding
- Construct stable institutional and funding arrangements

## Strategic Goals

### Ensure a high level of service quality

- Service provision monitored and evaluated periodically
- Regular feedback by users
- Ambitious, but realistic benchmarks
- Committed staff

## A.2.1. FORS in a nutshell

## Strategic Goals

### Intensify research

- Methodological core: planning, conducting, and analyzing surveys
- Substantive core: social change; values, attitudes, behaviour
- Based mainly on FORS data
- Research collaborations regionally, nationally, internationally
- Publications via scholarly media and scientific events

## Strategic Goals

### Intensify research

- Methodological core: planning, conducting, and analyzing surveys
- Substantive core: social change; values, attitudes, behaviour
- Based mainly on FORS data
- Research collaborations regionally, nationally, internationally
- Publications via scholarly media and scientific events

## Strategic Goals

### Extend collaborative networks

- Proactive promotion of scientific collaborations
- Collaborations centred around common projects (research, presentations, publications, etc.)
- Presence on national and international levels
- Continued collaboration with neighbouring Swiss institutions (e.g., SKBF, ARAMIS)

## ANNEXE 2 - Autoévaluation

## Strategic Goals

### Improve visibility

- Scientific community: scholarly publications and presentations
- Special interest publics: targeted topical publications and presentations
- General public: presence in printed and electronic media with a wide circulation
- Up-to-date communication tools: attractive corporate design and presentation material, dynamic website
- Professional scientific communication

## A.2.1. FORS in a nutshell

### Support staff development

- Academic qualification and continued professional formation
- Well-functioning internal communication flow
- Open and creative workplace atmosphere
- Favourable working conditions

## Strategic Goals

## ANNEXE 2 - Autoévaluation

## Strategic Goals

### Enhance third-party funding

- Topics at or close to the core areas of expertise of FORS
- Frontier research funded by SNSF, EU commission, or similar sources
- Mandated research projects
- Respecting time and financial budgets

## Strategic Goals

### Construct stable institutional and funding arrangements

- Long-term perspective
- Good governance
- Transparent and efficient decision-making procedures
- Checks and balances

**Learn more about FORS:**

[www.forscenter.ch](http://www.forscenter.ch)

Thank you for your support !





## Self-assessment report, part I:

### Mission, current state, strategic goals

**Note:** This document complements the presentation slides “FORS in a nutshell”. The slides contain more details on the issues mentioned in this paper. The slides in turn are a condensed version of key parts of the Annual Reports and the Work Programme 2012-2016.

#### A. What FORS is

The key mission of FORS is to be:

- a research-based infrastructure institution;
- at the service of the social science research community in Switzerland and abroad;
- a national centre of competence in empirical social research aspiring to the most advanced scientific standards possible;
- well integrated in relevant national and international networks.

The lack of such an institution was one of the main obstacles for the further development of social sciences in Switzerland according to the conclusions of the SNSF Priority Programme *Demain la Suisse* (1996-2003).

A scientific infrastructure is not conceivable if it is not **based on research** and if it is not participating in research (see our recent book on “Understanding Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences”, 2013, Zurich: Seismo; contained in PDF format in the evaluation documentation). Without being active in research and in exchange with researchers, an infrastructure would lose contact to scientific progress and consequently would most likely no longer be accepted as a partner by scientists. Inertia and bureaucratization could be the unintended and unwanted results of such a misstep.

Therefore, FORS was designed to be close to research from the outset. This was one of the reasons why FORS was placed close to a university with important activities in social sciences. This is very much in line with the opinion expressed by the Scientific Board in their evaluation report of March 2013: There is for FORS an *“in-nate requirement to constantly improve its performance in also engaging in well-planned systematic methodological research embedded at least in part in the international cooperation in the various projects mentioned before which provide the ground for powerful innovations in international survey research”*.

As an infrastructure institution FORS is **at the service of the scientific community**. The high quality and the user orientation of the services are at the core of the activities of FORS. This does not mean, however, that FORS has to or should abstain from its own research activities.

The relative importance of service and research is a critical issue as the Scientific Board rightfully states: *“Like a red thread permeating almost all discussions between the FORS staff/management and the assessment group (AG) was the tension between the service and research components at FORS. There was general agreement that on the one side the foremost raison d’être for the creation of FORS was that the organization should perform its services at the highest possible level, thereby supplying the Swiss social science community with resources helping it to enhance the quality of Swiss social science research. (...) On the other side, taking the examples of cross-nation comparative surveys, over the years it has become increasingly clear that the separation of service and research is quite artificial. FORS participation in cross-national surveys like ESS, EVS, ISSP (MOSAiCH) and SHARE by organizing the studies and overseeing the fieldwork for Switzerland is not only an administrative matter, but constantly touches on concerns which must be dealt with by methodological research. Here, the linkage to the international teams organizing the surveys is particularly challenging, but also rewarding because these surveys to be conducted on the highest possible professional level have to meet methodological challenges which do not only concern these specific surveys, but also pertain to social science research in general.”*

Finding the right balance of service and research is essential. We appreciate comments and suggestions that support us in advancing in this respect, taking into account the available resources.

The activities of FORS as **a national centre of competence in empirical social research** cover a broad field. The Annual Reports give in their chapter 2 an encompassing view of all activities, including the surveys, the data service, publications, the Lugano summer school on methods, and research. All the Annual Reports since 2008, including the most recent one for 2013, are contained in the evaluation documentation.

The **integration into scholarly networks** on the regional, national, and international levels is an important asset for FORS. Active collaborative links are paramount to keep the network alive and expanding. The Annual Reports document these collaborative links in detail in their chapters 2 and 3, and with several performance indicators in chapter 4: on help and advice to users (3.1), collaborative research projects (6.1), and workshops/seminars/conferences organised by FORS (6.2).

We are constantly working to turn the abstract formula of our mission into living reality. Thanks to a dedicated staff we have made quite some progress since we started in January 2008. And we are eager to continue in this direction.

## B. Where FORS stands

The Annual Report 2013, which is enclosed in the evaluation documentation, gives a comprehensive and detailed account of the current state of FORS and its activities. It can be benchmarked against the Work Programme 2012-2016 submitted to the SERI in 2010 (also included in the documentation). However, one has to keep in mind that this pluriannual programme had to be written well in advance and after only two years of operation. Certain basic conditions changed in an unforeseeable way between 2010 and 2012, e.g., with respect to the collaboration with the SFSO (two new directors consecutively appointed since 2010). Moreover, the Annual Report 2013 reflects the state of things after less than half of the 2012-2016 period.

With respect to the strategic guidelines presented in section 1.4 of the Work Programme (p. 8-9), our self-assessment is all in all positive:

- Finding an **optimal balance of research and service functions** is a task which has to be monitored continuously. The push for research activities that the Work Programme had planned by hiring a senior researcher able to acquire funding for research projects (see p. 37) was prevented by the decision of the SERI not to provide the necessary additional resources for such a position. Nevertheless we have made progress by including substantive topics in our research activities and by steadily acquiring third-party funded projects and mandates<sup>1</sup>, even if the estimation of a 15%-20% share of income generated by third-party funds cited in the Work Programme (p. 42) was probably too optimistic from today's perspective (see section 2.3 and the performance indicator on third-party funded projects (4.1) in the Annual Report 2013). The research activities of the FORS staff are well reflected in the publication record of 131 scientific publications since 2008 (the complete list of these publications is included in the evaluation documentation).

The average yearly growth rate in the dissemination of datasets of nearly 26% over the six-year period 2008-13 shows that the service functions of FORS meet a growing demand. More specifically, the number of disseminated datasets that were not produced by FORS but by other researchers has increased by the factor 10 since 2008 (2008: 71, 2013: 763, see the performance indicator on the number of datasets distributed (2.1) in the Annual Report 2013). This is also due to the expanding disciplinary coverage of the FORS databases as evidenced, among others, by the hosting of all Swiss PISA data at FORS. To prevent double registrations of research project descriptions, and to minimize the documentation workload for researchers there is a continued coordination and collaboration with similar databases in Switzerland (e.g., on education research at SKBF in Aarau and on research done or mandated by the federal administration via ARAMIS).

We judge the achieved state of research activities to be an asset when taking into account the fact that FORS is not a pure research institution nor a university insti-

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<sup>1</sup> Third-party funded activities include all projects and mandates *not* funded via the SERI subsidy *nor* via the SNSF infrastructure grants, but from other sources (including EU research programmes).

tute, and that it has to guarantee its service tasks for the whole research community at an advanced level of scientific quality.

- With the launch of the IT development project FORSbase, aimed at creating a unique, state of the art, and user-friendly IT environment for all FORS activities, and with the successful implementation of its first stage, the basis has been laid to allow FORS to **keep pace with the development of European data infrastructures** (see <https://forsbase.unil.ch>).

FORS is a founding member of the recently established Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA AS), which strives for coordinated and collaborative advancement of data preservation and access functionalities, including metadata standards (DDI), authentication systems and procedures, data access and dissemination policies (open access), and data harmonization activities. More specifically, within the international framework of CESSDA AS, FORS will contribute to the development of a multilingual question data bank, which is designed to facilitate questionnaire construction by offering choices of well-tested and established questions about key topics like education, well-being, political orientation, etc.

FORS is also a member of the consortium of the EU FP 7 project “Data without Boundaries”, where researchers and national statistical institutes collaborate to improve coordination and joint activities in the fields of data documentation, preservation, and access to official micro-data. In this context, FORS builds on experiences gained by implementing the portal COMPASS, which gives access to an encompassing documentation of Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) microdata (<http://forscenter.ch/en/data-and-research-information-services/public-statistics/>).

All longitudinal and/or comparative surveys run by FORS (SHP, SELECTS, ESS, MOSAiCH, EVS, SHARE) are closely linked to their equivalents in other countries. The FORS survey teams do not only implement changes and innovations as they are decided by the international coordinators – they also actively contribute to their development and testing by engaging in methodology committees, attending meetings and specific events, running tests and experiments, and by organising well-attended international conferences and workshops (e.g., the SHP user conferences and the SHARE workshop on biomarkers). The respective sections of the Annual Reports give detailed accounts of these activities.

All in all, FORS is on a very promising track toward the constant development of its offerings. There is no risk of losing touch with ongoing developments in its fields of activity.

- Scientific **networks** on regional, national, and international levels are of crucial importance in order to stay connected to the dynamics of science. At FORS, there is an *institutional side* of networking, which is represented by its relationships with the host university and the faculty for social and political sciences, by its nationwide network of contact points at all relevant universities and universities of ap-

plied sciences, and by international commitments (see chapter 3 of the Annual Reports). However, to make networks live and productive the *personal involvement* of researchers and their active collaboration is needed. As is demonstrated by the number of presentations by FORS staff and by the number of collaborative research projects in which they are participating, around 80% of the scientific collaborators are pursuing interinstitutional, often international, research activities (see the performance indicators on the number of presentations (5.2) and on collaborative research projects (6.1) as well as the complete list of presentations in the Appendix of the Annual Report 2013).

We believe that FORS has reached a high degree of integration in relevant communities, which is a fertile ground for developing and enriching scientific collaborations. We expect to continue successfully maintaining and enlarging our networks.

Competent scientific communication is an important means to reach this goal. Our publication activities like articles and book contributions, media releases, results brochures for respondents etc. are extensively detailed in the evaluation documentation.

- The composition of scientific **staff** at FORS has developed considerably since 2008: There is a better gender balance, with female colleagues on all hierarchical levels (including the President of the foundation), there is a balance of German and French native speakers, with one third of staff being native speakers of other languages, and collaborators have a wide variety of social science disciplinary backgrounds (see staff statistics in the Appendix of the Annual Report 2013). Most notably, more than half of the scientific collaborators hold a doctoral degree. All scientific staff are multilingual with a good working command of English. Scientific collaborators are supported by a small, but effective team of administrative and IT staff.

As with every scientific institution, especially in the social sciences and humanities, the collaborators are an essential factor for success. While FORS staff have almost doubled in number since the start in January 2008, it is worth noting that out of the 19 collaborators who were there from the beginning, 14 (74%) are still with FORS in 2014. The remarkably low turnaround and the proven ability to hire and integrate new staff are strong indicators of good working conditions and a good workplace atmosphere.

FORS management is well aware of the importance of the social capital represented by its staff and will continue to preserve and enhance it (see the FORS Staff Development Policy paper included in the evaluation documentation).

### C. Where FORS wants to go to

The strategic perspectives presented in the Work Programme 2012-2016 – written in June 2010 – were developed and concretised over the years. The current formulation is encapsulated in the following list of *seven strategic goals* presented to the President of the SNSF in August 2013:

- Ensure a high level of service quality
- Intensify research
- Extend collaborative networks
- Improve visibility
- Support staff development
- Enhance third-party funding
- Construct stable institutional and funding arrangements

The presentation slides “FORS in a nutshell” show more details on each strategic goal.

While the ordering of these goals does not reflect priorities (all are equally important), it is not purely accidental either. The list starts with the two items which are right at the core of the *raison d'être* of FORS, namely service and research: We want to ensure service quality *and* to intensify research. This challenge is discussed in some detail in sections A and B of this paper as well as in part II of the self-assessment report.

The next two items concern outreach to the scientific community (networks) and to the wider public (visibility). Both are continuous tasks. They need institutional backing and resources, but in the first place they need the personal involvement of staff members. The performance indicators in the Annual Reports show the steady development in this field, which we aim to optimise in the future.

Research is very much a people's affair, in the social sciences and humanities even more than in other disciplines. A well-qualified and dedicated staff is indispensable for a high level of performance. FORS is committed to offering favourable working conditions, a creative workplace atmosphere, and optimal possibilities for professional development. We will continue to support our staff in developing their qualifications and know-how (see the FORS Staff Development Policy paper included in the evaluation documentation).

Funding is of course the prerequisite of every goal to which we aspire. We will continue our efforts to acquire third-party funds that complement the contributions of our main funders. But it is evident that without a stable funding arrangement FORS – like any other research infrastructure institution – cannot function properly. We are confident that such an arrangement will be found in the near future. Several possibilities are presented in part II of the self-assessment report. There might be more arising from the evaluation process.

The late Sir Roger Jowell, distinguished member of our Scientific Board, suggested that we should not be content just to supply data, but that we should also strive for *extracting meaning* from our data, and to communicate what we have learned to the scientific community as well as to a wider audience. We honour his intellectual legacy by following his recommendation as firmly as possible.



## Self-assessment report, Part II:

### Input to the “specific evaluation questions” of the SERI

**Note:** This document has been written on request of the SSIC, which wishes to have FORS’ opinions on the issues raised in the “specific evaluation questions” of the SERI. We have integrated, where appropriate, suggestions by the FORS Scientific Board in their evaluation report of March 14, 2013.

#### A. Assessment of achievements

##### **A.1 How are FORS’ achievements to be assessed with regard to the resources at disposition, the years of existence and the requirements defined by the service agreement?**

We would like to make reference to a general statement by the Scientific Board in their evaluation: *“The assessment group (AG) has been impressed by the quality of work at FORS and by the enthusiasm for its work which the staff has displayed in the hearings with the AG. In looking at the output of the organisation, the AG has realized that FORS is still in the process of digesting the legacies under which it started its work, but believes that the institute is well on its way to achieve this. FORS is well integrated internationally, little wonder though given its involvement in an important set of comparative survey studies. It plays an active role in the ongoing efforts in Europe to institutionalise a powerful infrastructure for social research, as signalled by the creation of the ESS and CESSDA ERICS which are presently on their way (the SHARE ERIC has already been implemented).”*

With regard to compliance with the requirements defined by the service agreement, FORS has reported to the SERI in detail every year. All reports for the years 2008-2012 have been endorsed by the SERI. They are included with the evaluation documentation, together with the recent report for 2013, which has not yet been reviewed by the SERI at the time of finalising this paper.

##### **A.2 Which foreign institutions are suitable to be benchmarks? How do FORS’ achievements compare to the ones of those institutions?**

The usual pattern with social science research infrastructure institutions in Europe is that they are either responsible for documenting, archiving, and disseminating data (data management, data services) or for producing data by running large, often com-

parative data collections (mostly surveys). FORS does both. A benchmark institution should fulfill the same functions.

GESIS, the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Germany, is such an institution ([www.gesis.org](http://www.gesis.org)). As a matter of fact, it is the only one of this kind in Europe besides FORS. Consequently, we suggest GESIS as a benchmark institution.

Albeit similar in structural and functional aspects, GESIS is considerably larger than FORS, with some 280 collaborators and an annual budget of around 25 m€ (figures for 2014). This difference in size and resources has to be taken into account when comparing achievements.

## B. Analysis of the user side

### **Systemic/institutional level:**

#### ***B.1 How is the added value due to the existence of FORS as a national data and methods centre to be assessed (especially indirect added value for the SNSF compared with the funding of individual projects, and for individual universities)?***

The added value of FORS' activities in data collection and data management lies in the methodological rigour and the scientific quality of the data produced, documented, and distributed. Continuity over time and international comparability are valuable assets that allow researchers to run analyses and to produce knowledge clearly superior to what they could accomplish without these free data at their disposition.

The datasets produced by FORS reach by far beyond what individual researchers were able to achieve even under the most favourable conditions, in terms of variety as well as in terms of quality. Since excellent data are the precondition of excellent research outcomes, FORS allows for a much higher proportion of researchers to publish at an international state of the art level.

Also, FORS makes available its entire collection of several hundred datasets produced within Switzerland. These data are used for secondary analyses, and so research funding institutions benefit from re-use of these existing data, having to fund less often new projects with new data collections. Indeed, the datasets available from FORS are enjoying more and more re-use. The average yearly growth rate of 26% in data deliveries by FORS shows that the social scientific community is taking ever more advantage of the possibilities we offer (see the respective graphic in the outreach section of the self-assessment document "FORS in a nutshell").

The added value of FORS can be assessed as well from a more economic perspective. We suggest the following estimation, taking the SHP as an example:

- To our knowledge, there are about 400 scientific publications based on SHP data to-date. If we suppose that on average a research project produces 2.5 scientific publications (journal articles, book sections, reports, theses, etc.), then we can assume that there would have been 160 research projects behind these 400 publications. These 160 research projects used the SHP data. If these data would not

have existed, the projects would have had to collect data by themselves. But maybe not all researchers would have been ready or able to collect such data. So perhaps only half of the projects would have been actually undertaken. If we further assume that a data collection anywhere near the quality of the SHP will cost around 500 kCHF, then these 80 projects would represent an investment of around 40 mCHF – and these are individual cross-sectional surveys, not longitudinal ones like the SHP. The total investment of the SNSF for the SHP in the period 1998-2013 was around 31 mCHF. Thus, the indirect added value for the SNSF by supporting the SHP as opposed to funding individual projects amounts to 9 mCHF or 30% of the total investment. If we assume that an average individual social scientific research project that does *not* collect data costs about 200 kCHF<sup>1</sup>, around 40 additional projects could be funded thanks to the added value of supporting the SHP.

This is a rough, but conservative estimate. For example, it is well known that by far not all scholars report back on their publications and that not all publications can be identified, even when intensive and time consuming research is done. The number of 400 publications, which is the basis of the previous calculation, is therefore most probably underestimated.

Such estimates can be made for the other data collection activities at FORS as well.

Similarly, there are reduced costs to research funders for each publication based on data accessed from the archive. Evidence for this from another context is a recent impact analysis of the UK Data Service commissioned by the UK Economic and Research Council in 2012. The results as reported in a summary publication show an overall 2.5- to 10-fold return on investment when taking into account the secondary use made of all available data.<sup>2</sup> If and how these results and the assessment methods applied can be transferred to the Swiss case would have to be considered more in detail.

### ***B.2 Which advantages and disadvantages could result from a stronger concentration of SNSF funded social scientific data collection projects at FORS?***

*Advantages:* The synergies that we are able to realize by the fact that there are about 20 collaborators working on different and complex state of the art surveys are manifold: continuous exchange on practical issues like sampling frames, translation procedures, interviewer selection and training, fieldwork monitoring, data cleaning, data documentation, weighting algorithms, communication with respondents and the larger

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<sup>1</sup> According to SNSF statistics, project costs in social sciences, economics, and law amounted to 246 kCHF per project on average in 2012. This sum might include data collections. Infrastructures, however, are excluded. (SNSF Annual Report 2012, p. 32)

<sup>2</sup> Download of the summary publication:

[http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/5568/1/iDF308\\_-\\_Digital\\_Infrastructure\\_Directions\\_Report%2C\\_Jan14\\_v1-04.pdf](http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/5568/1/iDF308_-_Digital_Infrastructure_Directions_Report%2C_Jan14_v1-04.pdf)

For more detailed results see the full report on the UK Data Service:

[http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/ESDS\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_Evaluation\\_tcm8-22229.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/ESDS_Economic_Impact_Evaluation_tcm8-22229.pdf).

public, as well as collaborations in data analysis, authoring scholarly contributions and the like produce a remarkable added value in terms of state-of-the-art quality assurance as compared to isolated research projects. A high level of quality in data production is one of the key outcomes of such synergies. This added value can be useful for data collections that are newly commissioned to FORS as well. Such an effect was observed when FORS took over much of the responsibility for the practical implementation of the SHARE survey from wave 4 onwards.

*Disadvantages:* The only disadvantage we can think of is that the research community might feel dependent on a single actor. However, one actor can more easily and more efficiently be held responsible for scientific quality than several actors. With its broad scope of activities and disciplinary communities covered, and its multidisciplinary staff, FORS guarantees for responsiveness to diverse research interests.

### **Scientific level:**

#### ***B.3 How, by whom and for what purpose are FORS' services, the methods developed by FORS, and the data generated by FORS used?***

The performance indicators in the Annual Reports contain information about the usage and the users of FORS services: on the number of datasets distributed (1.1, 2.1), on the use of FORS datasets for teaching (1.3), on the number of new project descriptions (2.2), on the visits to webpages (2.3), on help and advice provided to users (3.1), and on the distribution of the Social Report (6.4).

Since most users are scholars using FORS data and services for their research and/or teaching one can conclude that the purpose of usage is scientific in the first place. This does not exclude the media from using FORS data and services. Moreover, there have been no data whatsoever distributed for commercial use.

The users of FORS data and services cover a broad range of disciplines (see the graphics on outreach in the self-assessment document "FORS in a nutshell"): While half of the users of the SHP come from economics and sociology, the other half represent a wide range of disciplines like psychology, media and communication science, demography, political science, education science, and others. Among the DARIS data recipients political scientists and sociologists prevail. However, in 2013 every fourth data contract was concluded with students. Thus, teaching is an important purpose for using our data. This is even more the case if we take online use of data into account (via the NESSTAR dedicated server), where 74% of the users in the year 2013 were students.

FORS is working on enhancing its user statistics and collection of user feedback. The new web site online since April 2014 utilizes cutting edge technologies that allow for more detailed statistics and recording of user feedback.

***B.4 How is the contribution of FORS to high quality social scientific research to be assessed? To what extent do achievements and expertise of the users suggest that there is qualitatively excellent research conducted based on FORS activities?***

The contribution of FORS to high quality social scientific research consists of the high quality of the data and services delivered. This quality is constantly monitored by our clients, by our national and international competitors, and by the SNSF.

The best indicator for scientific excellence is publications: There are more than 400 scientific publications with Panel data alone, several hundreds with other data collected or distributed by FORS, e.g., MOSAiCH around 200, SELECTS around 150. In total, there are some 200 new publications using datasets produced by FORS surveys every year (see the respective performance indicator 1.2). We have no similarly accurate figures concerning publications using other datasets disseminated by FORS, but taking into consideration the number of such datasets (around 1'500 per year, see the performance indicator on the number of datasets distributed (2.1)), we estimate that there are some 150 additional publications every year using data delivered by FORS, assuming that about one in ten data uses results in a scientific publication.

As is usual with these kinds of statistics, the numbers given tend to be underestimated since not all publications can be identified. Moreover, international surveys like ESS, EVS, or ISSP produce literally thousands of scholarly publications worldwide. While certainly not all use Swiss data, quite a number does. There is an added value also for Swiss social science and for Swiss researchers if Switzerland is included in comparative studies by foreign colleagues.

FORS not only publishes actively, it offers publication opportunities for scholars as well. Most prominently with the creation and hosting of the online journal "Survey Methods – Insights from the Field" ([www.surveymethods.org](http://www.surveymethods.org)), a joint venture with GESIS aimed at promoting professional exchange on practical survey research issues. The journal is peer-reviewed and contributes to quality assurance in survey research by keeping methodologists and practitioners up-to-date with recent developments in their domain.

***B.5 How is cooperation between FORS and professors/research groups in Swiss universities to be assessed? To what extent do there exist relationships between FORS and professors/research groups? Is FORS consistently consulted as a reference centre for data and methods when it comes to the conceptualisation and execution of substantive research projects?***

The collaborations with scientific partners in Switzerland are reported in detail in chapter 3 of the Annual Reports. Their extent is shown in the performance indicators on the number of collaborative research projects (6.1) and on workshops, seminars, and conferences organised by FORS (6.2). The statistics of the consultation activities

by FORS staff are detailed in the performance indicator on help and advice provided to users (3.1).

We think that we have reached an excellent level of scholarly contacts in Switzerland already and that we have made important progress in this respect as compared to the early days of operation, e.g., by collaborating with the NCCR LIVES and the newly established NCCR On the Move, which are national endeavours as well. We welcome the encouragement by the Scientific Board to intensify personal contacts with scholars all over the country. The Scientific Board's suggestion to reach out even more beyond regional limits is very well taken, and we are constantly working in this direction.

***B.6 How can the demand for social scientific data be regularly identified in a future-oriented way? By whom? How can it regularly, effectively, and efficiently be monitored if qualitatively excellent research is conducted using data collected, prepared, documented, and disseminated by FORS?***

Scientific research is driven bottom-up by the dynamics of scholarly debates in the community. These debates produce the demand for data. This is the main reason why it is so important for an institution like FORS to be involved in such debates. We then can constantly assess foreseeable needs and monitor current requests and use of data already at disposition. The calls for questions or questionnaire modules regularly issued by several FORS surveys (e.g., SELECTS, MOSAiCH) as well as the possibility for researchers to take part in the development of the SHP questionnaires are important means of keeping our surveys responsive to the changing needs of the science community. For example, we recently put up an internal working group on "big data". We intend to publish a position paper on our assessment of the possible added value and implications of the use of "big data" for survey research by the end of 2014.

FORS is active in collecting and making accessible quantitative as well as qualitative data. However, qualitative data are more difficult to treat since they pose completely different challenges with regard to anonymisation, contextualisation, and secondary use. The context of the actual collecting (researcher-respondent-setting, tools for registering and saving data, etc.) is much more important and to be known in detail than is the case with quantitative data. For these good reasons qualitative researchers are more reluctant to give away their data or to re-use data collected by others. FORS has developed instruments and policies for qualitative data documentation and access and is in scholarly exchange with the community of qualitative researchers by organizing the biennial "Swiss Methods Festival", which concentrates on qualitative research. In addition, FORS has close ties with the largest qualitative social science data archive in the world, the former ESDS Qualidata, now part of the UK Data Service (<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/about.aspx>).

Based on this intimate knowledge of empirical research activities in the social sciences, we are able to estimate the demand and the budgetary consequences. The

performance indicator on the number of datasets distributed (2.1) suggests, however, that the sheer quantity of distributed data could approach saturation, very much in line with the Scientific Board's remark in their evaluation report that *"it would be naive, given the limited and by definition not dynamically increasing numbers of potential users, to expect a continuing growth in users of data supply and documentation"*.

The quality of scientific work is assessed by the scholarly community when presenting at conferences and publishing in journals via the peer reviewing procedure. Consequently, presentation and publication records and statistics are a good way to monitor and measure the scientific quality of research output (see question B.4). There are different ways to do so (e.g., using Google Scholar or similar instruments). They have their limits and should be used with caution, but for informed evaluators they can be a valuable means of assessing scientific quality.

## C. Suitability of the organization

### ***C.1 How does the Foundation Board exercise its role as guarantor and intermediary for the national positioning and national utilization of FORS? Where is there potential for optimization?***

The Foundation Board is FORS's highest authority. *"It shall hold the widest powers to fulfil the Foundation's object and shall make all necessary arrangements for the proper functioning of the Foundation."* (Statutes, art. 9; see also art. 6-8 and 10). The Foundation Board's composition is defined in art. 7 of the statutes, its powers in art. 9, and its decision-making rules in art. 10; the statutes are enclosed in the evaluation documentation.

The Foundation Board has the task „to establish the Foundation's strategy“ (art. 9), which is supposed to follow the goals of FORS, among others „to perform its activities throughout Switzerland“ (art. 2) and to acquire „a national status“ (art. 3). It performs its role during the two regular meetings per year, one in spring, the other one in autumn. The meetings are minuted; all minutes of all the meetings in the period 2008-2013 are included in the evaluation documentation.

The Board's strategic advice is very valuable and highly appreciated by the leadership of FORS. The Foundation Board discusses and advises, among other things, on national positioning as well as on the national utilisation of the services of FORS.

There are frequent contacts between the President of the Foundation Board and the Director throughout the year. Direct and personal interaction is possible at any time if needed. This collaboration is essential for good functioning in day to day affairs, and it works very well in a productive and open way.

**C.2 How does the Scientific Board exercise its role as scientific advisor of the Foundation Board and the Management Board? Where is there potential for optimization?**

In contrast to the Foundation Board, which is composed following institutional logic, the Scientific Board's members are elected *ad personam*. The statutes define that they should be "*internationally renowned scientists working in Switzerland or abroad*" (art. 15). Currently the Scientific Board consists of 14 members. Half of them, including the Chair, are working abroad. The Board meets once a year for a two day meeting. Meetings are minuted; all minutes of all the meetings in the period 2008-2013 are included in the evaluation documentation.

The presence of members at the meetings is generally very good, and discussions are lively and productive. The feedback and advice from the Board help FORS to constantly improve in scientific matters. We highly appreciate the commitment and the contributions by the Board's Chair and its members. This is especially the case with respect to the scientific evaluation done by the Board in early 2013 (see the report of March 14, 2013, in the evaluation documentation).

There is a joint meeting of the two Boards every year, which gives the opportunity for direct exchange and feedback. The meeting is chaired by the President of the Foundation Board and is devoted to topics of relevance for the future development of FORS. The discussion with such a large number of high-level participants (usually around 20 persons) adds an intellectual and strategic surplus as compared to separate deliberations. These meetings are minuted as well; the minutes are included in the evaluation documentation.

As with the Foundation Board, the contacts with the Chair of the Scientific Board are frequent throughout the year. Personal exchanges of the Chair and the Director are very fruitful in orienting the work of FORS in scientific matters.

**C.3 Are there further steps to be taken to establish FORS as a superordinate national data and methods centre in the social sciences? If yes, which steps need to be taken?**

FORS is a national data and methods centre already. As a matter of fact, there is no other comparable institution of its kind in Switzerland today (see question D.1). The concentration of methodology and know-how in survey research and data management produces considerable synergies in scientific as well as in terms of resources; one case in point is SHARE, which has been run by FORS in collaboration with the Institute for Health Economics and Management of the University of Lausanne (IEMS) from wave 4 onwards (see question B.2). Similar achievements are possible in comparable cases as well, provided that the necessary resources are available.

However, research is driven bottom-up. FORS aims at being appreciated by the social scientific community based on the excellence of its products, services, and scholarly contributions, such that researchers accept a leading role of FORS in its fields of expertise. But they may need additional incentives to actually agree not to

set up independent infrastructures on their own. Just as the SNSF does with their obligation to deposit data collected by SNSF-funded projects at FORS, funders might require the embedding of new social science infrastructures into FORS as a condition of financing.

Another future step to reinforce FORS' role as a national data centre would be for the SNSF not only to oblige but also to enforce the deposit at FORS of all data produced by SNSF-funded projects. This would ensure maximum exploitation of data generated with public money. FORS' new IT platform FORSbase would lend itself well to such a policy, since it will allow self-deposit of datasets and related documentation. FORS can also provide trainings for researchers in data management to promote data quality and to facilitate re-use.

One important activity toward even more national and academic outreach is the implementation of the inter-university MA programme on Public Opinion and Survey Methodology, which reinforces the network with the three participating universities of Lausanne, Lucerne, and Neuchâtel, thus giving more emphasis to FORS as a centre of expertise in the field (see key information on the programme in the evaluation documentation). It is foreseen to extend the programme to other universities in the future.

We are very grateful for the support we receive from our funders, and we hope that this support will continue in appropriate forms (see question D.4). This will allow us to reach the goals set by the statutes, our Boards, and the community we are part of and working for.

## D. Perspectives for future development and alternative funding schemes

### ***D1. Which perspective for future development is to be pursued for FORS?***

***Among others, the following elements need to be taken into account:***

- ***Growth through new or newly integrated social scientific longitudinal studies (cohorts)***
- ***Continuous further development or discontinuation of existing data collections located at FORS***
- ***Expansion or reduction of services in the preparation, documentation, and dissemination of data as well as international networking (e.g., invitational programme for research fellows)***
- ***Expansion or reduction of methodological standard setting***

FORS was established to be an important centre of expertise in the social sciences in Switzerland. Scientific and resource synergies by combining decentralised activities into one organisation are obvious and easy to recognise (see questions B.2 and C.3).

In the case of developing and implementing *new longitudinal or cross-sectional data collections with an infrastructure character*, we suggest considering their integration into FORS from the start, in order to benefit the most from possible synergies. One

case in point could be the World Values Survey (WVS), if it was to be done in Switzerland again. The scientific synergies with the EVS already hosted by FORS are evident. So too, is the risk of duplicating certain parts of the study, which can best be avoided by locating the WVS at FORS as well. There are also scientific contacts to existing longitudinal surveys of an infrastructure character (e.g., TREE in Basel, COCON in Zurich). The institutional incorporation of such surveys into FORS is feasible provided that the necessary resources are transferred.

All existing data collections at FORS are internationally networked or the Swiss parts of international surveys. Two are ESFRI roadmap infrastructures (ESS, SHARE). Switzerland is a highly esteemed member of the respective communities. FORS represents Switzerland in their decision-making bodies as well as in scientific boards like the Methodology Committees of the ESS and the ISSP. The Swiss teams located at FORS are recognised to be reliable, professional, efficient, and scientifically successful, e.g., with regard to response rates and overall data quality. We do not see any reason to discontinue one or more of these activities.

The same holds true – *mutatis mutandis* – for our *data services* activities. The data that are documented, preserved, and made available by FORS for secondary use is a core service that should be expanded. The continuous increase in datasets distributed since the inception of FORS is a strong indication of the need for data in research and teaching. FORS should also attract more qualitative data, and should invest in the promotional work needed to convince qualitative researchers of the importance of re-use, and to train them in matters concerning documentation, anonymisation, and informed consent. These new activities will require additional resources.

With respect to its research inventory database, FORS exchanges information with similar institutions in the country (e.g., the federal research database ARAMIS, the database on education research of the SKBF in Aarau) to prevent double registrations of research project descriptions and to ease the burden for users to enter information. The research inventory is a unique and valuable source of comprehensive information on the topics and actors in Swiss empirical social research, which comprises more than 9'000 project descriptions (see the respective graphic in the outreach section of the self-assessment document "FORS in a nutshell").

FORS is well integrated in the new CESSDA's decision-making bodies and collaborates actively in the working groups on the technical challenges of creating a unified international access portal, and in the cooperation group, which has to ensure close relations with stakeholders and service users all over Europe. FORS would not have been called on to contribute to these important international developments if the head offices in Bergen were not convinced that productive results were to be expected from the collaboration with FORS. We are aiming to expand and develop our collaborations with CESSDA and its member institutions on different levels.

Moreover, the stepwise implementation of the IT platform FORSbase will add more user-friendly efficacy and efficiency to the functioning of FORS' services. The design and programming of this platform has encountered lively interest with sister organiza-

tions and beyond: e.g., in the Swiss University Conference P-2 programme on “Scientific information: access, processing, and storing”, where FORS has won in an open competition a mandate under its leadership together with, among others, the Scientific IT Services of ETH Zurich, the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, and the Digital Humanities Lab of the University of Basel to create an interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, and nationwide metadata hub and search engine for research data. See the successful proposal “Open Research Data Pilot ORD@CH” in the evaluation documentation.<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that the *invitational programme* for short or long stays of scholars is fully funded by the University of Lausanne. This programme allows FORS to implement and strengthen collaborative relationships with colleagues abroad by inviting them to stay for a certain period in Lausanne. There are also postdoctoral fellows regularly, working on their projects, but also collaborating with FORS researchers, eventually producing joint publications. The programme is jointly run by FORS and the SSP research unit LINES, in this way reinforcing scientific cooperation between FORS and the hosting faculty.

The German original of the mandate uses “Methodenentwicklung”, and in that document this is translated as “*methodological standard setting*”. As the Scientific Board rightfully states in their evaluation report, there is for FORS an “*innate requirement to constantly improve its performance in also engaging in well-planned systematic methodological research embedded at least in part in the international cooperation in the various projects mentioned before which provide the ground for powerful innovations in international survey research.*”

Doing surveys at the high-quality level FORS is used to cannot be successful without keeping pace with and contributing actively to methodological development (see question D.2). This means indeed setting standards for best practice.

***D.2 Should FORS independently, i.e. without collaborations with professors/research groups at Swiss universities, conceptualize and conduct substantive research, as recommended by the FORS Scientific Board? What are the pros and cons?***

The question as asked here does not reflect the actual recommendation by the Scientific Board in their evaluation, which focuses rather on the positive feedback to be expected from substantive research than on its institutional embedding: „*In our view, the FORS management has maintained a high quality of service coupled with methodological research, rightly emphasizing the positive feedback between the two activities. Similar synergies apply to substantive research and we forcefully urge the FORS leadership to pursue this avenue.*“

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Swiss University Conference P-2 programme and pertinent documents visit: <http://www.crus.ch/information-programme/projekte-programme/suk-programm-2013-2016-p-2-wissenschaftliche-information-zugang-verarbeitung-und-speicherung.html>.

We welcome this suggestion to engage more than before in substantive research without leaving methodological research aside, mainly due to two reasons:

- The *visibility* of methodological research and its results is limited to a dedicated, but relatively small community of often highly specialised scholars. This is worthwhile and of great importance for the development of the data collections run by FORS, as is rightfully stated by the Scientific Board. However, scholarly as well as public response is much more pronounced when it comes to results of substantive research. This is impressively demonstrated by the positive reactions to each publication of the Social Report or the election survey SELECTS (see the respective documents in the evaluation documentation). The scientific and public outreach funders and evaluators are asking can hardly be accomplished by doing methodological research alone.
- *Third party funding* for methodological research is difficult to find internationally and in Switzerland. Our own experience and also reports from colleagues at different social scientific university institutes show that the SNSF is rather reluctant to fund methodological research, even if the proposal in question is assessed positively by external reviewers. The SNSF usually asks to embed methodological tests or experiments in substantive research designs – which is a perfectly acceptable strategy in times of scarce financial resources and abundant excellent substantive research proposals. However, this means that an exclusive concentration on methodological research inhibits the acquisition of the funds needed to run such research on a cutting-edge level.

State-of-the-art research is often done these days in collaborative networks. However, it should be emphasized that the Scientific Board does not express an opinion about whether substantive research projects should to be done by FORS alone or in cooperation with other scholars or institutions. While it is quite foreseeable that such cooperation will happen regularly, it would be very unusual to formally inhibit FORS from doing research projects on its own. In fact, it would even be dysfunctional with regard to the demands placed on FORS by the funders and the community to keep pace with scientific progress and to contribute actively to scholarly debate.

### ***D.3 Which adjustments of the organizational structures would be needed for the different development perspectives?***

The organization of FORS follows the KISS principle: *Keep It Simple and Straightforward*.

There is one unit reuniting the surveys, another one the data and research information services, and a third one for the support functions (finances, human resources, IT, general administration). Additionally, there is a communications officer who covers the whole of FORS in her activity, and a research support officer. Only 6 out of 35 employees are not active researchers or data managers. Hence the largest possible part of human resources goes into the core tasks of FORS with as little investment as needed in support functions. It has to be stressed that this is possible

only due to the support in kind by the University of Lausanne, especially by the professional administration of salaries and social security payments and by legal consultation in human resource matters as well as by the provision of an excellent IT and telecommunications network.

Each Annual Report shows in its Appendix the current organisational scheme. In this way, its developments and changes can easily be traced (see evaluation documentation).

We do not see the necessity of changing the organizational structures fundamentally. Of course, new tasks might require additional human resources, be it for the surveys, the data services, and/or on support. But this can be an incremental growth.

***D.4 How can FORS be funded sustainably from 2017 onwards with regard to the different development perspectives, taking into consideration a periodic control of individual (national or international) data collections leading to clear decisions on continuation or discontinuation?***

Since its beginnings in 2008, FORS has had three main funders: the SERI, the SNSF, and the University of Lausanne. The SERI funded the DARIS part as well as the general administration costs and, from 2013 onwards, the administrative and service costs of the surveys; the SNSF funded the main part of the survey costs and directly related scientific work; the University contributed in-kind with rooms and services and in cash with a conditional subsidy.

This combination of several funders has the advantage of avoiding an exclusive dependence on one of them. The price to be paid is a certain administrative burden by dealing with different funding criteria, procedures, and deadlines. Any sustainable new funding arrangement should try to minimize such burden for the sake of cost efficiency.

More concretely, different options are possible that include the aspect of funding as well as quality assurance concerns:

- *Status quo*: It is very well conceivable to continue with the threefold funding structure where the funders control for quality in their respective fields of funding. However, this is feasible in the long run only if the SNSF develops strategies and instruments suited for the specific needs and logics of research infrastructures. For example, the performance of an infrastructure – which is a continuing endeavour – is best assessed by examining its functioning and its achievements on the basis of written documents *and* personal encounters (interviews, site visits). Infrastructure funding decisions should be made according to the results of such comprehensive assessments, rather than being based on remote reviews of proposals alone.
- *Stronger involvement of the SERI*: Another option is that the SERI engages more in funding. One model of doing so could be the delegation of this task and the respective budget to the Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences. Such a model is already in place for the “Année politique suisse” as well as for several

long-running humanities infrastructures (e.g., National Dictionaries/Nationale Wörterbücher, Historic Lexicon/Historisches Lexikon, Diplomatic Documents/Diplomatische Dokumente). In such a scenario – especially if funding by the SNSF would be limited or non-existent – one could consider mandating quality assurance to the SSIC, which is a consulting body to the government and has a long-standing experience in the evaluation of scientific institutions.

- *Stronger involvement of the host university:* This could be a feasible way, especially when considering the future institutionalisation of parts of the NCCR LIVES and the scholarly ties between this NCCR and FORS. However, such an arrangement might weaken or even endanger the national profile of FORS. The question of quality assessment remains to be resolved if one admits that those who fund should have a say when it comes to controlling for quality.

Independent of the option finally chosen, it is crucial that the funders involved commit for a reasonable time to continued funding, and that the question of funding arrangements does not have to be treated again each time a new funding period starts.

## Evaluation of FORS by the Swiss Science and Innovation Council

### Introduction

#### 1) *Short description and purpose of FORS*

FORS was founded in 2007 as a national centre of expertise in the social sciences. Its primary activities consist of:

- production of survey data, including national and international surveys
- preservation and dissemination of data for use in secondary analysis
- research in empirical social sciences, with focus on survey methodology
- consulting services for researchers in Switzerland and abroad.

FORS is financed by the Federal Government (State Secretariat for Education and Research, SBF) with CHF 2.5 Mio. p.a., by contributions from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) with about CHF 4.5 Mio. p.a. and by the University of Lausanne with CHF 0.8 Mio. p.a.

At present, the SNSF funds eight research infrastructure projects in FORS: SHP, MOSAICH, SELECTS, ESS, EVS, LIS, Social Report, and SHARE.

#### 2) *Evaluation of FORS by the Swiss Science and Innovation Council (SSIC)*

The goal of this evaluation is to assess the performance of FORS after its first operating phase 2008-2012. Moreover, the evaluation should also take into account the utilization of FORS on a systemic/institutional and scientific level and appraise how well the organization structures of FORS are suited to comply with its mandate.

The SNSF is requested to support the SSIC by providing a synthesis report on the past scientific evaluation of the funded research infrastructures. Therefore, the panel infrastructure has been designated to compile this synthesis report, which will be approved by the Research council before handing it over to the SSIC.

#### 3) *Preparatory work*

In order to facilitate the work of the panel infrastructures the administrative office has made some preparatory work:

- For each of the supported research infrastructures an overview of the last funding periods was generated, including also the available output-data.
- Positive and negative points of the last evaluations were collected to provide an overview over the scientific assessments by both external reviewers and the research council.
- Finally, this document includes a first attempt to integrate and consolidate the assessments of the single research infrastructure.

This draft was discussed in detail at the first session of the panel infrastructures (in social sciences). Following this discussion, some modifications on the synthesis report were made.

## Synthesis Report

### 1) *Scientific Value and Suitability of Methods*

#### **Data:**

Overall, data that was collected by FORS serves well to examine and respond to numerous important research question concerning societal, political and social developments in Switzerland and in comparison to Europe.

The quality of the collected data corresponds well to the European standard; it is even cutting edge in most cases. Part of the Swiss data are integrated into larger international databases that are provided to the European data centres. Comparability comes at the price of constraints consisting in a same wording of the questions or the use of the same model of data collection and structure. In some cases, the research infrastructures have to follow the requirements of the international surveys, which limits to some degree the room for manoeuvre for researchers at FORS.

In Switzerland, the response rate for most surveys is rather low and quite all research infrastructures and especially the panel-surveys are affected by a quite high attrition rate. However, FORS found means to successfully reduce this problem for some RIs (e.g. SHP, ESS). As surveys are expensive in Switzerland, the sample size is not always as large as would be desirable – for instance for the analyses of minority populations.

Finally, the SNSF regrets that FORS has not yet adopted a ‘big data’-perspective to collect, process and publish the data sets (like for instance the GESIS in Germany). Moreover, it would be desirable if FORS could automatically provide para-data of the surveys.

#### **Methodological Issues:**

FORS is mandated to perform methodological research to addresses three major areas of survey data quality (nonresponse, translation issues and use of mixed modes in surveys). They have submitted two project proposals to the SNSF for this purpose over the past years. Although these two projects could not be financed, the SNSF had expected more research projects on these issues. All large surveys are now facing the challenge of the population over-surveyed or not having fix telephone connections. To access a representative population FORS relies on the Federal Office of Statistics. However, considerations concerning long-term perspective and enhancing the current surveys are not to the same degree available for all research infrastructures. In this context, there are also some discrepancies between the surveys. For instance, the European Social Survey is quite innovative in adapting and enhancing the dataset, whereas others (e.g. SELECTS or SHARE) do not display the same efforts to further increase data-quality. Moreover, it remains unclear, whether these activities are coordinated well enough between the different research infrastructures of FORS. However, even if there is still some room for improvement, the data-quality overall is of a high standard.

#### **Coordination:**

There are some thematic overlaps between the funded research infrastructures at FORS. For instance, the World Values Survey (not at FORS but in Zürich) and the European Values Study share some close similarities. Therefore, it would be desirable if FORS adopted a foresightful coordination of Swiss participation in international surveys in social sciences.

In addition to the funded research infrastructures FORS may also submit projects for basic research at the SNSF. This could be important to further examine interesting aspects of the survey data or to develop new strategies to increase the data quality or response rates in the existing surveys. Unfortunately, FORS did very rarely apply for additional grants in project funding. On the other hand, there has been an extensive collaboration with the NCCR Lives. In this context and because of the rather limited resources of researchers in FORS (only 10-20% is available for thematic research and publications), it remains open, whether FORS still has capacity to apply for project grants at the SNSF.

### 2) *Benefit for a broader research community*

Overall, there is no doubt that a wide range of data has been collected and processed by FORS that is well used by the Swiss research community, especially by researchers from so-

cial sciences. Moreover, there has been some development from a more regional to a more national and even international use of the data. In this context, there is still room for improvement, not only regarding the use of the data but also regarding research co-operations with academics in Switzerland.

It is also important to note that FORS has established an open-data policy that facilitates the access of researchers to the data collections. However, data accessibility could be further increased by agreeing online to use the data appropriately, and then gain access to the data immediately via the internet. This could increase the use of the data substantially since researchers do not have first to register to determine whether the data will be helpful for their project.

Since FORS is mandated to be a national centre of expertise in the social sciences, it is important to note that currently not all disciplines in social sciences are equally well represented. Sociology and political sciences are well covered, whereas psychology, economics, education sciences, communication sciences, social geography, ethnology and urban studies are somewhat underrepresented. For the future development of FORS it could be vital to better incorporate the research interests of these communities.

### 3) *Cost-efficiency considerations*

A substantial amount of the overall budget for FORS was requested for the data collection by external contractors. Here, the SNSF should find a position in the question whether the outsourcing of the data collection is cost efficient given the fact that there is a pseudo monopoly market situation for survey institutes in Switzerland.

Overall, there is little transparency concerning funding of FORS. Although the SNSF does have information on the use of the finances in the funded research infrastructures, it would be desirable to have more information on the contributions of SERI and the University of Lausanne for the single research infrastructures.

There has been a rather limited transparency on the activities of the applicants and the staff in the research infrastructures. In general, the SNSF should have more data on the task sharing and the specific activities of all financed personnel. This is even more important since the SNSF finances the main and other applicants with salaries that exceed the brackets of the normal SNSF salaries by a fair amount. This issue has been addressed and resolved to a certain degree in 2012. It is important for the SNSF that FORS clearly declares to what percentage the personnel is working on administrative tasks and how much time is spent on actual research in their future scientific reports.

Since 2007 the spending level for most research infrastructures of FORS has increased significantly. Despite various survey-related cost increases since 2007 it is important that FORS is aware of maximising the cost-efficiency of their infrastructures.

Finally, the SNSF supported components that go beyond what normally constitutes a pure RI project. For instance, PhD-positions or publication costs were directly financed. In addition, it remains open, whether the SNSF is the right institution to pay for access fees to international databases.

### 4) *Output*

For this analysis only periods from which we have actually output-data are taken into account. Please note that SNSF grantees are obliged since 2011 to update and complement their output-data (also after the project has been completed).

Concerning the output of the financed research infrastructures, a rather large variability can be noticed. In some projects a large amount of publications could be generated (ESS, MOSA-ICH, SHP) whereas others had less output (SELECTS). A third group of research infrastructures produced no to very little output (SHARE, LIS, Social Report). Given the fact that the

SNSF invested largely into these research infrastructures, the output result for the latter group is quite disappointing.

Moreover, it is important that FORS provides information on researchers using their data (as has been done in the scientific reports). Only with these data each RI can be monitored regarding the disciplines and researchers for which FORS data is most used.

8.8.2014/tz



## Reaction to the SNSF “Synthesis Report”

**Note:** *This paper was authored by the FORS Executive Board by invitation of the SSIC. It is aimed at correcting factual errors and misunderstandings in the “Synthesis Report” of the SNSF, dated August 8, 2014. The introductory remarks (section A) summarize the general framework of the current evaluation, while the specific remarks (section B) describe the actual corrections.*

### A. Introductory Remarks

FORS appreciates substantive feedback on and discussion of its scientific endeavours. We are therefore grateful to the Swiss Science and Innovation Council (SSIC) for the opportunity to react to the “Synthesis Report” by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) dated August 8, 2014.

For a start, it is useful to recall the general background of the evaluation of which this SNSF report is one element. The key source document is the written protocol summarizing the conclusions of a meeting between FORS and its main funders, the SNSF, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), and the University of Lausanne held at the SERI on June 8, 2012 (see Appendix 1). The protocol was agreed upon by all meeting participants. It shows considerable differences between the funders with respect to strategic issues, specifically those involving long term funding arrangements (p. 1). As a consequence it was decided to strive for a durable arrangement for the SNSF-funded infrastructures at FORS for the financing period starting 2017 (*“eine dauerhafte Lösung für die Finanzierung der einzelnen Infrastrukturprojekte”*, p. 2). For the years 2014-16 a pragmatic solution was agreed upon: the SNSF would limit its funding to 4.5m CHF on the average per year, and the SERI would increase its funding to cover administrative and service costs related to the infrastructures in question (*“pragmatische Lösung”*, p. 2). According to this agreement, both funders made their funding decisions for the period lasting until the end of 2016.

The implication of this administratively fixed level of funding was that there was very little room for development or innovation in the seven SNSF proposals FORS had to submit by June 30, 2013 in order not to exceed the funding level defined by the funders.<sup>1</sup> The only exception was the second refreshment sample of the SHP, which had

<sup>1</sup> The funding level of 4.5m CHF on the average per year was fixed by the SNSF during the meeting of June 8, 2012 according to the respective figure for the period 2012-13 – without

been announced a long time in advance and which had to be fit into the available budget. This was clearly declared by FORS in the “Explanations” part of the financial planning documents of July 2012 (see Appendix 2), which were requested by the protocol mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “at present, the SNSF funds eight research infrastructure projects in FORS” (p. 1). This is somewhat misleading since the eighth infrastructure mentioned in the text, the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) SHARE, is led by the Institute for Health Economics and Management of the University of Lausanne (IEMS). FORS collaborates with the IEMS, but the main applicant is Prof. Jurgen Maurer, director of the IEMS. Consequently, the scientific and administrative responsibility for SHARE lies with the IEMS, and all proposals and reports were authored by Prof. Maurer. This is the reason why the latter are not contained in the evaluation documentation provided by FORS and why SHARE was included only marginally in the 2012 negotiations with the funders of FORS referred to earlier in this paper.

With regard to the issues raised in the “Synthesis Report” it should be remembered that FORS submitted to the SNSF 24 proposals and 20 scientific reports on the seven infrastructures in the period 2008-2013 (see evaluation documentation, chapter 6 [SNSF], section “Infrastructures”). The feedback on the scientific reports was exclusively administrative and positive to-date,<sup>3</sup> and only in five instances did the decisions on the proposals include substantive remarks or conditions:

- **LIS 2010-11:** Swiss user statistics were requested and delivered (*see Appendix 3, not contained in the evaluation documentation*).
- **SELECTS 2011-12:** A number of issues were raised in the decision, and four brief excerpts of reviews were attached to it. A written reaction was submitted and accepted (*see Appendix 4, not contained in the evaluation documentation*).
- **SHP 2012-13:** A number of issues were raised, among them the division of labour between the scientific collaborators of the SHP. The reply submitted to and accepted by the SNSF is contained in the evaluation documentation (*Documents ->SNSF->Infrastructures->Decisions->SHP->SHP 2012-13*).
- **MOSAICH 2012-13:** Innovations suggested by FORS in a discussion paper of October 13, 2011 that aimed at reducing costs by changing the interview mode from face-to-face to written form in order to compensate for additional costs due to the new SHP refreshment sample were rejected by the SNSF which asked FORS to continue MOSAICH unchanged (*“Grâce à cet octroi, MOSAICH et ISSP*

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taking into account, however, that two large surveys to be run in 2015 and 2016 had not taken place in the period 2012-13 (see summary figures in Appendix 5).

<sup>2</sup> „Für künftige Entwicklungen und Innovationen, die allein den dauerhaften Anschluss an den wissenschaftlichen state of the art gewährleisten, ist der Spielraum allerdings kaum gegeben.“ (p. 7).

<sup>3</sup> All the reports were endorsed by the SNSF without any modification or request for additional information.

*doivent être continués sous la forme soumise dans la requête du 1er juillet 2011.*“).

- **Social Report 2014-16:** The SNSF informed FORS that it will not fund the Social Report beyond 2016 anymore (*“Il s'agit du dernier subside que le Conseil de la recherche accorde pour un Rapport social. Le Rapport social ne constitue pas une infrastructure stricto sensu.”*).

Finally, we want to point out that the SNSF participates in all meetings of the FORS Foundation Board (see the minutes of all the meetings in the evaluation documentation, chapter 10 [Foundation]). As an observer, the SNSF receives continuously all information delivered to the Foundation Board.

Given this level of information and involvement, it is much to our surprise that many of the issues raised in the SNSF “Synthesis Report” were never put forward earlier as comments on scientific reports or proposals, or during the meetings of the Foundation Board. We do not know which documents were the basis for this “Synthesis Report” nor the concrete methods applied to synthesize them. We are aware, however, of the short descriptions we had to deliver to the SNSF for every infrastructure early April 2014 (ca. 5-7 pages each), but we find only very few traces of these descriptions in the “Synthesis Report”.

In the following section “Specific Remarks” we react to the most serious errors and/or misunderstandings in the “Synthesis Report”. We will be happy to provide any additional information on request, be it in writing or during the evaluation site visit meetings.

## B. Specific Remarks

### 1) Scientific value and suitability of methods

#### **Data**

The SNSF Synthesis report notes that “FORS (...) has not yet adopted a ‘big data’ perspective” (p. 2). The question of using “big data” for surveys or even for replacing surveys is much debated currently. In 2013, FORS established a working group to study the potential and challenges of “big data” for the social sciences, especially in relation to survey research.<sup>4</sup> We plan to author a position paper on “big data” and its relevance for FORS activities by the end of 2014. According to the scholarly debate on the issue, the use of such data has to be considered carefully. Their value for scientific research is not obvious at all.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> FORS Annual Report 2013, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> See for example the recent article by Mick P. Couper in: <https://ojs.ub.uni-konstanz.de/srm/article/view/5751>.

### **Methodological Problems**

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “the European Social Survey is quite innovative in adapting and enhancing the dataset, whereas others (e.g. SELECTS or SHARE) do not display the same efforts to further increase the **data quality**” (p. 2). Since the start of FORS operations in 2008, much emphasis has been placed on addressing data quality issues like coverage, nonresponse, translation, and use of mixed modes in surveys. All this work is well documented in the Scientific Reports to the SNSF, in the publicly available Annual Reports, as well as in scientific publications at conferences and in journals. For example, pioneering work to control for non-response bias has been conducted by the SHP (2004 and 2013, after each refreshment sample) and for the ESS (since 2006) teams. Regarding mixed modes, during the SHP 2010 survey, alternative modes of data collection (CAPI and CAWI) were tested as a first step towards a potential mixed modes strategy of data collection. These modes (CAPI at the household and individual level, CAWI at the individual level) are now used as a measure to convert refusals. Furthermore, mixed mode experiments were carried out in collaboration with LIVES, and soon to be published results were presented at conferences. SELECTS tested CATI/CAWI mixed mode interviewing in its 2011 round and will implement this kind of mixed mode interviewing systematically in 2015.<sup>6</sup> SHARE and ESS are ERICs participating in the EU FP7 DASISH project, which aims to improve tools and methods. SHARE has invested quite a lot in a new system of management of fieldwork and publication based on Blaise and DDI3.<sup>7</sup> In addition, SHARE was one of the first European surveys to collect biomarkers. In a coordinated effort between all its survey groups, FORS improved significantly during recent years in terms of coverage, by using the register based sampling frame of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office to draw all its samples (*Stichprobenrahmen für Personen- und Haushalterhebungen SRPH*).

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “it remains unclear, whether these activities (for improving data quality) are **coordinated** well enough between the different research infrastructures of FORS”. FORS was established, among other reasons, to create synergies between its components. This happens in continuous scientific exchanges and joint publications. Additionally, there are the monthly Lunch Seminars, where methodological and substantive research projects and results are discussed, as well as the bi-monthly Methods and Research Meetings. The presentations at the Lunch Seminars are mainly, but not exclusively, done by FORS scientific collaborators, whereas the Methods and Research Meetings are run jointly with the research unit on Life Course and Inequalities (LINES) of the Institute for Social Sciences at the host university, inviting scholars from other Swiss and foreign universities for presentations. The complete yearly programmes of the Lunch Seminars and the Methods and Research Meetings are included in the Annual Reports.

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<sup>6</sup> See for details the SELECTS 2014-16 proposal submitted to the SNSF on June 30, 2013 and endorsed as is on November 22, 2013, included in the evaluation documentation.

<sup>7</sup> See for example the SHARE Language Management Unit LMU:  
[http://www.share-project.org/uploads/tx\\_sharepublications/Methodology\\_Ch3.pdf](http://www.share-project.org/uploads/tx_sharepublications/Methodology_Ch3.pdf)

### **Coordination**

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “there are some thematic overlaps between the funded research infrastructures at FORS. (...) Therefore, it would be desirable if FORS adopted a foresightful **coordination of Swiss participation in international surveys**” (p. 2). FORS surveys cover a broad spectrum of topical areas for the whole community of researchers in the social sciences. Besides a multi-thematic longitudinal survey following the general population (SHP) and a cohort mainly dedicated to finances and health among 50+ respondents (SHARE), SELECTS is designed to study the electoral behaviour of Swiss citizens in each round of national elections. Concerning our international values and attitudes studies (ESS, MOSAiCH-ISSP, EVS) there is effectively some unavoidable thematic overlap, primarily because the content of the questionnaires is defined by the respective survey steering committees, in order to serve different communities of researchers. It should be noted though that there are far more differences than similarities in the content of the surveys. The best way to avoid overlap is to influence the topical coverage of the survey, a strategy we have adopted by being present in the Scientific Board of the old ESS and in the General Assembly of ESS ERIC and by our participation in the EVS executive committee. Moreover, we will recommend to the SNSF not to run again the European Values Study (EVS) *and* the World Value Survey (WVS) in parallel as has been the case in the last round (the WVS was not commissioned to FORS by the SNSF), but to look for a combination of both by integrating parts of the WVS in the Swiss EVS. We have already made contact with the WVS team of the last round in order to discuss this possibility, and this is on the agenda of the next executive meeting of the EVS, where Switzerland is a participating member.

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “FORS did very rarely apply for **additional grants in project funding**” (p. 2). All grant proposals by FORS and the respective decisions by the SNSF are included in the evaluation documentation (*Documents->SNSF->Research projects*). There were four grant applications in the six years period 2008-13. For different reasons, only one proposal was successful. Apart from resource issues on our side (SNSF grant proposals need a considerable amount of preparation, and decisions take up to 6 months), we understand that the SNSF already funds FORS generously. So we have been systematically looking for alternative research funding sources. This has not been without success, as the participation in two EU FP 7 consortia and two COST Actions shows (documented in the Annual Reports and in the evaluation documentation, chapter 8 [EU funded projects]). This demonstrates that applying for additional grants at the SNSF is not the only way to participate in cutting-edge scientific research, even if we do plan to apply for new projects in future.

### 2) Benefits for a broader research community

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “**data accessibility** could be further increased by agreeing online to use the data appropriately, and then gain access to the data immediately via the internet” (p. 3). This possibility exists already since the be-

gining of FORS. All Swiss data from ESS, MOSAiCH, and SELECTS are available directly and immediately through the Internet by way of our Nesstar server: <http://fors-nesstar.unil.ch/webview/index.jsp>. There are over a thousand downloads each year of FORS survey data using Nesstar. Nesstar at FORS also includes highly-used data from several non-FORS surveys, such as the Eurobarometer (Swiss part), Voxit (standardized post-vote surveys), and Sicherheit (security). Further, we intend to improve accessibility to the data archive beginning next year by implementing enhancements to our IT platform FORSbase. It should be noted, however, that access to survey microdata is closely tied to data protection issues. Compliance with Swiss legal requirements is therefore imperative.

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “not all **disciplines** in social sciences are equally well represented. Sociology and political sciences are well covered, whereas psychology, economics, education sciences, communication sciences, social geography, ethnology and urban studies are somewhat underrepresented.” (p. 3). The service agreements with the SERI, which are the legal basis of FORS’ activities, do not refer to any specific disciplines that have to be represented by FORS.<sup>8</sup> FORS statistics show that the distribution of disciplines varies considerably according to the field of activity: the project descriptions within the research inventory come mainly from education science (17%), sociology (15%), and economics (10%), SHP users belong mainly to sociology (29%) and economics (26%), whereas the data archive data recipients are often from political science (32%) and sociology (14%); however, half of the project descriptions and one third of the SHP users belong to all other social science disciplines, and 25% of the data downloads are for teaching purposes in different disciplines.<sup>9</sup>

As a matter of fact, research traditions in the social scientific disciplines are quite diverse, and not all use the kind of data FORS offers with the same intensity. In psychology, for example, the sub-disciplines that use survey data (e.g., social psychology) are a minority compared to experimental and clinical psychology. Cultural anthropology, on the other hand, uses qualitative field study methods in the first place. Economics, which is nevertheless an important user group at FORS, is to a large extent oriented towards aggregate data analysis and model building rather than survey microdata. Besides, a purely quantitative view might be misleading. In education science, for example, all Swiss PISA data are available already via FORS, and data on basic skills at the primary and secondary level, which will be collected in the framework of the HarmoS concordat from 2016 onwards, will most probably be archived and accessible via FORS in future. These datasets are by far the most important ones for empirical quantitative research in education science in Switzerland. Thus, those who conduct research and provide and use data and research information through our services represent fairly well the empirical quantitative social sciences already. We are currently intensifying our activities for acquiring and disseminating

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<sup>8</sup> *Contrats de prestations* for the periods 2008-2011/12 and 2013-2016, included in the evaluation documentation (chapter 5 [SERI]).

<sup>9</sup> All figures contained in the self-assessment report slides on outreach in „FORS in a nutshell“.

qualitative types of social scientific data for (sub-)disciplines that deal mostly with these.

### 3) Cost-efficiency considerations

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “the SNSF should find a position in the question whether the **outsourcing of the data collection** is cost efficient given the fact that there is a pseudo monopoly market situation for survey institutes in Switzerland“ (p. 3). At its 2009 meeting the FORS Scientific Board discussed this question, based on a paper on the topic authored by FORS. The conclusion of the Board was that „it has been checked if data collection could be done by FORS and that the result is that the number of surveys is still not enough to justify in scholarly and economic terms a data collection facility. The Scientific Board supports this decision for the time being even though this issue will probably come up again in the future, i.e. linked to mixed mode surveys.“ (Scientific Board minutes of May 4/5, 2009, p. 5). This conclusion still holds the line. In fact, online surveys and the online/paper parts of mixed mode surveys are done by FORS in-house nowadays, whereas CATI and CAPI surveys continue to be contracted out.<sup>10</sup> Since there is more interview capacity offered on the market than demanded by potential customers, there is a fierce competition for the prestigious mandates we are tendering. In its different projects FORS collaborates with several survey agencies. Mandates for cross-sectional surveys are advertised in open competitions. In any case, a close collaboration between FORS researchers and survey institutes is necessary to ensure that the high level scientific requirements are met. This implies full transparency, constant interaction, and the possibility of involvement at every step of management and follow-up in the data collection process. It is worth noting that the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO), which does more than 100'000 (mainly CATI-) interviews every year, has never established its own surveying organisation; all SFSO surveys are mandated to different external companies.

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “there is little **transparency concerning funding** of FORS (...) on the contributions of SERI and the University of Lausanne for the single research infrastructures” (p. 3). Preparing for the meeting with the funders on June 8, 2012 (see section A of this paper) FORS developed overviews of the funding structure of all infrastructures co-funded by the SNSF, plus a summary table, for the periods 2008-11 (accounts), 2012-13 (agreed budgets), and 2014-16 (estimated budgets). We enclose these tables in Appendix 5. This material was handed over to all participants in advance of the meeting and served as the basis for defining the SNSF funding limit of 4.5m CHF on the average per year (see section A).

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that „the SNSF should have more data on the **task sharing** and the specific activities of all financed personnel“ (p. 3). This information was requested of the SHP once in the decision for the period 2012-13 (see

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<sup>10</sup> See Annual Report 2013, p. 14.

section A). It was given in an extra paper by the SHP and endorsed by the SNSF.<sup>11</sup> It was not given for the other infrastructures because it was never requested by the SNSF. However, information on the funding of different tasks like research, questionnaire drafting, data collection, etc. for each infrastructure is contained in the detailed tables in Appendix 5.

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that „it is important for the SNSF that FORS clearly declares to what percentage the personnel is working on **administrative tasks** and how much time is spent on actual research in their future scientific reports“ (p. 3). It is worth noting that according to the 2012 agreement between the funders the SERI covers administrative and service costs related to the infrastructures for the period 2014-16 (see section A and Appendix 1). The respective figures and percentages are given in the tables in Appendix 5, which were presented at the SE-RI/SNSF/University of Lausanne meeting on June 8, 2012.

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “it is important that FORS is aware of maximising the **cost-efficiency** of their infrastructures” (p. 3). We agree. However, the cost-efficiency of research is a complex issue. First of all, for an assessment of cost-efficiency a consensus is needed on what this term is supposed to mean with respect to research infrastructures. For example, is the priority on saving costs or on preserving scientific quality? Specifically with surveys, cutting costs can easily lead to inferior data quality if interviewer selection and training are effected, or the number of contacts until an address is eliminated, or the number of addresses fielded in a given point in time, or the equivalence of questions and scales in different languages, or many other factors that influence survey data quality. FORS continuously evaluates these challenges internally and with colleagues worldwide and implements improvements where appropriate. We are happy to discuss this with our funders in more detail.

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “the SNSF supported components that go beyond what normally constitutes a **pure RI** project” (p. 3). In the international debate on research infrastructures in the social sciences and in the respective literature there is a widely shared consensus that successful infrastructures need to be competent and active in doing research themselves.<sup>12</sup> The examples cited by the SNSF (PhD positions, publication costs) seem to indicate that the SNSF has a concept of research infrastructures that limits these to “pure” service institutions. In contrast to this rather narrow conception, finding the optimal balance of service and research functions is one of the key tasks of every institution similar to FORS, such as for example the German social science infrastructure GESIS.

<sup>11</sup> The decision and the paper can be found in the evaluation documentation in chapter 6: *documents->SNSF->infrastructures->decisions by SNSF->SHP->SHP 2012-13.*

<sup>12</sup> See for example the recently published volume on the international conference „Facing the Future – European Research Infrastructures for the Humanities and Social Sciences“: <http://www.allea.org/Pages/ALL/33/552.bGFuZz1FTkc.html>

#### 4) Output

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “SNSF grantees are obliged since 2011 to update and complement their **output-data**” (p. 3). Obviously this refers to the respective section in the online grant management portal mySNF. Unfortunately, this section is aimed at the output of researchers for individual projects only. Most of the output of research infrastructures, however, is generated by the worldwide community of scholars who benefit from infrastructures. An evaluation of the output of the research infrastructures has to take into account the massive publication output found on the respective websites (e.g., ESS, ISSP, SHARE).

The SNSF Synthesis Report notes that “a third group of research infrastructures produced **no to very little output** (SHARE, LIS, Social Report)” (p. 3). For reasons given above, the mention of SHARE as producing “no to very little output” is difficult to understand; the site <http://www.share-project.org/publications.html> gives a full account of hundreds of SHARE-related publications of different kinds, including those which used Swiss SHARE data. In the case of the Social Report the three books (in German, French, and English) and the related internet pages *are* the product and main output. And LIS is the country contribution giving Swiss researchers access to the Cross-national Data Center in Luxembourg. This unique database of harmonized income data has itself produced a plethora of publications; the LIS working paper series alone is now at number 612 (see <http://www.lisdatacenter.org/working-papers/>). It is worth noting that the SNSF LIS grant covers, besides the country fees, only very limited costs for a biennial introductory workshop organized by FORS and some support for Swiss scholars wishing to attend the yearly LIS summer workshop in Luxembourg; looking for “output” in such a case is inappropriate.

### C. Concluding Remarks

FORS staff are constantly seeking progress in the scientific state of the art for all their activities and for possibilities to implement new methods and techniques, even when faced with serious budget restrictions (see section A). The extensive Annual Reports contain a complete track record of these endeavours.

Maintaining and enhancing quality is paramount in everything we do. We are well aware that there is always potential for improvements in different fields of our activities. This is why we appreciate constructive comments and critique. We are confident that the evaluation by the SSIC will support our aspiration to offer the best possible services to the social scientific community in Switzerland and abroad and to contribute to scientific progress to the best of our collective capabilities.

## Evaluation of FORS

**Report of Experts (Pierre Bréchon, Thomas Hinz, Hans Jørgen Marker)**

October 2014

This report by external experts is one part on which the evaluation of FORS by SSIC is based and mainly addresses important questions raised by the SSIC in the mandate. We refer in our evaluation to the material submitted by FORS to SSIC, to the SNSF synthesis report and the comment on it by FORS, to the GESIS/FORS benchmarking paper and to our rich personal impressions we gained during the site visit on September 2014, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. FORS directorate, FORS employees, members of the foundation board, members of the scientific advisory board, representatives of the SNSF and of the Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences in Switzerland answered thoroughly to a bundle of (partly very detailed) questions and discussed with us relevant aspects of current achievements and future challenges. We are grateful for their patience and commitment to the evaluation process. This report is written in common authorship.

FORS was founded in 2008 – with the mandate to become the centre of competence for survey research, data production, data archiving and data dissemination in Switzerland. It was located at UNIL which is one of the Swiss universities with a strong social science department. FORS should perform outreach to all other Swiss social scientists and the interested public as well.

From the beginning, FORS was actively involved in its own methodological and substantive research projects. Doing own research at the institution means that FORS strives to contribute to the scientific progress beyond being a well-designed and useful service organization. According to several statements by stakeholders, these roles of research and service have continuously to be kept in balance; the idea of contributing to research is legitimized by the fact that offering all services on the highest quality level is only possible if the employees are well versed in current scientific practice.

To date, FORS combines the responsibility for the production of (partly complex) survey data with service functions (data archive, project inventory, consulting, and knowledge transfer). The production of survey data contains several large studies. FORS outsources the fieldwork for personal interviews (PAPI, CAPI and CATI) while web-surveys are conducted without the use of external resources. Data production is relatively expensive in Switzerland, thus FORS invests more into a mixed mode approach to adjust the survey mode to the specific populations under research while having the chance to economize on survey costs.

FORS also serves the task of transferring data and knowledge to the broadest social science audience possible. Seminars and promotion visits belong to the portfolio of activities related to the transfer function.

### General achievements

Most importantly, the main founding goals of FORS which were to become a visible centre of competence for survey research in Switzerland and to serve to community of social scientists with data products, data archives, and data access have been definitely achieved. FORS is a highly active and respected institution and has helped to get social sciences in Switzerland better integrated into international research projects and networks. Relevant international research questions in the fields of sociology, political sciences and other disciplines can now be addressed for Switzerland – using data provided by FORS. In our impression, this was made possible by enormous efforts from all sides.

As it was outlined in the self-assessment by FORS and confirmed during the site visit by all participants from the director to the members of the scientific advisory board, a *tension* between service and research exists.

During the site visit, FORS stated a 10 % share of working time is devoted to research done by FORS staff. Approximately, half of the published research is devoted to *methodological* questions; the other half is devoted to *substantive* issues. We noticed that the adjusted publication output with .5 articles in peer-reviewed journals per year and full-time equivalent is at a similar level that is reached by employees of GESIS in Germany. Reaching this benchmark is remarkable given that most of the working time is needed to fulfil the service functions. We also observed that the platforms for peer review publications (N=64 from 2008 to 2013) are rather diverse what makes it difficult to come to a joint evaluation for the total output. There are journals listed on the publication record with high reputation and impact (European Sociological Review, West European Politics, Field Methods, etc.) while others are not even included to the Web of Science data base (SSCI). The number of FORS publication venues counted for SSCI data base is N=24 for 6 years with 28 FTE in 2013. We acknowledge that some FORS researchers successfully contribute to a large share of the total output. For instance, one staff member responsible for research support is (co-)author of 7 SSCI articles. These figures underline that the total output of publications might be looked at somewhat more critically than just referencing the reported GESIS benchmark. To represent FORS researchers among the most competent experts for survey methodology, it would be advisable to reach out for the leading journals in the field such as Public Opinion Quarterly, Sociological Research and Methods, Survey Methodology. Admittedly, evaluations on the basis of publication records are of limited validity by design. In order to get more reliable data on impact of research results, it is recommended for the future to document not only the output in terms of number of articles, but possibly also consider citations, academic prizes/honours etc. There is no doubt that employees of FORS actively take part in academia, they frequently visit meetings, international conferences, and workshops which are relevant for their field. FORS seems to be well-integrated into survey research, methodology and some substantive research communities.

Three *methodological* fields of research have been defined in 2008: non-response analysis, mixed modes in surveys, and problems of translation of survey instruments. All three are of evident importance to FORS and were approved by the scientific advisory board. However, they have not been adjusted since they were set up six years ago. There are several important new developments in survey methodology that are of high relevance to FORS as well. For instance, the access to a new sample frame provided by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office significantly improved the possibilities to draw high quality samples in Switzerland. Significant shifts in data quality should be addressed in the methodological research conducted by FORS. Adjustments of the research orientation should be on the agenda of regular internal meetings of staff and meetings of the scientific advisory board.

The *substantive* fields of research are mainly data-driven, and by the specific interests of employees. Thereby, contingencies develop over time. In general, the research conducted by FORS is well-published but could be planned more strategically. Even with a short and medium time horizon, employees and their interests should be integrated into a more explicit research planning. This recommendation refers to publications as well as to research proposals submitted by FORS. We were impressed by the diversity of proposed and conducted research beyond the service functions (e.g. in field of youth studies, urban sociology, etc.) but we could hardly identify an overarching orientation in all of these activities.

During the founding phase, the “Social Report”, published as a book each four years, was a main contribution of FORS to outreach to a public (non-academic) audience. The “Social Report” was successful to inform journalists, teachers, politicians, further interested readers without a social science background about important trends in Swiss society. However, we can follow the SNSF in their announcement that “Social Report” will not be funded anymore by 2016. The report evidently does not stand for innovative, “fundamental” research. We recommend that FORS develops a strategy to provide the very interesting and demanded information of “Social Report” in a more dynamic manner, e.g. by indicators (graphically represented) on the webpage – with user-friendly tools.

As we learned, a specific cooperation exists between FORS and NCCR Lives at the UNIL. Such local cooperation strengthens the research profile of both partners. In principal, cooperation with other research projects and clusters (beyond Lausanne) should be developed within a framework of a more general research strategy. FORS should be able to identify more such interesting partners for research cooperation. In addition, the cooperation with other external research partners could be used to raise funds. Our recommendation is to actively seek for such cooperation. In consequence, such a strategy would integrate the research of FORS even better into national and international networks.

This would be supported by a strategy to link the FORS staff (at least the directors of the units) to Swiss universities (again beyond UNIL). Some FORS employees are already involved into teaching. We recommend thinking about possible (joint) appointments, for instance as research professors with a relatively low teaching load at different universities which are interested to widen their research and teaching portfolio to survey research. Close links to universities would endogenously create more research outreach of FORS and could also be used to strategically involve PhD projects and even to recruit new personnel. We are convinced that a combination of proposed institutional innovations could also further raise the number and quality of research proposals submitted to funding agencies such as the SNSF, ERC, etc. Last not least, the existing cooperation with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office could be broadened beyond the scope of sampling. During the site visit, we learned about the willingness to cooperate with regard to issues of data linkage – this cooperation should definitely be continued.

Finally, the question of organisational appropriateness has to be addressed. FORS has a very simple and straightforward organisational structure: three task-orientated units (surveys, data services, IT), a directorate including a communication officer and research support officer, the foundation board (representing the institutional stakeholders) and a scientific advisory board. All organizational bodies meet regularly and document the process of discussion and all decisions made in transparent way. As outlined above directorate, units, and boards should consider more deeply questions of strategic planning for which we provided some suggestions. Obviously, this is a permanent challenge given the work load of all daily business but it is necessary.

## Services and outreach

The presentation and the documentation found for instance in the annual reports, shows that FORS is aware of the significance of outreach. A very basic measure of the effect of outreach is the number of datasets disseminated. FORS gives the following numbers for total dissemination per annum:

Year	Datasets disseminated
2008	628
2009	796
2010	1429
2011	1901
2012	2196
2013	2033

The table shows an increase every year from the establishment of FORS but a dip in 2013. The organisation declares that they are unable to give a specific reason for the dip. It may be just a random fluctuation or it may be due to availability of some specific data sets that are produced each two resp. four years. This may well be and the future will show. The general tendency internationally is, however, that there is growth in the demand for data. However, growth in itself is not a success. The quoted average annual growth rate of 26 % and the absolute level of the dissemination are quite respectable for the size of country, the composition of the collection and the modes of distribution employed.

FORS primarily serves a service provider of high quality data products for the social sciences conducting several flagship surveys such as the SHP and SELECTS, the Swiss Election Study. An integral and important part of the FORS data portfolio FORS are several international survey programs for which FORS organizes the fieldwork in Switzerland. From the perspective of an external evaluation, the service function is provided with great professionalism and oriented to the community which FORS wishes to reach. Social scientists in Switzerland profit very much from the services provided and – due to the integration into international survey programmes – international comparisons include Switzerland more often which raises the visibility of Swiss social science in general. The growing demand for services significantly demonstrates the need of service provision by FORS. The users come from very different academic fields. While the SHP data are used mainly by sociologists and economists other data products (e.g. SELECTS) find higher interest in political science. In general, we noticed a need for involving the economists more directly when data products of FORS are designed and distributed. In addition, user feedback should be gathered more systematically in the future.

It is obvious that data use is clustered at certain universities and research institutes where researchers – driven by their research interests – show significant interest in data access. While it became clear that researchers from all social sciences more or less do use the data services of FORS the institutional and regional coverage in Switzerland was not well documented. For the future, we recommend to carefully evaluate the “contact points” of universities, universities of applied sciences, and other institutions on a regular basis and possibly adapt the concept resp. change (inactive) contact points. “Contact points” should link their institution to FORS more actively than just by distributing information material. To be clear: the overall achievement in the field of data services is impressive. We acknowledge the fast and goal-oriented creation of FORS as necessary and successful service institution. FORS – without any doubts – meets high international standards regarding data production, data archiving, and data access. Moreover, all data products are open to the needs of potential users when FORS publishes open calls to contribute to survey instruments. This possibility is sometimes limited due to the specific requirements of some survey programmes.

We understand that survey production was funded by grants of the SNSF. To our impression, this funding directly helped to establish FORS as a leading actor in the production of high quality data in the social sciences. Given the current achievements of FORS in this field, researchers from Switzerland and other countries are now in the comfortable situation that they can use these high quality products for their own research and do not need to apply for resources to conduct surveys on their own. The data products funded by the SNSF in the past years belong to social science infrastructure and can hardly be evaluated as standard research projects.

The data dissemination covers social science broadly and a fair amount of the dissemination goes to students. It is not clear to which extent data are used for master's thesis or doctoral disputations. It seems likely that there still is an untapped potential here. FORS participation in the interuniversity MA programme on Public Opinion and Survey Methodology is a commendable outreach activity which holds a good future potential.

The value of the research inventory database was questioned during the visit although such a database principally enables more communication among social scientists. The coverage and timeliness of such a database is limited as long as researchers feed in their data on a voluntary and unsteady basis. As a consequence, the research inventory most probably remains incomplete and inaccurate. Given the different important tasks of FORS, we suggest to think about priorities and new challenges.

We already discussed the quality of research activities above. Doubtlessly, the outcome of the research activities in FORS contributes very much to the visibility of the institution, its services and expertise. It could be prudent to take this aspect into account when forming a future research strategy.

The "Social Report" mentioned above report also contributed to outreach in the past and raised the awareness of FORS outside the research community. It has already been decided that future "Social Reports" will be produced in a different format than the previous editions. When this format is decided it would be wise to take the outreach potential into account – possibly by providing interactive user tools that enables interested user to compose the particular information, which they are seeking for, themselves.

## Integration in international networks

It is part of FORS key mission to be well integrated in relevant national and international networks. FORS participates in international surveys such as ESS<sup>1</sup>, EVS<sup>2</sup>, ISSP<sup>3</sup> (MOSAiCH<sup>4</sup>) and SHARE<sup>5</sup>. FORS has been a member of CESSDA<sup>6</sup> and is now the Swiss service provider for the common legal entity

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<sup>1</sup> European Social Survey, <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

<sup>2</sup> European Values Study, <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> International Social Survey Programme, <http://www.issp.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Measures and Sociological Observation of Attitudes in Switzerland, Swiss part of ISSP, <http://forscenter.ch/en/our-surveys/international-surveys/mosaich-issp/>

<sup>5</sup> Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe, <http://www.share-project.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Council of European Social Science Data Archives, an organisation which functioned from 1976 and 2013 and in the end organised data archives from 23 European countries

CESSDA AS<sup>7</sup>. FORS is well integrated in the CESSDA work plan. Moreover, FORS participates in the EU project Data without Boundaries<sup>8</sup> and participated in the recently finished project SERSCIDA<sup>9</sup>. FORS is one of the CESSDA partners in a new social science cluster application to Horizon 2020.

FORS adheres to important international standards such as DDI. Through the CESSDA participation FORS will also acquire a Data Seal of Approval. It is less clear whether FORS intends to apply OAIS which could perhaps be a recommendation in the long run.

There is absolutely no doubt that FORS activities are well integrated in relevant international cooperation networks and that FORS has a significance in these networks that is at least compatible with the size of the institution.

### Challenges of funding

FORS is a relatively young research infrastructure but to some extent it benefitted from previous work done by SIDOS. Reliable and sustainable funding is a crucial precondition for this kind of research infrastructure. Infrastructure projects such as FORS are in need of durable and sufficient funding. To date, particularly, the survey production was funded by two or three year SNSF grants. We understand that this situation is not satisfying –neither from the SNSF nor the FORS perspective. We encourage the various stakeholders to develop new models of funding that allow running all infrastructure functions (survey programmes and data services) with a longer time horizon. It seems adequate to re-evaluate such investments each 8 to 10 years. Only if basic funding is secured does FORS have the chance to develop more efficiently in the future.

FORS has a staff of 35 people (28 FTE), it is a solid basis but the tasks to complete are numerous and growing in numbers and in content. The tasks include producing data, offering good services for users, organise some training and seminars on methodology, checking the quality of data, etc. Thus, it is very important to keep a financial support allowing at least to maintain the number of positions and to maintain the activities and their quality and, if possible, to increase them. A fixed budget does not allow for dealing with new challenges. FORS has to develop its links with new disciplines, increase the number of carried out surveys and archived data files, improve the quality of data and services, to do more methodological and substantive research. Therefore increased financial means would be necessary.

FORS has good chances to be successful in the long run if the financial resources are sufficient.

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<sup>7</sup> Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives a common legal entity established in 2013 by 13 European countries, <http://www.cessda.net/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dwbproject.org/>

<sup>9</sup> Support for Establishment of National/Regional Social Sciences Data Archives, <http://www.serscida.eu/en/>

## Further challenges

### Quality assurance

Quality issues are very different for data produced by FORS for which it is easy to check the sampling and the field work, and for data only deposited at FORS by different data producers. Some of the surveys done by FORS form part of high quality international surveys. The fact that the FORS projects are accepted in that context can be judged as a recognition of the quality assurance exercised by FORS. It seems fair to assume that the quality assurance measures employed to the national surveys done by FORS fulfil the same high standards. Though the technical quality of deposited data is checked thoroughly by FORS the evaluation of their scientific potential is not as rigorous. It could be worthwhile to have reflections about this question to eventually define a strategy:

- Is it possible to easily evaluate the scientific potential of received data? What are the means necessary for that task?
- What is the goal of a checking: giving a kind of label to the producers of surveys and give to the institution financing the survey the guarantee that they are of good quality? Or only giving qualitative information to the future users, quality defined by a discussion between producer and archive?

### FORS support for the professional career of junior researchers appropriately (especially women)

FORS is very supportive towards young researchers. But there are in fact two different situations. Three or four post-doctoral students are at FORS and can, in good conditions, do research. It would be a good thing that a larger number of post-doctoral students were taken in to the foundation. FORS is a good location to complete a research CV and improve junior researchers' possibilities to apply for university positions.

In the staff of FORS, there are a lot of rather young people (very often women). Some of them are involved in PhD-projects. They seem to appreciate the possibility given to them to improve their academic curriculum vitae. But they also state that they have only about 10 % of their time available for their research project and would like to have a little more time. But it is not a strong demand, the staff is conscious they have a good employer.

During the site visit, we discussed with the junior researchers about their working conditions. In general, they were very satisfied with their working teams and individual career opportunities. Although FORS displays an even gender balance on total, a possible development towards vertical segregation should be seen.

### Resource issues

Scarcity of resources does not allow investing into new survey instruments while keeping the other needed instruments running. In particular, survey research profits very much from initiatives such as innovation panels. Though we fear that the funding situation at FORS will not improve significantly we nevertheless encourage FORS to use the open calls by other institutions to work on innovative methodological questions.

### Ease of data delivery

An important precondition for keeping a data archive attractive is that researchers constantly deliver their new data to the archive. All research funded by public resources is obliged to transfer the data to a public archive after the project finishes. This policy seems to need some more stringent enforcement. In addition, data production should be credited higher in order to motivate researchers to deliver their data sets to an archive. FORS could publish the fact that archived data sets gets more citations<sup>10</sup>. It could also be worthwhile for FORS to explore using DataCite. Interesting new data could be promoted with reference to the producer. The process of delivering data (“uploading”) should be as easy as possible while fulfilling standard quality checks. In addition, FORS could encourage more secondary research in the social sciences, thereby enlarging the number of data users. Two suggestions: (1) offer a secondary research server to journals that request data and syntax files from their authors; (2) announce a prize for solid secondary research studies for “spectacular” findings using FORS data for Switzerland.

### New data types

Facing significant changes in the “world of data”, FORS needs new expertise in rapidly evolving fields. Many researchers observe the trend to use “big data” for the social sciences. Some do it with great enthusiasm, others with scepticism. We acknowledge that FORS formed a “big data” group which will discuss upcoming topics. It seems that further external expertise on this broad and complicated issue should be integrated. Particularly, FORS should work on a strategy for what kind of process-produced data could be transferred to the data archives to produce added value for the social sciences. “Big data” will to a certain degree change the profile of expertise needed to work in the field. FORS should be aware that the “data analyst” in the future will have to understand algorithms, relational database, strategy of record linkage etc. Finally, the discussion on the possibility to submit “qualitative” data to data archives needs attention. Given that researchers doing qualitative research have very diverging opinions about the necessity and the general usefulness, this challenge may not have highest priority.

### Conclusion

Given the very few reservations that are stated above, our general impression from the visit was that of an institution doing well and fulfilling an important task in the Swiss research community, of an institution well worth to preserve and further build up in order to meet future challenges in the social sciences.

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<sup>10</sup> This has been shown in many studies. One example is: Heather A. Piwowar, Todd J. Vision. Data reuse and the open data citation advantage. *PeerJ*, 2013; 1: e175 DOI: [10.7717/peerj.175](https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.175)



## Comment on the Draft of the External Experts' Report

**Note:** *The SSIC evaluation procedure gives FORS the possibility to comment on the draft report authored by the external experts following the site visit on Sept. 1-2, 2014. This comment was written by the FORS leadership and seen by the President of the Foundation and the Chair of the Scientific Board before submitting to the SSIC.*

### A. Introductory Remark

We think that the draft of the external experts' report gives a balanced and constructive view of our achievements and of the challenges we are facing currently and in the future. Thus, we judge it to be a pertinent basis for the report to be authored by the SSIC.

While we generally agree with most of what is said in the report, we would like to use the opportunity offered by the SSIC to comment on those recommendations that we deem to be of high relevance for the future development of FORS.

### B. Comments on Recommendations

#### 1 Research Strategy, Planning, and Collaborations (p. 2/3, p. 4)

The orientation of the methodological and substantive research activities of FORS collaborators is one of the main topics of the experts' report. We endorse the recommendation to "consider more deeply questions of strategic planning" of research on different levels of the organisation. We must, however, keep in mind that FORS needs to find a good balance for using the scarce resources available for research on the one hand for discussions on strategy and planning and on the other hand for actually doing research, preparing publications, and participating in scientific events.

Any kind of strategic planning should take into account path dependencies: Scientific collaborators have developed their thematic preferences and experience during their studies and personal research work, which make them especially competent in their preferred fields of research. Reorienting key areas of research would require not only a considerable investment but also the compliance of the collaborators. Thematic interest and commitment to research are mainly governed intrinsically and cannot be imposed without some loss of motivation and quality.

We welcome the recommendation to "actively seek for (research) cooperation", be it with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office – talks and meetings with the SFSO director

are ongoing, the next one being scheduled for November 18, 2014) – or be it with economists: FORS is the data expert partner within a network of seven university economics departments in all regions of Switzerland currently preparing an SNSF proposal to investigate interdependencies in the Swiss social security system using data on disability insurance, unemployment insurance, and social assistance payments. The data will originate from different government agencies in anonymised form, and will be hosted by FORS and offered for use by the scientific community. The proposal will be submitted in January 2015 (Sinergia funding scheme). Other initiatives are being prepared as well, such as, for example, a project to help six Western Balkan countries establish new social science data archives (proposal in the framework of the Swiss SCOPES programme, to be submitted in November 2014).

## 2 The Social Report (p. 3, p. 5)

The Social Report will undergo profound changes after the announced termination of SNSF funding of the Report in 2016. As the experts recommend the indicators will be updated more regularly and in a user-friendly way, i.e. by online graphic representation and interactive data analysis tools. We plan to become much more active in the field of social indicator research than we have been before.

However, we would like to maintain the option of publishing a volume from time to time, which demonstrates the power and possibilities of the scientific analysis of societal dynamics. This volume might or might not be published in several languages, and it might come in an adapted print format (e.g., print on demand), but its analytic contributions will remain a showcase of the social sciences as has been the Social Report until now, which always received great public attention and much echo in the media. We think that it would be a big and unnecessary loss to completely abandon such an excellent opportunity to create public attention for results of social science research in Switzerland.

## 3 The Contact Points (p. 4)

Contact points (*“guichets”*) were established in all Swiss universities and universities of applied sciences active in the social sciences. In the big universities there are several of them. The contact points are “ambassadors” of FORS and represent for us the possibility of collecting information from and addressing competent and interested persons with regard to concrete needs at their institutions.

But we should be realistic: Most contact points are senior assistants on a postdoc-level who have a lot of other tasks, obligations, and interests. If we demand too much of them we might lose them. Thus, we have to keep a balance between inactivity and overburdening. We understand the recommendation of the experts as an indication that we have to care for finding and maintaining the optimal balance.

#### 4 The Research Inventory (p. 5)

The experts suggest that FORS reconsider whether the “value (of the research inventory) justifies the cost”. In response, we would like to argue that beyond its utility as a historical record of almost 10'000 social science research project descriptions in Switzerland since 1992, the inventory is an indispensable service within the larger context of DARIS and its future goals. As a matter of fact, it serves, as a research information system, FORS and the scientific community equally.

The current costs of this information system are moderate. Thanks to its smooth functioning and the accumulated know-how of its administrator, its maintenance requires no more than a 0.5 FTE. The benefits, however, are considerable.

The database makes possible *targeted communications with the community of social science researchers*. Institutional website monitoring software allows for monitoring of the entire research landscape. The inventory webpages are regularly the most visited on the FORS website, with more than 10'000 visits yearly. Because of our up-to-date inventory database of 8'500 researchers active in the social sciences, we are able to send out communications at any moment about FORS services and data, like for example open calls for questionnaire modules (e.g., MOSAiCH), the biannual Data Bulletin informing about important new data releases, invitations for scientific events organised or co-organised by FORS, information about network websites hosted by FORS (e.g., qualitative-research.ch, healthstudies.ch), and many more. Detailed information about the recipients (e.g., discipline, language, institution, status) allows us to target messages to specific audiences.

It is because of the inventory database that the new IT platform FORSbase will soon make possible a networking system where researchers can send personal messages to other researchers regarding specific projects and learn more about their other research activities, as well as about the research activities being conducted at different institutions. Further, the system facilitates institutional networking, where FORS can exchange with other research information systems (e.g., Schweizerische Koordinationsstelle für Bildungsforschung SKBF, the research database of the Federal Administration ARAMIS, comparable databases of CESSDA partners like GESIS), provide consulting services for other similar systems, or serve as a reference database for universities that do not have their own centralised research information system (e.g., University of Bern). We plan to extend global agreements on data exchange with institutional research databases in order to improve the coverage of our database and to alleviate the burden of entering information while still consolidating the research inventory as *the social science metadata hub* in Switzerland.

The importance of research metadata hubs for the access to scientific information in the future was emphasised recently by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) by commissioning to a consortium consisting of FORS, the ETHZ, and the University of Basel the task to develop and implement a Swiss Open Research Data Portal, which will harvest research metadata from existing portals of different disciplines and of different institutions, one of them being the social science oriented FORSbase inventory.

The inventory is also a tool for discovery of up-to-date research information across domains and institutional databases. It allows researchers and research policy-makers to see who is doing/has done what in the social sciences in Switzerland for over two decades. This is especially useful for students and junior researchers who are developing their own projects. For each project there is detailed information about the methods employed and the types of data gathered (e.g., quantitative vs. qualitative), as well as about who was involved in the work. Also, many bibliographic references relating to projects point to valuable grey literature that is not available in library catalogues. This level of information about such a wide corpus of research projects in the social sciences with such an easy and centralised access is not available from any other source in the country nor from internet sources like Google Scholar, thematically focused listservers, or referenced publications. More than 10'000 visits per year are a proof of the interest in the database – and of its value as an excellent showcase promoting the visibility of FORS.

In sum, we think that the benefits clearly surpass the modest costs of maintaining this research information system. Once abandoned, it would be virtually impossible and very expensive to recreate it again.

### 5 Quality Control for New Data in the Archive (p. 6/7)

The experts recommend that the archive within DARIS give more emphasis to quality control for data deposited from external sources. We would like to note that this has always been a key concern for the archive, and our practice has always been to conduct checks of quality for incoming data collections. First, we check that the datasets that we receive and then publish are clean, well-labelled, and do not contain any variables that could lead to identification of individuals. Second, we check that there is sufficient accompanying documentation to enable meaningful and appropriate use of the data, including questionnaires and information about the methods used by the researchers.

It may be that the experts were concerned about future plans to implement a self-deposit system within the new system FORSbase, a service that currently does not exist in the data archive. We would like to reassure them that with the new system we will continue with the same quality control procedures that have been used up until now – evaluating the overall study and data collection against our selection criteria, checking to be sure that all submitted datasets are clean and anonymised, and that there is adequate documentation. Each new data submission to the archive within FORSbase will undergo a careful review for quality.

### 6 Staff Development, Joint Appointments with Universities (p. 7, p. 3)

As any other organisation of its size, FORS has to live with the restriction that the number of hierarchically higher-level positions is limited, and that the persons occupying these positions tend to stay – which of course is no drawback at all from the aspect of stability and capacity building. Nevertheless, we continuously strive for

equal representation of men and women at FORS in all boards and organisational units, and on all hierarchical levels.

FORS is an equal opportunity employer, and gender issues are always a concern when hiring new collaborators, especially for higher-level positions. But profile, qualifications, and experience are just as important, and every hiring has to balance all aspects to find an optimum in the best FORS interest.

The experts recommend to think about “possible (joint) appointments, for instance as research professors (...) at different universities” in order to strengthen scientific collaborative links and “to strategically involve PhD projects”. This model is close to what we know from GESIS. One of the obvious advantages of such a model is that FORS would have better chances to attract academically oriented scholars as collaborators, in this way reinforcing its profile in academia. However, there are drawbacks as well. The GESIS experience shows that joint appointments tend to be complicated and time consuming. Moreover, research professorships are unusual at Swiss universities for a number of reasons. Last but not least, such joint appointments limit the autonomy and flexibility of FORS in hiring senior staff considerably.

### 7 Encouragement for Secondary Research (p. 8)

We fully agree with the experts’ recommendation to “encourage more secondary research”. As a matter of fact, we offer for quite a while already a course on data management that can be adapted to the actual needs of the respective public. It has been given, among others, at the Summer School in Lugano. Good data management is a prerequisite for secondary research.

In addition, the introduction of unique “persistent” identifiers is a necessary condition for the successful secondary use of data. We have decided to use the Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) provided by GESIS, and have taken the initial steps towards their implementation.

We appreciate the suggestion of a “prize for solid secondary research studies”. There are several challenges here which seem, however, manageable. One of them is to identify and define the criteria for granting the prize with the needed precision and validity, another is to appoint qualified experts for the evaluation of submitted publications, and a third is the establishment and promotion of the prize in the scientific community. And of course the funding of the prize has to be secured for a longer period. We will look into existing examples in order to evaluate the best practices, benefits, and costs.

### 8 New Data Types, “Big Data” (p. 9)

We are well aware of the challenges connected to the use of new data types. As is stated in our Annual Report 2013, we established a working group on the issue. We plan to produce a strategic paper, which might be discussed by our Boards in their 2015 spring meetings.

Depending on the outcome of these discussions, we will design concrete steps to introduce new data types into our portfolio in the future.

### **C. Concluding Remark**

We would like to thank the experts for their fair and constructive work. We feel reassured that we are on the right track, and we will aspire to implement most of the recommendations as professionally as possible.

Our comments should be understood as additional explanations highlighting issues important to us. It is of course up to the experts to introduce one or several of these comments into the final version of their report.

gesis

Leibniz Institute  
for the Social Sciences

## Comparison GESIS – FORS

Report commissioned by SWIR

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21. August 2014

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## 1 Introduction

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The document has been prepared by GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences following the service contract with the Swiss Science and Innovation Council (for contributions by FORS see below). In accordance with the contract from July 2014 it has been titled „Comparison GESIS – FORS“. The requirements have been laid down in chapter 2 of the contract SWIR.2014.0020:

„Ziel des Auftrages ist das Verfassen eines Berichtes mit Vergleichszahlen und Erläuterungen zu folgenden Themen (soweit möglich): Aufgaben; Organisationsstruktur; Ressourcen (personell, inkl. Qualität, und materiell) und Finanzierung; Produkte und Produktivität hinsichtlich Infrastrukturdiensten, sonstigen Services und Forschung; Nutzerkreise und Nutzung nach Umfang und soweit angebar spezifiziert nach Disziplinen und Stellung der Nutzer.

Als Leitfaden dient eine Auswahl aus den „Performance Indicators“, wie sie FORS in ihrem Jahresbericht 2013 ab Seite 50 aufführt.

Im Vergleich wird stets berücksichtigt, dass GESIS und FORS sehr unterschiedliche Größenordnungen haben und in unterschiedlichen Kontexten (z.B. Forschungsaktivitäten der Ministerien, Bund-Länder-Setting) arbeiten.

FORS kann das Ergebnis kommentieren; der FORS-Kommentar ist Bestandteil des GESIS-Berichts.

Die Geschäftsstelle SWIR erhält den Schlussbericht im Word-Format. Der Bericht ist auf englisch zu verfassen.“

GESIS has been chosen for comparison because, on the whole, it is on international level the institution most alike to FORS. Descriptions and figures used here have partly been taken from the published annual reports of GESIS. In other parts figures have been taken from unpublished documents like the factual report and the key figure report. Some of the descriptions and figures had to be written and calculated anew so as to suit the aim of comparison. Chapters 2-6 are describing the last year 2013, chapter 7 is giving numbers for the last four years, if such numbers have been available.

It has to be mentioned that GESIS is different from FORS in many aspects. Size is one of the obvious differences, and there are many more, obvious and not so obvious. To support readers in understanding both institutions appropriately and to support the comparison of both the report tries to make explicit differences which are restricting the comparability of the institutions.

The process allows GESIS only to describe its organization, but not to conduct a comparison of GESIS and FORS by itself; thus, differences are being described by FORS. The according text is being marked as indented paragraphs with italic text beginning with "Comment by FORS". All other text has been written by GESIS. This points at what this report exactly is: It is a description of and by GESIS according to the requirements and parallel to the description of and by FORS. It is left to the reader to compare the institutions and draw conclusions in a wise way.

In preparation of the document a workshop took place in Lausanne at FORS on 16. July 2014. Participants were Dr. Marianne Bonvin Cuddapah (scientific advisor of SWIR), Prof. Dr. Peter Farago (director of FORS), Dr. Brian Kleiner (responsible for key performance indicators at FORS), Dr. Guido Koch (quality manager of GESIS), and Prof. Dr. York Sure-Vetter (president of GESIS).

## 2 Mission

GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences promotes research in the social sciences. By providing sustainable infrastructure services and conducting application-oriented and basic research, it makes an important contribution to the description and explanation of social developments from a national, cross-national comparative, and historical perspective. Paragraph 2.2 of the statutes (German only) names the tasks in detail:

„(2) Der Vereinszweck wird insbesondere durch die Erfüllung der folgenden Aufgaben verfolgt: a) kontinuierliche, interdisziplinäre Forschung und Entwicklung im Zusammenhang mit den in den Buchstaben b) bis g) dieses Absatzes genannten Aufgabenbereichen, b) Beschreibung und Erklärung gesellschaftlicher Entwicklungen in nationaler, international vergleichender und historischer Perspektive einschließlich der Datenerhebung, statistischen Modellierung und Dauerbeobachtung, c) Archivierung, Dokumentation und Langzeitsicherung sozialwissenschaftlicher Daten, einschließlich ihrer Erschließung sowie qualitativ hochwertigen Aufbereitung besonders relevanter Daten für Sekundäranalysen, d) Aufbereitung von Literatur- und Forschungsinformationen, e) Schaffung eines benutzerfreundlichen und hochqualitativen Zugangs zu allen für die empirische Sozialforschung relevanten Informationen und Daten einschließlich des Aufbaus und der Pflege sozialwissenschaftliche Portale und Kommunikationsnetzwerke, Entwicklung effektiver Instrumente für die Recherche, Aufbereitung, Auswertung, Sicherung und Archivierung der relevanten Informationen, f) Beratung von Wissenschaftlern bei Primärerhebungen und Sekundäranalysen, einschließlich der Aus- und Weiterbildung auf dem Gebiet der empirischen Sozialforschung und g) Unterstützung der internationalen Kooperationen von Wissenschaftlern und Mitwirkung am Aufbau einer effektiven Infrastruktur für die international vergleichende Forschung.“

GESIS' outstanding feature is its ability to combine within the institute expertise in the areas of survey research, social science research, and applied computer science. This unique bundling of expertise enables GESIS to keep its infrastructure services up to date for its users at all times.

GESIS' general concept is based on the orientation of its infrastructure services towards a research data cycle designed from a user's perspective, which comprises, in particular, the typical research processes in empirical social research (see figure 1). What makes GESIS unique is its ability to support all phases of the cycle with research-based infrastructure services and its own research.

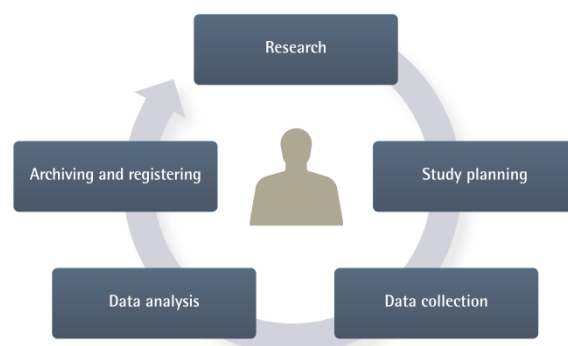


Figure 1: GESIS research data cycle from a user's perspective

The research data cycle offers a holistic perspective on the production, provision, and retention of research data and research information. Designed to provide researchers in the social sciences with intuitively understandable access to the institute's products and services, it comprises five individual phases:

- support for researchers in the search for information, especially by providing extensive databases containing metadata for scholarly publications, research data, and projects as well as full texts and research data;
- support in planning and collecting empirical research data and in designing studies;
- the collection and preparation of research data;
- the provision of services for the analysis and exploration of research data;
- the provision of services for the registration and archiving of research data.

Moreover, in all phases GESIS offers scientific consultancy and knowledge transfer (workshops, seminars etc.).

The products and services for each phase are the result of collaboration between the five scientific departments (see chapter 3).

GESIS is a research-based infrastructure institution for the social sciences. It also conducts its own continuous interdisciplinary research in three major research areas – namely, survey methodology, substantive social science research, and applied computer and information science (see figure 2).

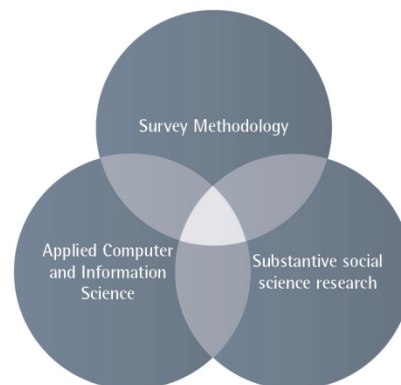


Figure 2: Research areas at GESIS

The results of this research serve not only to generate scientific knowledge but also to sustainably improve GESIS' overall range of products and services for the social sciences. Only by combining the three research areas can GESIS keep its infrastructure services up to date at all times.

*Comment by FORS: The mission of FORS is analogue to the one of GESIS, see art. 2 of the statutes and art. 3 of the service agreements with the SERI. With regard to research areas (see fig. 2 above) the most important difference is that there is no research field for applied computer science and information science at FORS. The FORS IT group is a purely internal service unit.*

### 3 Organization

GESIS was founded in 1986 under the name "German Social Science Infrastructure Services". Since 18 June 2009 it bears the name "GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences". GESIS is a non-profit association.

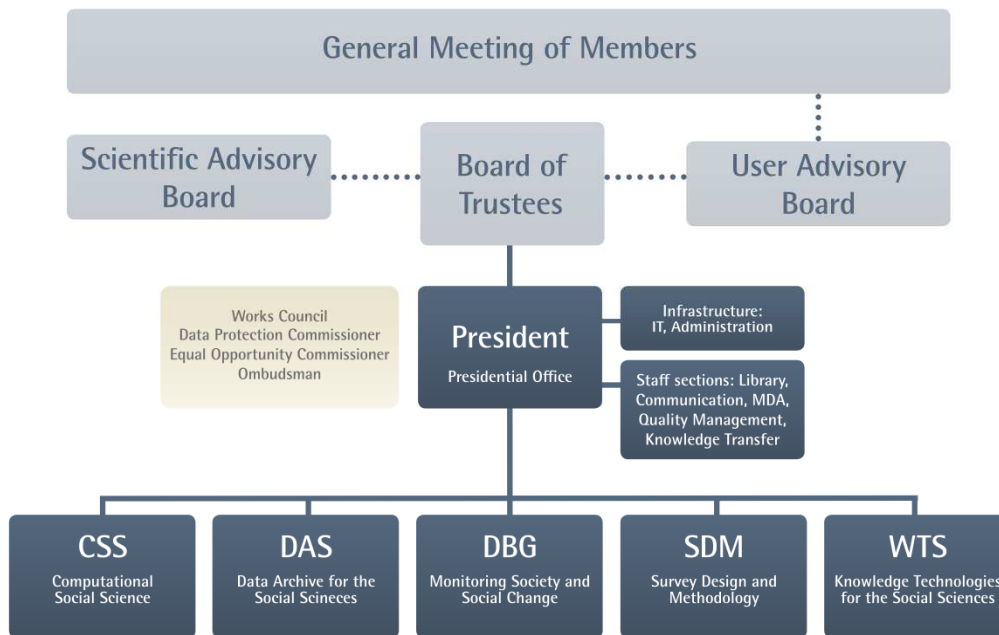


Figure 3: Organigram of GESIS

GESIS is organized around the following organs:

- The General Meeting of Members, which comprises universities and social science professional associations, forms the basis of the association.
- The Board of Trustees is the supervisory body of the association. Its members are scientists and representatives of the awarding authorities. All affairs and arrangements of fundamental significance that exceed the ordinary course of business require the prior consent of the Board of Trustees.
- The President is the *Vorstand* [Board] of the association within the meaning of the law governing associations in Germany. He leads and represents the association and directs its business.
- The Scientific Advisory Board and the User Advisory Board advise the Board of Trustees in the fulfilment of its tasks. The Scientific Advisory Board is appointed by the Board of Trustees and adopts positions on the long-term development (programme planning and programme budget) of the association. The User Advisory Board is appointed by the General Meeting of Members and adopts positions on the services by GESIS. Both boards together conduct audits of GESIS.

GESIS has five scientific departments, whose heads are appointed in a joint appointment procedure with the partner universities:

- The "Computational Social Science" department (CSS) was established in October 2013 (succeeding the "Specialized Information for the Social Sciences" department). On one hand, the department focuses on the exploration of novel methods and algorithms for the analysis of social phenomena on the WWW, based on – for example – data from social media. On the other, the department has expertise on knowledge discovery and -acquisition that is used for organizing the output of social science processes. In addition, the Center of Excellence Women and Science (CEWS) is administratively associated with the department.
- The "Data Archive for the Social Sciences" department (DAS) focuses on providing excellent data service for national and international comparative surveys from the fields of social and political science research. These surveys, which must comply with clearly defined methodological and technical requirements, are archived and processed according to internationally recognized standards and made accessible to the scientifically interested public in a user-friendly manner.
- The „Monitoring Society and Social Change" (DBG) department supports social researchers in monitoring current social developments by providing comprehensive resources for the description and analysis of social developments. The resources encompass services for official microdata, social indicators, and survey programs.
- The "Survey Design and Methodology" department (SDM) is concerned with social science survey methodology with regard both to research and to the provision of services. All staff members are certified experts in different areas of survey methodology ensuring, in sum, that the entire spectrum of survey research is covered, from design development, to administering questionnaires and samples, to data coding and statistical analysis.
- The "Knowledge Technologies for the Social Sciences" department (WTS) is focused on advancing and improving digital services for the Social Sciences on the basis of novel knowledge technologies. To ensure a high quality of GESIS services the department is carrying out research in applied Computer Science, in particular in the fields Web Science, Semantic Web, Linked Open Data and Information Retrieval.

The five scientific departments comprise teams created on the basis of subject-specific criteria. Each team is led by a team head.

Where necessary and appropriate, organisation units are formed across departments, as is the case, for example, with the four research data centers ALLBUS, the German Microdata Lab, International Survey Programmes, and Elections.

The process of strategic management includes the formulation of a mission statement, of a programme planning for three to eight years ahead, and of a programme budget for two years ahead.

The formally funding providing authority is the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts (MWK). Besides Baden-Württemberg, the *Länder* in which GESIS is located are North Rhine-Westphalia and Berlin. At federal level, the competent authority is the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). GESIS is member of the Leibniz association.

*Comment by FORS: FORS is a foundation according to art. 80ff. of the Swiss Civil Code. Its highest authority is the Foundation Board, which is composed of representatives of the key stakeholders (see art. 6-10 of the statutes). The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation as well as the Swiss National Science Foundation as the main funders attend the meetings of the Foundation Board as observers in an advisory capacity. The Scientific Board has an advisory role on scientific matters; it is composed of eminent scholars in the fields of scientific*

activity of FORS (see art. 15 of the statutes). Since there is no equivalent to the GESIS "General Meeting of Members" (FORS as a foundation has no members), a FORS User Advisory Board would lack an institutional basis and representative legitimacy. This is one of the reasons why such a Board is nonexistent at FORS.

FORS has three units (or departments): 1) Surveys, 2) Data and Research Information Services (DARIS), and 3) Support (IT, personnel, finances). Communication and research support services are directly attached to the Director. The three heads of departments and the Director constitute the Executive Board (see art. 11 of the statutes). There is no equivalent at FORS for the joint appointments with universities of heads of departments at GESIS. However, the current Director holds a professorship at the host university, and one of the host university professors participates regularly in the Executive Board meetings. Moreover, one of the FORS senior researchers is associate professor *ad personam* at the host university.

For mandates or special projects, cross-cutting task forces are established for a limited time and according to the specific qualifications and experiences needed. Good cases in point are the team responsible for the "ch-x" survey on "Mobility of Young Adults" and the working group on "big data".

## 4 Resources

GESIS receives joint funding from the federal government and the *Länder*. In 2013 the total revenue of GESIS was 24.7 million Euro. For details see table 1 and table 7.

Table 1: Revenue and expenditure of GESIS 2013

	2013 (k€)
<b>Budget</b>	<b>24,685</b>
Joint funding from the federal government and the Länder	19,358
Third party funding	4,800
Revenue from economic activity	526
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>24,685</b>
Personnel	16,194
Costs for materials	8,305
Other investments	173
Allocation to reserves	13

GESIS has 280 employees as at 31.12.2013 (not including student assistants). Of those, 165 are scientific or managing staff. Further details can be found in table 2.

Table 2: Staff as at 31.12.2013<sup>1</sup>

	Total		Academic and management staff <sup>2</sup>		Other staff	
	FTE	Employees	FTE	Empl.	FTE	Empl.
<b>GESIS</b>	<b>244.36</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>142.76</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>101.60</b>	<b>115</b>
	100 %	100 %	58 %	59 %	42 %	41 %
President and executive departments	17.26	18	4.00	4	13.26	14
	7 %	6 %				
Administration <sup>3</sup>	26.80	30	1.00	1	25.80	29
	11 %	11 %				
IT <sup>4</sup>	16.26	17	1.00	1	15.26	16
	7 %	6 %				
Knowledge transfer	7.25	9	4.25	5	3.00	4
	3 %	3 %				
DAS	49.15	57	33.40	38	15.75	19
	20 %	20 %				
DBG	24.85	29	22.95	26	1.90	3
	10 %	10 %				
CSS <sup>5</sup>	38.91	44	22.65	27	16.26	17
	16 %	16 %				
SDM	40.22	49	35.35	42	4.87	7
	16 %	18 %				
WTS	23.66	27	18.16	21	5.50	6
	10 %	10 %				

Explanations:

1. Persons financed by the institution (including apprentices and guest scientists, excluding interns and student assistants).
2. Staff positions BAT IIa and higher resp. TVöD/TVL EG13 and higher (including doctoral candidates). Management staff is – except for executive departments, administration and IT – at the same time academic staff.
3. Number of apprentices in the department: 3.
4. Number of apprentices in the department: 1.
5. Number of apprentices in the department: 2.

The number of staff in the scientific departments preparing their Ph.D. sums up to 30.86 FTE or 43 employees as at 31.12.2013. Junior academics preparing their Ph.D. are typically being hired for limited time at 75 % of the full working hours. One third of their working time is being devoted to preparing the Ph.D. Over and above this, those junior academics are being supported, for example, by specific advanced training. The number of employees with at least a Ph.D. or equivalent title is 68 as at 31.12.2013.

*Comment by FORS: The total revenue of FORS amounted to 7.2mCHF in 2013. However, this figure is changing from year to year according to the different time schedules of the surveys; in 2012 for example it was 6.6mCHF. On the average, the contributions by the SERI and the SNSF amount to 2.5mCHF and 4.5mCHF respectively, but these vary from year to year as well following differing payment schemes. All accounts of the period 2008–2013 are contained in the evaluation documentation.*

*As of December 31, 2013, FORS employed 35 collaborators (28 FTE), out of which 30 (24 FTE) are scientific collaborators, 16 (13 FTE) with a doctoral degree or equivalent. All staff are permanently hired. Collaborators preparing a doctoral thesis are supported by FORS by freeing up a share of their paid working time for the dissertation (normally 20 %). According to organizational units, the figures are as follows:*

Table 2.FORS: Staff as at 31.12.2013

	Employees	FTE
<i>FORS</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Direction</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2.6</i>
<i>Surveys</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13.2</i>
<i>DARIS</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>7.9</i>
<i>Support</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.3</i>

*Detailed staff statistics are included in the Appendices of the Annual Reports.*

## 5 Products and Productivity

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In the year 2013 GESIS had 52 different services on offer (not including research). They are being classified into the categories portals, databases, data services, survey programmes conducted by GESIS, knowledge transfer and user tailored services. From a user's perspective the services are arranged around the GESIS research data cycle (see figure 1).

The joint funding from the federal government and the *Länder* governments is not project-specific but grants one budget for GESIS as a whole. Responsible for the management and allocation of the resources is GESIS with its various bodies. Within GESIS, no budgets for survey projects or budgets for organizational units exist with an exception for third party funded projects. The programme budget only has budgets for the three programme areas of GESIS: infrastructure, research, and knowledge transfer.

In order to make a comparison of productivity possible, we take as an example the surveys of which the datasets are being produced and disseminated by GESIS (see chapter 7.1). For these the resources GESIS invests inhouse can be specified approximately, namely the FTE of the responsible Research Data Centers (all numbers as at 31.12.2013). Please note that work being done outside the Research Data Centers like pretesting or sampling is not included in these numbers. The German General Social Survey (ALLBUS) is being managed by the Research Data Center ALLBUS with 4.7 FTE. The German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) is managed by the Research Data Center Elections (which manages also other national election surveys like the Politbarometer) with 5 FTE.<sup>1</sup> The European Values Study (EVS) and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)<sup>2</sup> are managed by the Research Data Center International Survey Programmes (which manages also other international surveys like the Eurobarometer and the European Election Study/Piredeu) with 15.87 FTE. It is noteworthy that employees in the Research Data Centers partially also perform tasks outside the Research Data Centers.

Single services will be described with more detail in chapter 7.

*Comment by FORS: FORS has never quantified its services in this way, and so no comparable figure is available.*

*At FORS, the SNSF funded surveys follow a fundamentally different pattern from that one of GESIS, namely a project oriented logic. The SNSF funds each survey as a separate project with separate detailed budgets, asking FORS to allocate funds survey by survey according to the figures in the proposals. A comparison with the figures given by GESIS is therefore not feasible. It should be recalled, however, that FORS has in total 13.2 FTE at disposition for managing all the surveys, including the Swiss Household Panel (see table 2.FORS above).*

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<sup>1</sup> GLES is a third party funded project (funded by the DFG) of which GESIS is one of the five principle investigators. The revenue of GESIS for the funding period 1. January 2012 till 31. December 2014 is 1,316,948 Euro.

<sup>2</sup> For the ISSP, GESIS is responsible for collecting the national data of each wave in Germany. Beyond that, GESIS is responsible for the creation and dissemination of the international data set of the ISSP since the inauguration of the project and has a leading role in various working groups.

## 6 Target Groups and Usage

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The mission statement names the target groups of GESIS:

“Our offer is directed primarily at researchers in empirical social research with a focus on the areas of sociology and political science as well as social science in its entirety.<sup>3</sup>”

Other target groups include those working in related political, social and commercial social science environments.”

For the sake of comparison, an indicator for the relative size of the target groups of GESIS is being provided here: the number of professors in political science and in social sciences (demography, social studies, and sociology) at universities. According to the latest report by the Federal Statistical Office, in Germany in the year 2012 there were 791 professors.<sup>4</sup> This number, however, represents only a fraction of the GESIS target groups.

GESIS has a number of instruments to foster target group orientation. It starts with the representation of target groups in the organs of the institute: the General Meeting of Members, the Board of Trustees, the Scientific Advisory Board, and the User Advisory Board. The last two boards carry out regular audits of the scientific departments. Survey projects regularly have their own boards. An annual internal portfolio analysis delivers the basis for strategic management and will be irregularly extended by a survey among target groups.

User orientation is being guaranteed with the help of user statistics and user surveys. For the sake of user tests of web services GESIS is building up its own online panel. Some survey programmes also offer user conferences.

Usage with concern to single services will be described in chapter 7.

*Comment by FORS: FORS' target groups are generally the same – researchers in empirical social research. FORS also reaches beyond sociology and political science into other disciplines, such as education science, economics, geography, and communication studies (see the user statistics given in the self-assessment report slides “FORS in a nutshell”). The number of professors of sociology and political science in Switzerland is currently 109.<sup>5</sup>*

*The election study SELECTS has its own commission composed of stakeholders and target groups of the study (e.g., political scientists, higher civil servants). The SHP is organizing regularly international scientific user conferences. The SHP, ESS, SHARE, and ISSP teams are informing the respondents about important results of their surveys regularly; the respective flyers and leaflets are contained in the evaluation documentation.*

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<sup>3</sup> The latter term is in German “Sozialwissenschaften insgesamt”. It should be noted that this term does not refer to a disciplinary perspective, but to a holistic view of social science. As a consequence it should not be misunderstood as a reference to all social science disciplines.

<sup>4</sup> Statistisches Bundesamt: Personal an Hochschulen. 2012. (= Fachserie 11, Reihe 4.4). Wiesbaden 2013. [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Hochschulen/PersonalHochschul\\_en2110440127004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Hochschulen/PersonalHochschul_en2110440127004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile) (18. July 2014). Numbers can be found on page 96, the classification of disciplines on page 301.

<sup>5</sup> We counted professors and associated professors (prof. associé, this is a common stable position in F-CH), but not Assistenzprofessoren, Titularprofessoren, and no prof. ad personam, in all universities and the two ETH, but not in the Fachhochschulen. Demography is in Switzerland to be found in different departments. If in sociology (like for example Prof. Wanner in Geneva), we counted them. “Social studies” is a translation of the original German term “Sozialkunde”; this does not exist on university level in Switzerland.

*FORS is working on extending its user statistics. Our newly programmed and updated webpage, together with the enhanced IT platform FORSbase, provides improved possibilities for reasonably detailed user statistics that will be explored in the near future.*

## 7 Performance Indicators

FORS lists performance indicators in its annual report. It was agreed upon to report the following eight indicators: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.2.<sup>6</sup>

### 7.1 Dissemination of datasets

The FORS indicator 1.1 gives the "number of datasets produced by FORS surveys that are distributed to researchers" or more exactly the number of distributions of datasets. At FORS these are datasets of the surveys ESS, MOSAiCH/ISSP, SELECTS, and SHP.

The datasets that are being produced and disseminated by GESIS are datasets of the surveys ALLBUS, EVS, GLES, and ISSP. Except for ISSP, the surveys distributed at GESIS and FORS are not only not the same, but also different in type. GLES is the only new survey starting in 2009, ALLBUS and EVS have huge target groups partially because they also address students. That is why absolute numbers of distribution are difficult to compare. Thus GESIS adds here the annual growth rates since 2010.

Table 3: Growth rate (%) and absolute numbers for dissemination of data produced by GESIS

	2010	2011	2012	2013
ALLBUS		1 %	-22 %	25 %
	10,100	10,180	7,980	10,013
EVS		76 %	16 %	-20 %
	3,141	5,516	6,382	5,112
GLES		45 %	-52 %	-2 %
	2,585	3,761	1,813	1,768
ISSP		10 %	67 %	-21 %
	4,281	4,729	7,874	6,254

On the European level, GESIS is being engaged in two of three ESFRI roadmap infrastructures in the social sciences, namely CESSDA and ESS.

*Comment by FORS: Table 3.FORS shows the absolute numbers and the growth rates for dissemination of datasets produced by FORS. As with GESIS, there are significant changes within surveys from one year to the next. This is likely related to the survey cycles, that is, newly available data tend to increase use for some time, followed by a decline. This is dramatically illustrated with use of SELECTS data, which peaked in 2012, after new data were released. Please note that the figures for the ESS count only the specific Swiss ESS data set produced by FORS. Dissemination figures for the ESS comparative data sets provided by NSD (Norway), which include of course Swiss data, look completely different. The same goes, mutatis mutandis, for the Swiss ISSP data included in the MOSAiCH data file.*

*FORS is engaged in all three ESFRI roadmap infrastructures in the social sciences (CESSDA, ESS, and SHARE).*

<sup>6</sup> Prof. Dr. Peter Farago and Prof. Dr. Christian Simon had agreed upon those eight plus indicators 5.2 and 6.1. At the workshop indicator 5.2 has not been regarded significant and it turned out that GESIS cannot provide comparable numbers for indicator 6.1. Consequently these indicators have been dropped (cf. annual report 2013: chapter 4, pages 50-60).

Table 3.FORS: Growth rate (%) and absolute numbers for dissemination of data produced by FORS

	2010	2011	2012	2013
MOSAiCH/ISSP		148 %	34 %	-29 %
	119	295	396	280
SHP		-30 %	26 %	28 %
	348	243	307	392
SELECTS		2 %	111 %	-18 %
	174	177	374	318
ESS		-79 %	0 %	-17 %
	306	63	63	52

The FORS indicator 2.1 gives the "number of datasets distributed to or downloaded by researchers". Included are all datasets distributed, either produced or not produced by FORS.

The relevant surveys at GESIS are Eurobarometer, ALLBUS, ISSP, HISTAT, EVS (European Values Study), GLES, and Politbarometer (named are only those with more than 1,000 distributions in 2013, starting with the survey with highest numbers). For the same reasons as in chapter 7.1 (indicator 1.1) GESIS gives the growth rates per year in addition to the absolute numbers: 2010 33,186, 2011 35,504 (7 %), 2012 41,677 (17 %), 2013 48,802 (17 %).

*Comment by FORS: Including all data disseminated by FORS (whether or not produced by FORS), the absolute numbers and the growth rates per year were: 2010 1,453, 2011 1,901 (31 %), 2012 2,196 (16 %), and 2013 2,033 (-7 %).*

## 7.2 Publications

The FORS indicator 1.2 gives the "number of publications using datasets produced by FORS surveys" but not necessarily being distributed by FORS (publications have to include FORS-produced Swiss data in their analyses). The surveys included are ESS, SELECTS, SHARE, SHP, and MOSAiCH/ISSP.

The relevant surveys at GESIS are as before ALLBUS, EVS, GLES, ISSP, and, in addition, CSES (the German part being produced, but not distributed till 2013 by GESIS). The different target groups (especially students) compared to FORS do not affect the number of publications as much as it does affect the numbers of downloads. Hence absolute numbers are being given here. The figures give the numbers of publications using data of the named surveys. With international surveys it has not been checked whether publications included data regarding Germany.

Table 4: Publications using GESIS survey data

	2010	2011	2012	2013
ALLBUS	123	119	95	106
CSES	55	46	43	69
EVS	20	11	67	93
GLES	100	85	94	116
ISSP	361	392	344	216

*Comment by FORS: Table 4.FORS shows publications since 2010 using survey data produced by FORS. As with GESIS, the numbers of publications varied greatly across years for the different survey data. It should be reiterated that the higher publication figures for ISSP at GESIS could reflect the fact that they were not checked for whether the publications included data for Germany, whereas the more conservative Swiss figures include only publications that used Swiss MOSAiCH/ISSP data.*

Table 4.FORS: Publications using FORS survey data

	2010	2011	2012	2013
SHARE	n/a	76	34	95
ESS	28	108	36	54
SHP	28	27	31	27
SELECTS	22	16	33	30
MOSAiCH/ISSP	6	33	30	22
EVS	28	11	0	0

The FORS indicator 5.1 gives the "number of publications by FORS staff" counting the following types of publication: peer-reviewed, working papers, book sections, and edited books.

To give comparable numbers, the numbers of publications are being standardized by the number of scientific full time equivalents. On average at GESIS 0.44 peer-reviewed journal articles and 1.30 publications in total were published per year and FTE.

Table 5: Publications of GESIS per academic FTE

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Peer-reviewed journal articles <sup>7</sup>	0.21	0.54	0.46	0.56
Total <sup>8</sup>	1.27	1.17	1.21	1.55

*Comment by FORS: The number of peer-reviewed journal articles per scientific FTE holding an MA or above is 2010 0.78 (19/24.25), 2011 0.52 (12/23.15), 2012 0.34 (8/23.8), 2013 0.46 (11/24.0).*

<sup>7</sup> At GESIS peer-reviewed publications include publications in peer-reviewed conference proceedings in information and computer science. Since these show statistically different characteristics compared to peer-reviewed journal publications and since FORS has no such publications they are being excluded here. If they are being excluded in the numerator, the denominator has to be decreased accordingly. To keep the procedure simple, for the number of peer-reviewed journal articles the two departments focusing on peer-reviewed conference proceedings (Computational Social Science and Knowledge Technologies in the Social Sciences) are being left out completely. According to table 2, the number of FTE (DAS plus DBG plus SDM) for 2013 is 91.7. For 2012 it is 84.08 FTE, 2011 79.63, and 2010 73.

<sup>8</sup> This includes authored books, edited books, journal articles (peer-reviewed or not), individual contributions to edited volumes, and working papers. GESIS publishes also annotated bibliographies and variable reports which are not being counted here. According to table 2, the number of FTE for 2013 is 142.76. For 2012 it is 133.1 FTE, 2011 121.59, and 2010 105.5.

### 7.3 Documentation of research project descriptions

The FORS indicator 2.2 gives the "number of new research project descriptions in the research inventory".

At GESIS the corresponding database is called SOFIS which can be edited by users directly since 2012 via SOFISwiki. SOFIS depends not only on user generated content but also integrates social science project data, e.g., by the DFG.

At the end of 2013 the number of projects in the SOFIS database was 52,851. The annual rounded growth rate (new project descriptions) was 2010 5 %, 2011 4 %, 2012 3 %, and 2013 3 %.

*Comment by FORS: At the end of 2013 the number of projects in the FORS research inventory was 9,576. The annual rounded growth rate (new project descriptions) was 2010 6 %, 2011 5 %, 2012 5 %, and 2013 3 %.*

### 7.4 Scientific Consultancy

The FORS indicator 3.1 gives the "number of cases of help and advice provided to users or to others requesting information or expertise".

At GESIS consultation has centrally been documented for the first time in 2012 (probably in 2012 with an underreporting for consultation up to 30 minutes).

*Table 6: Numbers of consultations*

	2012	2013
1-30 minutes	1,219	1,820
31-60 minutes	190	251
>60 minutes	203	263

Users of this service come mainly from universities (2012: 77 %, 2013: 70 %). Other user groups are non-university research institutes (2012: 9 %, 2013: 13 %) and public institutions (2012: 6 %, 2013: 6 %). The biggest field of consultations is research (2012: 50 %, 2013: 39 %). Other important fields are study planning (2012: 20 %, 2013: 9 %), data collection (2012: 15 %, 2013: 9 %) and data analysis (2012: 9 %, 2013: 12 %). As we can see from a survey in 2012, people using this service have a master degree or a higher qualification (80 %) and their primary subject is sociology (34 %), political science (22 %) or economics (16 %).

*Comment by FORS: Table 6.FORS shows the number of documented consultations by FORS in 2012 and 2013, by devoted time. As at GESIS, most users of this service came from universities or universities of applied sciences (2012: 64 %, 2013: 77 %). At FORS the consultations addressed a wide variety of topics in 2012 and 2013, such as data access, data analysis, survey design and implementation, and documentation. At FORS the users were evenly distributed across different levels, from PhD students, to teaching and research faculty, to students. A significant percentage of users were from outside of academia in 2012 (22 %) and 2013 (30 %), such as journalists and administrators. No data are available with respect to the disciplines of users.*

Table 6.FORS: Numbers of consultations by FORS

	2012	2013
1-30 minutes	319	229
31-60 minutes	105	77
>60 minutes	70	150

## 7.5 Third party funding

The FORS indicator 4.1 gives the amount of "total funding for third-party financed projects in progress. [...] However, FORS ongoing infrastructure projects are excluded".

At GESIS the criterium "in progress" does not matter and, much more important, ongoing infrastructure projects are not being excluded. Third party funding includes revenues for infrastructure projects as well as for research projects. With smaller infrastructure projects (most often funded by DFG, sometimes by the Federal ministry) it is generally being assumed that GESIS guarantees sustainability beyond the end of third party financing. Big third party funded infrastructure projects like the German Longitudinal Elections Study (GLES) are being funded by the DFG for ten years at maximum. Sustainability then depends on additional institutional revenues.

In 2013 third party funding made up 19.25 % of the overall revenues which is slightly above the yearly average since 2009 (for absolute numbers and more details see table 7).

Table 7: Revenues from project grants and services (in k€)

GESIS	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Revenue from project grants<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>2,517</b>	<b>5,884</b>	<b>3,227</b>	<b>4,801</b>
DFG	228	1,142	727	1,797
Leibniz Association (competitive procedure)			31	94
Federal, <i>Länder</i> governments	1,618	3,178	1,604	2,314
EU	389	1,439	722	310
Industry (if applicable, break down by source)			-	-
Foundations (if applicable, break down by source)			2	5
Other sponsors (if applicable, break down by source)	282	125	140	281
<b>Revenue from services</b>	<b>267<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>592<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>302</b>	<b>406</b>
Revenue from commissioned work			23	136
Revenue from publications			1	1
Revenue from the exploitation of intellectual property for which the institution holds industrial property rights (patents, utility models etc.)			-	
Revenue from exploitations of intellectual property without industrial property rights			-	
If applicable, revenue for other services; please specify <sup>3</sup>			278	269

Explanations:

1. Differences between sum and summands are due to rounding.
2. No information available for subcategories in 2010 and 2011.
3. Revenue mainly come from knowledge transfer and from license agreements for the database SOLIS.

*Comment by FORS: The share of third party funding of total funding, including the SNSF "infrastructure projects", for the period 2008-2013 is 67 % (25.7mCHF, out of which 23.9mCHF SNSF), with a maximum of 70 % (2008, 2011) and a minimum of 63 % (2009).*

## 7.6 Knowledge transfer

The FORS indicator 6.2 gives the number of "workshops, seminars, and conferences organised and conducted by FORS".

GESIS carries out knowledge transfer in this sense and has a wide range of courses on offer: A three-week summer school on survey methodology with several courses (since 2012), a spring seminar for social scientists interested in advanced techniques of data analysis with three one-week courses, five one-week methodology seminars and several workshops. A team specialized on knowledge transfer organizes the courses (the size of the team can be seen from table 2). In 2013 50 courses and five CESSDA workshops have been conducted by GESIS. Over and above this, 13 conferences have been organized by or in cooperation with GESIS in 2013.

*Comment by FORS: The backbone of this kind of knowledge transfer at FORS is the yearly methodological summer school in Lugano. Other regular events include the international SHP user conferences, the Swiss Methods Festival, the Research and Methods Seminars organized together with the host university, and the introductory workshop on the use of LIS data. Additionally, there are every year ad hoc conferences and seminars organized like for example the ESRA conference 2011, the joint workshop with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office on their new sampling frame in 2012, the SHARE workshop on biomarkers in 2013, the 2-week seminar on visualization in the social sciences given by Dr. Karl H. Müller later this year, and the ESS conference 2016.*

*There is no organizational unit at FORS dealing exclusively with the organization of such events. Task forces are formed ad hoc, which always include the communications officer and the office manager. With respect to rooms, catering, etc. there is logistic support by the host university available.*



## FORS Data Recipients 2008-2014

### 1 The Task

In its letter of September 19, 2014, the SSIC asks for quantitative evidence on the following characteristics of FORS data recipients:

*“emplacement, rattachement institutionnel et grade académique des utilisateurs de FORS, en premier lieu des personnes qui demandent des données produites ou conservées par FORS (DARIS)”*

Moreover, it suggested a comparison of data usage purposes:

*“Une comparaison directe du nombre d’utilisateurs à des fins scientifiques (recherche vs. enseignement) ainsi que des autres formes d’utilisation possibles est également souhaitable.”*

This paper presents statistics on FORS recipients, as far as they are available currently. The next section describes the data at our disposal. Then we summarize the results, and the final section presents some conclusions. The Annexes contain the detailed figures and a list of selected foreign institutions hosting FORS data recipients.

The period we refer to is January 1, 2008, to September 30, 2014, covering the entire 6.75 years of operation of FORS until now.

### 2 The Data

For the time being, and until the implementation of the full functionalities of our newly developed IT platform FORSbase, we have to rely on three sources for information about our data recipients: The most demanded data are distributed via the online NESSTAR server, which is password protected; the passwords are attributed on request by FORS. Other data are available after signing a contract, either by delivery on a medium like a DVD or (the common case nowadays) by FTP download. This applies to the SHP data as well, which are distributed by the SHP team. Such a complex system refers to the predecessors of FORS, which had all their specific distribution procedures.

This system allows for quite good and reliable statistics on the institutional attachment of data recipients and, therefore, their geographic distribution. But it is incomplete or even lacking with respect to academic degrees and the purpose of data usage. Such information will be available once all data distribution routines are migrated to FORSbase, which is expected to happen in 2015.

### 3 The Results

Annex 1 shows the number of FORS data recipients according to the three distribution channels mentioned above. Since the systems are not harmonized yet (this will be the case when they are implemented into FORSbase), it is possible that individuals are counted several times if they use two or more channels, e.g., by downloading data from the NESSTAR server *and* by receiving SHP data. This is the reason why there is no “Total” column in Annex 1.

To account for this and to provide the SSIC with cleaned and accurate figures we checked for duplicates. In the following list the 326 duplicates are excluded. Thus, the list gives a valid picture of the **institutional attachment and geographical distribution of FORS data recipients:**

<u>Switzerland</u>	N	%
U Neuchâtel	680	22.2
U Zurich	383	12.5
U Bern	342	11.1
U Lausanne	315	10.3
U Geneva	170	5.5
U Basel	113	3.7
U Lucerne	95	3.1
U applied sciences E-CH	72	2.3
U St. Gallen	53	1.7
U Fribourg	49	1.6
ETH Zurich	34	1.1
U Svizzera italiana	16	0.5
U applied sciences W/S-CH	11	0.4
EPF Lausanne	2	0.1
Others	92	3.0
Unknown	188	6.1
<u>World</u>		
Universities	353	11.5
Others	20	0.7
Unknown	80	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3068</b>	<b>100</b>

When interpreting these figures it has to be taken into account that downloads via the NESSTAR server are often used for teaching. This happened for several years already in Neuchâtel, but we assume that this is the case for other universities with high NESSTAR download figures as well (Bern, Lausanne, Zurich, see Annex 1). While we are not yet able to exactly distinguish between teaching and other data usage purposes, it is reasonable to assume that especially high numbers of users are

due to continued teaching activities (see also the performance indicator 1.3 in our Annual Reports).

#### 4 Some conclusions

- FORS data recipients are **mainly attached to universities**, in Switzerland and abroad. Thus it is very likely that FORS data are used for scientific purposes in the first place.
- **85% of data recipients are located in Switzerland**, but there is also a considerable number of users in other countries. Annex 2 shows that they are mainly from, but not limited to, Europe and North America. In this way, FORS serves the Swiss as well as the global research community.
- FORS has data recipients **at all Swiss universities** active in social sciences. Consequently, they are spread all over the country. The highest numbers occur in the big universities (Basel, Bern, Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich). Neuchâtel is an exception, which can be explained by intensive use of FORS data for teaching (see above).
- FORS data recipients are to be found in several of **the world's most prestigious universities and research institutions** such as Berkeley, Cambridge, Essex, EUI, Harvard, Humboldt, Michigan, Oxford, MIT, Princeton, WZB, Yale, and many others (see Annex 2).

**Annex 1:**  
[FORS Data Recipients, 1.1.2008 - 30.9.2014](#)

Evaluation de FORS par le CSSI

Institution	** Manual distribution	*** Online distribution	**** SHP
<u>Switzerland</u>			
U Basel	8	14	96
U Bern	50	222	119
U Fribourg	12	15	30
U Geneva	23	90	76
U Lausanne	42	189	124
U Lucerne	8	35	60
U Neuchâtel *	7	634	52
U St. Gallen	8	13	42
U Svizzera Italiana	4	6	9
U Zurich	55	173	200
ETH Zurich	11	17	12
EPF Lausanne	0	2	2
U applied sciences E-CH	27	14	36
U applied sciences W/S-CH	4	2	7
Public administration	16	5	16
Others (e.g., NPO)	15	18	32
Institutional affiliation unknown	254	0	0
<u>World</u>			
Universities	105	93	180
Others (e.g., NPO)	13	2	7
Institutional affiliation unknown	88	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>1544</b>	<b>1100</b>

*[Note: Individuals may appear in several columns if they use several distribution channels.]*

\* At the U Neuchâtel the online distribution of data sets is much more widely used for teaching than at other universities. Hence the large number of data recipients.

\*\* Data protection agreement signed, data delivered or downloaded

\*\*\* Password protected access, data downloaded via NESSTAR server

\*\*\*\* Data protection agreement signed, data delivered or downloaded

## Annex 2:

### Institutional Attachment of Foreign Data Recipients – Selection

Aarhus University, Denmark  
Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland  
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg i. Brsg., Germany  
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași, Romania  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece  
Central European University, Budapest, Hungary  
Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung DIPF, Frankfurt am Main, Germany  
Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung DIW, Berlin, Germany  
Duke University, Durham, NC, USA  
Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Tübingen, Germany  
European University Institute, Florence, Italy  
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany  
Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA  
German Institute for Global and Area Studies GIGA, Hamburg, Germany  
Glasgow Caledonian University, UK  
Hannah-Arendt-Institut an der Technischen Universität Dresden, Germany  
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel  
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany  
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary  
Indiana University, USA  
Institut für Höhere Studien, Wien, Austria  
Institute for Social Research, Oslo, Norway  
Jagellonian University, Krakow, Poland  
Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, Germany  
Justus-Liebig-Universität, Giessen, Germany  
Kanazawa University, Japan  
Keele University, UK  
Leiden University, The Netherlands  
Lisbon University Institute ISCTE, Portugal  
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München, Germany  
Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung MZES, Germany  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology MIT, Cambridge, MA, USA  
McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada  
Otto-Friedrich-Universität, Bamberg, Germany  
Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Kallithea, Greece  
Philipps-Universität, Marburg, Germany  
Princeton University, NJ, USA  
Queen's University, Belfast, UK  
Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands  
Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule RWTH, Aachen, Germany  
Rice University, Houston, TX, USA  
Rokkan Centre for Social Studies, Bergen, Norway  
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg, Germany  
Rutgers University, Piscataway Township, NJ, USA  
Sciences Po, Bordeaux, France  
Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada  
Soziologisches Forschungsinstitut Göttingen SOFI an der Georg-August-Universität, Germany  
Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan

Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland  
Universidade de Brasília  
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal  
Università di Trento, Italy  
Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain  
Universität Hamburg, Germany  
Universität Konstanz, Germany  
Universität Leipzig, Germany  
Universität Salzburg, Austria  
Universität Wien, Austria  
Universität zu Köln, Germany  
Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium  
Université de Montréal, Canada  
Université de Rennes 1, France  
Université du Luxembourg  
Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium  
Université Lumière Lyon 2, France  
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, USA  
University of Bath, UK  
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada  
University of California, Berkeley, USA  
University of California, Davis, USA  
University of California, Irvine, USA  
University of Cambridge, UK  
University of Chicago, USA  
University of Colorado, Boulder, USA  
University of Essex, UK  
University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA  
University of Glasgow, UK  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL, USA  
University of Iowa, USA  
University of Kent, UK  
University of Latvia, Riga  
University of Leeds, UK  
University of Leicester, UK  
University of London, UK  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, USA  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA  
University of Notre Dame, IN, USA  
University of Nottingham, UK  
University of Ottawa, ON, Canada  
University of Oxford, UK  
University of Reading, UK  
University of Sheffield, UK  
University of Southern Denmark, Odense  
University of Toronto, Canada  
University of Twente, The Netherlands  
University of Warsaw, Poland  
University of Western Sydney, Penrith, NSW, Australia  
Uppsala University, Sweden  
Washington University in St. Louis, MO, USA  
Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung WZB, Germany  
Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA



## FORS Evaluation by the Swiss Science and Innovation Council SSIC

### FORS Site Visit program

#### Dates

September 1st / September 2nd, 2014

#### Places

*Lausanne University Campus*

*Restaurant de Dorigny, 1015 Dorigny*

*FORS Facilities, Bâtiment Geopolis, Rue de la Mouline, 1022 Chavannes*

*Lausanne Downtown Hotel and Restaurant*

*Hotel Continental and Restaurant Olympia Grill, place de la gare 2, 1001 Lausanne*

#### Participants

##### SSIC delegation (01. and 02.09.2014)

Prof. Franz Schultheis, SSIC member, *chair*

Prof. Pierre Bréchon, external expert

Prof. Thomas Hinz, external expert

Dr. Hans Jørgen Marker, external expert

Prof. Christian Simon, SSIC staff

Dr. Marianne Bonvin, SSIC staff

##### FORS delegation I (afternoon 01.09.2014)

Prof. Franciska Krings, President

Prof. Peter Farago, Director

Corine Bolle, Head of Support unit, Directorate

Dr. Brian Kleiner, Head of Data and Research Information Services unit, Directorate

Dr. Boris Wernli, Head of Surveys unit, Directorate

Monika Vettovaglia, Communications officer

Dr. Michèle Ernst Staehli, Head of International Surveys group

Dr. Carmen Borrat-Besson, Senior Researcher

Dr. Michael Ochsner, Senior Researcher

Dr. Robin Tillmann, Head of Swiss Household Panel group

Florence Lebert, Researcher

Dr. Marieke Voorpostel, Senior Researcher

Prof. Georg Lutz, Head of SELECTS group

Schweizerischer Wissenschafts- und Innovationsrat-Geschäftsstelle  
Christian Simon  
Hallwylstrasse 15, 3003 Bern  
Tel. +41 31 322 96 97, Fax +41 31 323 95 47  
christian.simon@swir.admin.ch  
www.swir.ch

Nicolas Pekari, Researcher  
PD Dr. Oliver Lipps, Senior Researcher  
François Lorétan, Head of Data Service group  
Eliane Ferrez, Data Service expert  
Stefan Buerli, Research Inventory administrator  
Andreas Perret, Head of Data Publication group  
Dr. Alexandra Stam, Senior Researcher and Data Service expert  
Céline Schmid Botkine, Social Report editor-in-chief

FORS delegation II (dinner 01.09.2014)

Prof. Franciska Krings, Foundation Board President, vice-rector of the University of Lausanne  
Prof. Fabien Ohl, Foundation Board, representing the University of Lausanne, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences  
Prof. Dominique Joye, Foundation Board, representing the University of Lausanne, vice-dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences  
Prof. Mike Martin, Foundation Board, representing the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Prof. Robert Fluder, Foundation Board, representing the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences (KFH)  
Dr. Ingrid Kissling-Näf, Foundation Board permanent guest, representing the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)  
Prof. Max Kaase, University of Mannheim, chair of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)  
Prof. Eugen Horber, University of Geneva, SAB member  
Prof. Edith de Leeuw, University of Utrecht, SAB member  
Prof. Peter Farago, Director

FORS delegation III (morning 02.09.2014)

*The same people as under FORS delegation II and:*

Corine Bolle, Head of Support unit, Directorate  
Dr. Brian Kleiner, Head of Data and Research Information Services unit, Directorate  
Dr. Boris Wernli, Head of Surveys unit, Directorate

## Program first day

#	Time	Event	Location	Participants	Rem.
	<b>Monday 01.09.2014</b>				
01	1130-1200	Individual transfer to university campus	Taxi	Experts	The metro is currently out of order.
02	1200-1400	Briefing Lunch	Restaurant de Dorigny (on University campus, Bâtiment Uni-thèque)	Experts SSIC	
03	1415-1500	Welcome Address by FORS President Welcome Address by SSIC  <b>Introduction</b> <b>FORS' Main Objectives, Achievements, Communication Strategy, and Challenges</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by FORS Director</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul> <i>Chair: FORS President</i>	FORS Bâtiment Geopolis, 5 <sup>th</sup> floor Room 5899	FORS President  FORS Directorate  Experts  SSIC	
04	1500-1545	<b>FORS' Resources Today</b> <b>Manpower</b> <b>Infrastructure</b> <b>Networks</b> <b>Finances</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by FORS Director</li> <li>• Questions, Discussion</li> </ul> <i>Chair: SSIC</i>	FORS	FORS Directorate  Experts  SSIC	
05	1545-1600	Coffee Break  <i>The experts meet a group of junior scientists privately to discuss conditions for doing research at FORS.</i>	Room 5201		<i>as requested during introductory discussion.</i>
06	1600-1615	<b>Visit of FORS' Premises</b>	FORS	FORS Director  Experts  SSIC	

07	1615-1730	<b>FORS' Survey (Monitoring) Activities until Today</b> <b>Incl. FORS Research Collaboration with Universities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by Dr. Boris Wernli</li> <li>• Questions, Discussion</li> </ul> <i>Chair: SSIC</i>	FORS	FORS Director FORS Staff Experts SSIC	
08	1730-1845	<b>FORS' Services and Consultation Activities until Today (Data Archive, Inventory of Research Projects, Access to National Statistical Microdata, Social report)</b> <b>Incl. FORS Research Collaboration with Universities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by Dr. Brian Kleiner</li> <li>• Questions, Discussion</li> </ul> <i>Chair: SSIC</i>	FORS	FORS Director FORS Staff Experts SSIC	
09	1845-1915	Transfer from Campus to Hotel Downtown	Limousine or taxi	Experts SSIC	Organized by SSIC
10	1915-1945	<b>Results of the Day</b>	Salon Londres, Hotel Continental 2, place de la gare	Experts alone	
11	2000-2130	<b>Dinner</b> <b>Meeting with FORS Foundation Board and Scientific Board</b>	Restaurant Olympia Grill in Hotel Continental 2, place de la gare	Experts SSIC FORS Foundation Board FORS SAB FORS Director	

## Program second day

	<b>Tuesday 02.09.2014</b>				
12	0815-0845	Transfer from Hotel to Campus	Limousine or taxi	All hotel guests	Organized by SSIC
13	0845-1000	<p><b>Summative Synthesis of FORS' Achievements</b></p> <p><b>Monitoring Change</b></p> <p><b>Data Repository</b></p> <p><b>Services to the Scientific Communities</b></p> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <p><b>Networks in Switzerland</b></p> <p><b>Networks in Europe/World</b></p> <p><b>FORS' Own Research</b></p> <p><b>Teaching</b></p> <p><b>Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statements by the Experts</li> <li>• Comments by FORS' President, Director, and Senior Staff</li> <li>• Comments by FORS Scientific Board</li> <li>• Questions by SSIC</li> </ul> <p><i>Chair: SSIC</i></p>	FORS Le Geopolis 5 <sup>th</sup> floor Room 5899	<p>Experts</p> <p>SSIC</p> <p>FORS Foundation Board</p> <p>FORS SAB</p> <p>FORS Directorate</p>	
14	1000-1015	Coffee Break	Room 5201		
15	1015-1215	<p><b>Future Challenges and Possible Responses</b></p> <p><b>FORS' Mission</b></p> <p><b>FORS' Core Activities</b></p> <p><b>FORS' Networks</b></p> <p><b>FORS' Relationship with Scientific Communities</b></p> <p><b>FORS' Financing</b></p> <p><b>FORS' Governance Structures and Quality Assurance</b></p> <p><b>Making Use of Foreign Experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by FORS Director</li> <li>• Experts' Questions and Recommendations</li> <li>• FORS' Answers and Comments</li> </ul>	FORS	<p>Experts</p> <p>SSIC</p> <p>FORS Foundation Board</p> <p>FORS SAB</p> <p>FORS Directorate</p>	

		<p><b>Tentative Conclusions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts' Preliminary Insights</li> <li>• First Reaction by FORS</li> </ul> <p><b>Farewell Address by FORS President</b></p> <p><i>Chair: SSIC</i></p>			
16	1215-1245	<b>Transfer from Campus to Hotel Continental</b>	Limousine or taxi	Experts SSIC	Organized by SSIC
17	1245-1400	<b>Lunch</b>  <b>Next Steps Towards Experts' Report Communication and Deadlines</b>	Restaurant Olympia Grill	Experts SSIC	

## 8. Liste des documents utilisés

Les documents mentionnés p. 35 en annexe du mandat SEFRI ne sont pas repris ici.

### *Auto-évaluation de FORS*

- FORS in a nutshell, présentation FORS du 11.04.2014
- Self-assessment report I and self-assessment report II par FORS, 14.4.2014
- Présentations de FORS pour la Site Visit des 01/02.09.2014

### *Documentation annexe transmise par FORS dans le cadre de l'auto-évaluation*

- FORS Annual Reports: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013
- List of Scientific Publications by FORS Collaborators 2008-2013
- Publications
  - Social Report: 2008 and 2012 english editions
  - CH@YOUPART, Politische Partizipation junger Erwachsener in der Schweiz. FORS 2012.
  - Open Government Data Studie Schweiz. Berner Fachhochschule. Juni 2012.
  - Swiss Political Science Review, Special Issue on the Swiss National Elections 2007
  - Editorial Board of «Survey Methods, Insights from the fields».
  - Understanding Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences. 04.06.2013. Seismo. Social Sciences and Social Issues AG, Zurich.
- Accounting
  - Budget: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013
  - Accounts: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013
- Financement selon l'art. 15 LERI
  - FORS Proposals to the SER: 2008-2011 (17.10.2007) and 2012-2016
  - SER funding decisions according to art. 16 RIPA: 2008-2011, 2012, 2013-2016
  - FORS Reports to the SER : 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013
  - Service agreement between FORS and the SER: 2008-2011 and 2013-2016
- FORS research projects submitted to the SNF
  - REPCONG 2008: Proposal, SNF Decision, Scientific Report to the SNF
  - Mixed Mode Experiment 2009: Proposal, SNF Decision, Withdrawal letter
  - Mixed Mode Experiment 2011: Proposal, SNF Decision, Review
  - Agora 2012: Proposal, SNF Decision
- FORS survey proposals submitted to the SNF
  - ESS: 2008-09 (+MOSAiCH), 2010-2011, 2012-2013, 2014-2016
  - EVS: 2008, 2016
  - LIS: 2010-11, 2012-2013, 2014-2016
  - MOSAiCH: 2008-09, 2010-11, 2012-2013, 2014-2016
  - SELECTS: 2008-09, 2010, 2011-12, 2013, 2014-2016
  - SHP: 2008-09, 2010-11, 2012-13, 2014-2016
  - Social Report : 2009-11, 2012, 2012-13, 2014-16
- SNF decisions regarding survey proposals
  - ESS: 2008-09, 2010-2011, 2012-2013, 2014-2016
  - EVS: 2008 and 2016
  - LIS: 2010-11, 2012-2013, 2014-2016
  - MOSAiCH: 2008-09, 2010-11, 2012-2013, 2014-2016
  - SELECTS: 2008-09, 2010, 2011-12, 2013, 2014-2016
  - SHP: 2008-09, 2010-11, 2012-13, 2014-2016
  - Social Report : 2009-11, 2012, 2012-13, 2014-16
- FORS scientific reports to the SNF
  - ESS: 2008-09, 2010-2011, 2012-2013
  - EVS: 2008-09
  - MOSAiCH: 2008-09, 2010-11, 2012-2013
  - SELECTS: 2008-09, 2010, 2011, 2012
  - SHP: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

- Meetings of FORS organs
  - Foundation Board meetings: all minutes from 1st until 15th meeting
  - SAB meetings: all minutes from 1st until 7th meeting
  - Joint meetings: all minutes from 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 meetings
- Organizational chart. January 2014.
- Staff Development Policy. 13.12.2012.
- Statutes
- Convention avec la Faculté SSP
- Convention avec l'UNIL sur le matériel
- Convention avec l'UNIL sur la recherche
- MA Inter-university agreement
- MA Presentation 07.03.2014.
- MA Student guide

#### *Financement*

- Budget et comptes 2013 y compris Prestations « in-kind » de l'UNIL, fournis par FORS
- Budget et comptes 2013 y compris Prestations « in-kind » de l'UNIL fournis par le SEFRI
- Notes de réunion entre le FNS et FORS du 15.02.2012, FNS
- Réunion du 08.06.2012 entre FORS, le SER, le SNF et l'UNIL
  - Finanzplanung 2013-2016, Kommentar zuhanden des SBF zu den aufgrund der Sitzung vom 8.6.2012 überarbeiteten Kennzahlen, FORS, 30.07.2012
  - Analyse des dynamiques de financement: PSM, ESS, MOSAICH, SELECTS, EVS, RAPPORT SOCIAL, LIS, SHARE, et explications de FORS
  - PV décisionnel du SER

#### *FNS*

- CSSI, Evaluation des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds in Bezug auf die strategische Förderung von Forschungsinfrastrukturen und Fachgebieten. Rapport final transmis au SEFRI le 30.09.2014.
- Formulaire d'évaluation des enquêtes de FORS par le FNS dans le cadre de la Roadmap
- SERI and SNF, Call for Applications for the Swiss Roadmap for Infrastructures, 23.10.2013.

#### *Hautes écoles*

- Lettre de réponse du 13.08.2014 de la COHEP au CSSI
- Email du recteur de l'Université de Berne Martin Täuber à la Présidente CSSI du 01.09.2014.
- Consultation par le rectorat de l'Université de Genève des chercheurs concernant l'utilisation des services de FORS (essentiellement dans le cadre dans le cadre du NCCR LIVES)
  - Short report sur l'utilisation de FORS par les chercheurs de l'UNIGE, par Laura Bernardi
  - Usage of FORS-provided Data and Services at the University of Geneva, 2008-2014, par FORS, du 05.10.2014
- Prises de position demandées par le rectorat de l'Université de Zurich des instituts concernant l'utilisation des services de FORS
  - Institut für Sozialanthropologie und Empirische Kulturwissenschaft, par Thomas Hengartner
  - Psychologisches Institut, par lettre de Martin Kleinmann, 04.08.2014
  - Institut für Politikwissenschaft, par lettre de Fabrizio Gilardi, 19.08.2014
  - Institut für Publizistikwissenschaft und Medienforschung, par lettre de Werner Wirth, 20.08.2014
  - Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, par lettre de Lucien Criblez, 20.08.2014
  - Soziologisches Institut, par lettre de Jörg Rössel, 20.08.2014

#### *Autres institutions*

- LISSY Statistics on Switzerland; Swiss Users and Job Statistics 2002-2010
- LIS 2013-2014-2015 Revenue Report as of 17.06.2014
- Présentation du Programme CUS P-2 lors de la manifestation de la CRUS du 11.09.2014
- Ergänzender Leitfaden für die Beantragung von Langfristvorhaben, DFG, Februar 2014.

9. Liste des personnes et institutions consultées en dehors de la *site visit*

Institution	Personnes consultées
FNS	Monika Budowski, membre du Conseil de la recherche, Peter Johannes Schulz, membre du Conseil de la recherche, Thomas Zimmermann, secrétariat scientifique, division I
OFS	Georges-Simon Ulrich, directeur, Ruth Meier, vice-directrice, Markus Schwyn, Marco Buscher
ASSH	Heinz Gutscher, président, Claudine Burton-Jeangros, membre du comité, Markus Zürcher, secrétaire général, Beat Immenhauser
CRUS	Raymond Werlen, secrétaire général
KFH	Thomas Bachofner, secrétaire général
COHEP	Sonia Rosenberg, secrétaire générale
UNIL	Dominique Arlettaz, recteur, Franciska Krings, vice-rectrice
UNIGE	Yves Flückiger, vice-recteur, Laure Ognois, Michele Pellizzari, Stephan Andréas Sperlich
UNIBAS	Antonio Loprieno, recteur
UNIZH	Michael Hengartner, recteur, Otfried Jarren, prorecteur
Société suisse d'Economie et statistique	Raphael Lalive
Société suisse d'Ethnologie	Ueli Hostettler
Société suisse d'Histoire économique et sociale	Thomas David
Société suisse de Linguistique (SSL)	Georges Lüdi
Société suisse de Psychologie	Sakari Lemola
Société suisse de Recherche en éducation	Silvia Grossenbacher
Association suisse de Science politique (ASSP)	Marco Steenbergen
Société suisse de Sciences administratives	Reto Steiner
Société suisse de Sciences de la communication et des mass media	Diana Ingenhoff
Société suisse de Sociologie	Ben Jann
Société suisse de Statistique	Beat Hulliger

Par ailleurs, quatre professeurs de sociologie et de politologie (Andreas Diekmann, Simon Hug, Daniel Kübler et Adrian Vatter) ont été consultés par le CSSI dans le cadre de l'évaluation de FORs.

## 10. Abréviations

ALLBUS	Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften
ASSH	Académie suisse des sciences sociales et humaines
CESSDA	Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives
CHUV	Centre hospitalier universitaire vaudois
COCON	Competence and Context. Swiss Survey of Children and Youth
COHEP	Conférence suisse des recteurs et rectrices des hautes écoles pédagogiques
CRUS	Conférence des recteurs d'universités suisses
CSSI	Conseil suisse de la science et de l'innovation
DARIS	Data and research information services
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft
EPF	Ecole polytechnique fédérale
EPFZ	Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Zurich
EPT	Equivalent plein-temps
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
ESS	European Social Survey
EVS	European Value Survey
FNS	Fonds national suisse de la recherche scientifique
FORS	Fondation suisse pour la recherche en sciences sociales
GLES	German Longitudinal Election Study
HEP	Haute école pédagogique
HES	Haute école spécialisée
ISSP	International Social Survey Programme
KFH	Conférence des recteurs de hautes écoles spécialisées suisses
LERI	Loi fédérale sur l'encouragement de la recherche et de l'innovation
LIS	Cross-national data center in Luxembourg (previously Luxembourg Income Study)
MOSAIC	Measures and Sociological Observation of Attitudes in Switzerland
NCCR	National Centre of Competence in Research
OFFT	Office fédéral de la formation professionnelle et de la technologie
OFS	Office fédéral de la statistique
PSM	Panel suisse des ménages
SEFRI	Secrétariat d'état à la formation, à la recherche et à l'innovation
SELECTS	Swiss Electoral Studies
SER	Secrétariat d'Etat à l'éducation et à la recherche
SHARE	Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe
SIDOS	Service suisse d'information et d'archivage de données pour les sciences sociales
TREE	Transitions de l'Ecole à l'Emploi
UE	Union Européenne
UNIL	Université de Lausanne