

FORS 

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Annual Report 2017

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1. Editorial from the FORS Director

Where we stand, where we want to go

By the end of 2017 FORS had existed for 10 years. During a cold January in 2008 collaborators from the three existing institutions SIDOS (Swiss Data Archive), the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) and the Swiss Electoral Studies (SELECTS) moved into offices in Vidy in Lausanne and started to work for this new institution. Bringing together colleagues working on large survey projects and data services into a new social science infrastructure in Switzerland created a unique environment to concentrate and develop knowledge on how to collect, archive, and disseminate social science data, but also how to provide services to social scientists in a broader sense. FORS developed and prospered in the last 10 years adapting services to new needs and new technical environments. On September 12, 2018 FORS will celebrate its 10-year anniversary with a symposium on “The future of data collection in the social sciences” to reflect on the key challenges social science data collections are facing in the coming years.

Scientific research is undergoing a digital transformation. Changes in the way data are collected and disseminated in the social sciences is relevant for FORS. In the world of research data management and data archiving major shifts are taking place. Funders, research institutions and increasingly also researchers commit actively to open research data. The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) put in place in 2017 a new policy that requires researchers to submit Data Management Plans as part of their research funding applications. Facilitating research data management requires knowledge as well as institutional and technical solutions to collect, store, and disseminate research data. To facilitate research data management is part of FORS' mission. FORS has a long experience in data archiving, a well-functioning technical solution called FORSbase that already allows depositing and sharing data in a flexible way. Moreover, through CESSDA ERIC, FORS is part of a European network of national data archives.

In order to find out how to better support researchers in research data management, FORS started pilot studies with the Faculty of psychology of the University of Zurich and with the Faculty of social and political sciences of the University of Lausanne. These pilot studies will allow an assessment of the concrete difficulties and needs of researchers in research projects, and will help FORS to continue developing FORSbase.

The new SNSF policy is just a starting point for improved research data management in many disciplines. Swiss research institutions as well as policy makers need to develop a joint strategy on how the future research data infrastructure will look like. FORS strongly favours building a comprehensive national infrastructure and will work towards this at a political and technical level in 2018. The future integrated infrastructure should mainly work on developing and connecting existing institutions within Switzerland, and should be overseen by Swiss research organisations.

A national solution for data archiving is important for many reasons. Research data are a key strategic resource for Swiss academic institutions. To remain in control over their own data should therefore be a

key aspect of this. Research data should also not be in the hands of private companies like Google, behind the paywall of publishers, or deposited anywhere in the world without any guarantee for long-term sustainability and data protection in line with Swiss and European law. Some of the data are also sensitive and subject to Swiss data protection regulation and therefore need to be within a secure and controlled environment. A central tool for this will be FORSbase, the project and archiving tool developed at FORS over many years. FORSbase was further developed and upgraded in 2017, with version 3.0 successfully launched. To position FORSbase within the future data landscape in Switzerland will be further pursued in 2018 and beyond.

Digitalization also had consequences on FORS surveys. For a long time scientific surveys were mostly done through telephone or face-to-face interviews in Switzerland. Nowadays, more and more scientific surveys are conducted online. People do not simply respond on computers but on their smartphones, which requires again a different format for asking questions. This meant that long-established methods of data collection had to be revised and adapted to this new environment for FORS surveys.

2017 was the launch of MOSAiCH 2.0. The MOSAiCH survey changed from a bi-annual face-to-face survey into an annual online survey that will go into the field in 2018. For MOSAiCH not only the mode of data collection has changed. MOSAiCH will also be more open to researchers than in the past. Researchers can submit proposals to be included in MOSAiCH, and a newly established scientific commission reviews and decides on the proposals that will then be included. The first wave of MOSAiCH 2.0 will go into the field in 2018.

FORS also conducted various pilot studies for future online data collections. During the data collection of the European Value Study (EVS), a European comparative survey project, FORS tested if and how long online surveys can work in the field, – with some first encouraging signs that citizens are also willing to respond to rather long surveys. FORS also started with an online pilot for the Swiss Household Panel (SHP), which is one of the most complex projects to potentially move to an online survey.

Doing online surveys also means that FORS organises a greater part of the data collection internally. FORS continues building the internal capacity to organise and conduct most parts of the online survey data collection in-house. This internal know-how is also increasingly interesting for external partners. FORS was commissioned in 2017 with a mandate to conduct a large online survey for the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) and for a large survey for a colleague from the University of Geneva.

FORS cooperates with many partners in national and international projects. To have strong networks and partners is essential to develop its services with and for the social science community. We are looking forward to collaborating with our many partners in building and developing social science in 2018.

Prof. Dr. Georg Lutz, Director



2. Surveys

FORS is responsible for a number of national and international surveys, mostly funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The surveys described below took place during the current funding period 2017-20. FORS academic surveys can also use the sample frame “Stichprobenrahmen für Haushalts- und Personenbefragungen (SRPH)” of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO). This sample frame is based on official registers and allows with high precision to sample individuals resident within Switzerland. The sample frame centralizes information from cantonal and communal population registers which are updated on a quarterly basis.

2.1 Swiss Household Panel SHP

Five principal tasks

Five principal tasks were achieved for the SHP in 2017:

The fieldwork for waves 18 (SHP_I: number of households interviewed = 2,651, number of individuals interviewed = 4,311), 13 (SHP_II: number of households interviewed = 1,487, number of individuals interviewed = 2,324), and 4 (SHP_III: number of households interviewed = 2,365, number of individuals interviewed = 3,809) was completed in early March. With regard to these waves, work related to data cleaning and preparation, variable construction, and documentation were realised from March to December in order to prepare the data dissemination. The dissemination of these waves took place by the end of December 2017 ([consult this page](#) for full information), with an annually updated user guide.

The fieldwork for waves 19 (SHP_I), 14 (SHP_II), and 5 (SHP_III) was prepared between February and August – mainly questionnaires (including new questions on health insurance and policy, and satisfaction with medical care), qualitative and quantitative pre-tests, communication to participating households, training of interviewers, and implementation of incentives – and started in early September 2017.

A revised version of the SHP data waves 1 to 18 (1999 to 2016), with a codebook, was provided to the Cross-National Equivalent File (CNEF) in December 2017 ([see this page](#)).

Moreover, two waves of the SHP LIVES-Vaud and three waves of the LIVES Cohort were prepared for diffusion, which took place also by the end of December.

Finally, the definition of the design, selection of the survey institute and sample request in connection with the preparation of the SHP_IV pilot study were realized during the year. Roughly speaking, the design of the study contains three groups. The first group (control group) closely follows the current design of the SHP, which is mainly a CATI survey. The second group is a sequential mixed mode group using CATI (or CAPI) at the household level, and CAWI at the individual level. The third group tests whether data can be collected completely online (CAWI group).

Further activities

A variety of activities were conducted by the SHP team. They presented the SHP survey at the Swiss Longitudinal Data Fair, organised by FORS at the University of Berne. Further, the 9th International Conference of Panel Data Users in Switzerland took place on June 6-8 at the University of Lausanne. The scientific program contained 2 plenary sessions and 10 workshop sessions with 39 contributions. A one-day workshop on the use of weights in survey data analysis took also place on June 8. The Conference was well received and attended by around 60 participants. Finally, a revised version of the book "Social Dynamics in Swiss Society: Empirical Studies Based on the Swiss Household Panel" was submitted to an international publisher by the end of the year and an updated version of the SHP longitudinal analyses guide was made available.

2.2 International Surveys

2017 was centred around the data processing of ESS 2016, the fieldwork of SHARE wave 7, MOSAiCH 2017 and EVS 2017, and the preparation of the new concept for MOSAiCH.

ESS

The fieldwork of the ESS 2016 (Round 8) started September 1, 2016, and finished by March 2, 2017 with 1'525 valid interviews. The final response rate of 52.2% is similar to that of previous editions. Maintaining previous improvements and introducing new ones, such as the completely revised briefing material and the motivating effect on interviewers of the International ESS conference held in Switzerland in July 2016, helped to maintain such results, while other surveys struggle with dropping response rates.

The survey agency delivered the interviews on March 30 and the contact data on May 12, 2017. The cleaning and coding of the survey and contact data and

the preparation of the documentation was achieved by the end of May and was delivered on time to the ESS data archive at NSD in Bergen, Norway for final processing. The first edition of international data and documentation for ESS round 8 was released on October 31, 2017, comprising 18 countries. The test data were released on November 11 and the contact data on November 30 for the same countries, including Switzerland. The complete Swiss ESS 2016 data and documentation in German and French will be published by DARIS on the FORS NESSTAR Server and in FORSbase in early 2018. The media reports that were collected during 10 weeks starting one week before the start of fieldwork were based on newspapers of the different Swiss linguistic regions. They have been coded and made available to the ESS data archive in April 2015. They include 496 media claims.

In 2017, two ESS ERIC National Coordinators Forums took place, the first in April 2017 in Madrid, and the second in November in Mannheim. The main topics of these meetings were: the rotating modules for 2018 (a partial repetition of the Round 3 “timing of life” module and the new “Justice and Fairness” module), the core module review, the changes in specifications for Round 9, the electronic fieldwork management and monitoring system, the new data protection regulations GDPR, the ESS Cronos web-panel, and various updates and current organisational matters.

The ESS ERIC General Assembly, where Switzerland is represented by Prof. Georg Lutz, met twice in 2017: the 9th GA Meeting (26.4.2017) in Brussels, and the 10th GA Meeting (18.10.2017) in Frankfurt. As of mid-2017, the ESS ERIC counts 18 member countries, 1 observer country (Switzerland) and 4 guest countries. The ESS ERIC General Assembly renewed the membership of half of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and the Methods Advisory Board (MAB): Dominique Joye, at the end of his mandate, has been replaced in the MAB, and Christian Staerklé (University of Lausanne) has been newly appointed for the SAB.

FORS, representing the point of view of an observer country, also contributed to the ESS ERIC Membership Development Advisory Committee, which had the last meetings of its mandate in 2017. The aim was to better understand national funding mechanisms for contributing to ESS ERIC and to facilitate close work between different stakeholders, in order to help increase participation and coverage of the ESS. This committee also discussed the funding scenarios and outlined the ESS prospectus, published this year.

The workshop “*Household division of labour among couples in Europe*”, supported by the Horizon 2020 project ESS-SUSTAIN, was organised at FORS in June 2017, bringing together academics producing publications based on ESS data.

The SUSTAIN project also funded a broad impact study, showing among other things the contribution of the national team and structures such as FORS to the success story of the ESS ([see here for more information](#)).

MOSAiCH / ISSP 2017 was the year of the fieldwork for MOSAiCH 2017 and the preparation of MOSAiCH 2.0, as it was decided to completely redesign this survey.

The MOSAiCH 2017 face-to-face survey included the ISSP 2016 (Role of Government V) and 2017 (Social Network and Social Resources), the updated Swiss Eurobarometer questions, and the extended socio-demographic module. The paper-drop off, addressed to all face-to-face respondents, was around the topics of social engagement, social inequality and social services, political consumerism, and democracy in Switzerland, and is the product of the open call questions organised in 2016.

The fieldwork of the MOSAiCH 2017 survey started February 15, the face-to-face part ending August 7 with 1'066 valid interviews; the last paper questionnaire came in November 1. It was one of the most difficult MOSAiCH fieldings, with a very slow start, achieving an AAPOR response rate of 41.2%, ten percentage points lower than the 51.7% of the previous edition. The reason for this modest result probably depended on a multitude of minor factors that negatively influenced the interviewers' motivation. This minimized significantly, for example, the success of the refusal conversions. However, a good score of 77% of the respondents returned a valid paper drop-off questionnaire.

The ISSP 2016 data have been documented and deposited for international archiving at GESIS in September. The complete MOSAiCH 2017 dataset, including ISSP 2016, ISSP 2017, and data from the drop-off questionnaire, has been prepared for national publication in German and French and will be archived at DARIS in early 2018.

A complete redesign of MOSAiCH has been decided, with the principle of turning the biannual face-to-face survey, fielded by an external survey organisation, into an annual self-completion survey (web-paper) with several waves, realised in-house. This allows for a continued participation in the ISSP and the offering of an annual open call for question contributions addressed to the Swiss research community, while expanding the sample size.

The survey design was fine-tuned during 2017, and the project, called MOSAiCH 2.0, was presented in June to the scientific community at the University of Lausanne, and at the University of Zurich during the Congress of the Swiss Sociological Association. During this congress, two workshops

for MOSAiCH data users were also organised by FORS. At the end of June the first call for question contributions of this project was published; it encountered a notable success. A scientific committee, in charge of the evaluation of the annual MOSAiCH proposals, was established and mandated by the FORS Foundation Board. It held its first meeting in October, deciding the content of the MOSAiCH 2018 wave 2 questionnaire. The accepted questions were elaborated by the International surveys team, in collaboration with the proposing authors. Meanwhile, the ISSP questionnaire for wave 1 was prepared and translated. The fieldwork for MOSAiCH 2018 was planned to start at the end of February 2018.

EVS

The 5th wave of the European Values Study, realised every 9 years, was prepared and fielded during 2017.

In order to prepare this survey for the future, the EVS, where Switzerland is represented in the different boards and committees, allowed for a parallel fielding of the survey through the traditional face-to-face interview mode, and additionally by self-completion, mainly web. FORS, supported by its Scientific Board, decided to adopt the matrix design, to explore possibilities of imputing the missing values inherent to the matrix, and to test several alternatives to solve the challenge of administering a one-hour survey through web and paper, including experiments on the question order. The International surveys team analysed the topical and correlational structure of the EVS 2017 questionnaire and EVS 2008 data in order to propose an optional split of the questions. This proposal was adopted by all other countries fielding EVS following a matrix design. Several international meetings in 2017 supported the preparation and coordination of this project: a meeting of the central bodies in March in Milan, one gathering all countries in May in Athens, and a Web-countries specific one in July in Lisbon, parallel to the ESRA conference, where Switzerland co-organised a session on this topic. The following coordination has been supported by the newly developed online tool myEVS and the translation tool TMT, based on developments realised in the SERISS project (see chapter 2.2 ESS).

The whole EVS self-administered fieldwork was organised internally, while the face-to-face fieldwork was outsourced to a survey company. The sample could be drawn from the individual-based register frame SRPH and all sample units received an unconditional 10 CHF value incentive in the form of a postal check. The fieldwork started the second week of September 2017 and was closed in January 2018.

As of the end of 2017 over 2'000 short matrix web-paper interviews were

realized (length about 40 minutes, announced as 25), out of which were 1'600 with a completed complementary follow-up interview (length of about 20 minutes). Additionally, over 800 long web-paper and 650 face-to-face interviews were realised (length of about 1 hour). This corresponds to response rates of about 43% for the short web-paper survey, 33% for the complete web-paper version in two steps (main interview plus a follow-up), 41% for the long web-paper version, and 47% for the face-to-face mode. Overall, almost 30% of the self-administered answers were on paper, and about 10% of the web interviews were done on a mobile phone. Note that these figures are provisional and do not take into account for example the fact that answers could be incomplete or of differential quality. But they show that long web-paper interviews seem to be doable, whereas there is a higher loss of respondents when picking up the contact again with follow-up surveys. Potential respondents might also perceive both proposed lengths, 25 and 45 minutes, as long, so that in the end the difference in response rates is small. It has, however, to be verified how far the length and the question order influences the sample composition and the data quality. Such analyses, together with the exploration of how to handle design missingness in matrix design survey data, for which cooperation with GESIS has been initiated, will be a central challenge for the coming period.

SHARE

In 2017, SHARE activities were divided between the main data collection of wave 7 and development of research projects promoting and using SHARE data.

Regarding the operational tasks on SHARE, the main wave 7 data collection started in February with five interviewer training sessions lasting two and a half days each and organised by the survey agency Link. The interviewer training sessions took place in Zurich, Lucerne, Berne, Lausanne, and Lugano. Members of the Swiss SHARE team were present at each of these sessions to give their own input and to answer interviewers' questions. The main data collection started at the beginning of March and lasted until the end of November. In Switzerland, the longitudinal sample was contacted for an interview focusing on people's life history (SHARELIFE). About 2'500 interviews were conducted in total. This corresponds to a retention rate slightly above 85%, which positions Switzerland among the best performing countries in SHARE. Data cleaning of wave 7 and the preparation of all deliverables started during fieldwork and will last until fall 2018.

In fall 2017, the Swiss SHARE team also wrote, as panel care duty, a SHARE newsletter intended to thank the SHARE respondents for their participation in the survey and to inform them about the state of the scientific research

using SHARE data. The following topics were presented: the financial situation of retired people, childcare and limitations in daily activities in Europe, and alcohol consumption in Switzerland.

The Swiss SHARE team attended two SHARE meetings in 2017 organised by the international coordination team, located at The Munich Center for the Economics of Aging (MEA). The mid-term meeting took place in Nice, France, from May 17-19 in the middle of the main wave 7 data collection. The wave 8 kick-off meeting was in Sofia, Bulgaria from September 25-27. During these meetings topics related to the stage of the survey were presented and discussed, including the funding situation, the procurement procedure, the questionnaire development, and fieldwork results. Furthermore, the international coordination team exposed and explained the coming operational tasks in a one-day workshop specifically organised for the country team operators in charge of the operational part of the survey.

Concerning research using SHARE data, the Swiss SHARE team analysed the data of the paper and pencil questionnaire on end-of-life issues that were distributed to the Swiss respondents of SHARE at wave 6. A preliminary version of these data was made available to the Swiss team at the beginning of 2017. Preliminary results on knowledge and attitudes toward advance directives and assisted suicide, as well as people's preferences regarding their own end-of-life were presented at the following conferences; the 9th International Conference of Panel Data Users in Switzerland, the 4ème Congrès International Francophone de Soins Palliatifs, and the Swiss Public Health Conference 2017.

The audience was very interested in receiving unique information from Switzerland on the topic. Scientific publications on this issue are in preparation. In addition, the Swiss SHARE team developed several research projects using SHARE data to apply for national grants. Finally, the Swiss SHARE team also presented the SHARE data at the Swiss Longitudinal Data Fair, organised by FORS and held on January 27 in Berne, whose aim was to introduce new users to existing panel data by giving some hands-on sessions (see chapter 6 "events"). And last but not least, the SHARE Swiss team was expanded with the arrival of a new research collaborator in October 2017.

2.3 Political surveys

SELECTS

In February 2017, Prof. Anke Tresch took up her position as SELECTS project director, as successor to Prof. Georg Lutz, who became FORS Director. In addition, and also in relation with the new VOTO studies, two new junior collaborators (80%) were recruited, respectively in May and in June.

In 2017, SELECTS prepared and released a new version of the cumulative dataset with post-election survey data from 1971-2015, which facilitates longitudinal research of turnout and voting behaviour in Swiss elections. This cumulative dataset contains variables that have been included in at least two previous national election surveys.

Another main activity of SELECTS was the preparation of a special issue on “The 2015 Swiss national elections” for publication in the Swiss Political Science Review (SPSR), scheduled for December 2018. Following an open call, 12 papers were presented at an author workshop in October. In early December 10 papers were finally submitted to the SPSR and are currently in the peer review process. Most of these papers rely on data from the modules designed for the 2015 SELECTS study. This testifies to the success of the opening-up of the questionnaire development process to the scientific community by a call for modules: it ensured that the collected data respond to the research interests of the scientific community and results in publications.

In 2017, preparations for the 2019 election study started. The SELECTS commission, which is responsible for all major strategic decisions regarding the Swiss election study, decided on the different study components and survey modes for 2019. The general design remains similar to 2015: SELECTS will again run a post-election survey, a short-term panel survey with a parallel media analysis during the campaign phase, and a candidate survey. However, the rolling-cross section (RCS) component, introduced for the first time in 2011, will be dropped in 2019 due to the high day-to-day stability of opinions and voting intentions. Instead, as a major innovation, a long-term panel component will be implemented: the short-term panel—with a pre-campaign wave, a campaign wave and a post-election wave—will be continued with annual waves until the 2023 national elections to study changes in voting behaviour and attitudes in the medium-term. Another change concerns the survey modes. In 2015, SELECTS already switched the data collection mode for the post-election study from CATI to mixed-mode (online/CATI). In 2019, SELECTS will completely abandon CATI surveys and conduct the post-election study in-house, as a sequential mixed-mode online/paper survey. The decision is mostly motivated by potential improvements in data quality. Indeed, paper as a mode is better adapted to complement an online survey as it is also both visual and self-administered. Paper

surveys have also been proved to better complement an online survey, as they are better at attracting those respondents that would not participate online.

As part of SELECTS 2015, a new SNSF-funded project “Determinants and effects of the short-term dynamics of issue ownership” started in August 2017. A doctoral student was hired at the University of Geneva to work on this project in the coming three years.

SELECTS also continued its activities in several international collaborative networks. SELECTS participates in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which develops common questionnaire modules that become part of national election studies. In 2017, SELECTS (Prof. Georg Lutz) participated in a Planning Committee Meeting in Mannheim, Germany.

SELECTS also plays an active role in the framework of the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS). CCS is a joint effort to collect data on party candidates based on common questionnaire modules. The current CCS Questionnaire Module II has been in the field since 2013. Since October 2017, the SELECTS project team has been working on the preparation of a comparative CCS Module II dataset, comprising 13 candidate surveys from 12 countries. A first release is planned for early 2018. The SELECTS team is also actively involved in the preparatory work for the CCS Module III questionnaire development process. Work on the new module starts in early 2018. The new module III is expected to be ready for inclusion in the 2019 Swiss election study.

VOTO

Since 1977, a survey is conducted after each direct-democratic federal vote to analyse the reasons that motivate Swiss voters to turn out and reject or accept a ballot proposal. These surveys were known as “VOX analyses”. In summer 2016, the Federal Chancellery mandated FORS, together with the Center for Democracy Aarau (ZDA) and the survey institute LINK, to carry out these analyses under the new name VOTO studies for the years 2016-2020.

VOTO is a collaborative project between FORS, ZDA, and LINK. After each federal vote, LINK is in charge of conducting CATI interviews with a representative sample of about 1'500 Swiss citizens, whereas FORS and ZDA jointly elaborate the questionnaire, and are alternately responsible for data coding, analysis, and reporting. For each VOTO study, the VOTO team at FORS coordinates the mailing of invitation letters for sample members, organises the translation of the questionnaire and final report, and prepares the data for distribution by FORS.

In 2017, three VOTO studies were published. These studies cover the seven proposals that were submitted to the Swiss popular vote in February, May, and September 2017. Among these proposals were three large reform projects, which were all submitted by way of a referendum: The Corporate Tax Reform III, the Energy Act, and the Pension 2020 Reform. Whereas Swiss citizens gave the green light for nuclear phase-out, the promotion of renewable energies and the lowering of energy consumption by approving the Energy Act, they rejected both the Corporate Tax Reform III and the Pension 2020 Reform. In both cases, the VOTO study revealed that an above-average share of voters had difficulties understanding these complex proposals (74% in case of the Corporate Tax Reform III, 46% in case of the Pension 2020 Reform). The rejection rate was especially high among left-leaning voters in the case of the Corporate Tax Reform III (e.g., 84% no votes among Social Democrats), whereas the Pension 2020 Reform was overwhelmingly rejected by sympathizers of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (84% no votes). In both cases, voters of the centre-right parties were more divided.

VOTO studies follow strict scientific standards of data collection and analysis, but they are written for a wide public. They address political decision-makers, political parties and interest groups, journalists, and a wider general audience. The Federal Chancellery publishes the reports in German, French, and Italian about eight weeks after a federal vote. These reports are freely available as barrier-free documents on the [VOTO website](#). In addition, FORS distributes at the same time the anonymized data and related documentation. The publication of the reports is announced in a press release, and the main results are generally widely covered by the major newspapers, radio, and TV stations. In addition, VOTO members have been invited by different stakeholders to present their study results and to participate in public discussion forums.

In fall 2017, the VOTO team at FORS started to work on a cumulative VOTO dataset, covering 11 proposals that were submitted to the popular vote since 2016. Similar to the VOXit dataset, which relates to the former VOX studies and is also distributed by FORS, this cumulative dataset will also include some aggregate data on the proposals. These aggregate data relate to the proposal (policy domain, institutional form), the campaign (voting recommendations by the main political parties), and the outcome of the vote (number of votes for and against the proposal, number of accepting/rejecting cantons).

3. Data and research information services DARIS

Usage and workflow

There were 2'168 datasets downloaded or ordered from DARIS in 2017 (see chapter 6 "Performance Indicators" table Number of datasets distributed to or downloaded by researchers). In addition, there were 18 new datasets deposited in 2017 to the FORSbase platform, such as COUPLES - Social Stratification, Cohesion and Conflict in Contemporary Families (1998-2011), Swiss Electoral Studies (SELECTS) 2018, Devenir parent - transition à la parentalité et sexuation des trajectoires, VOTO 4: Swiss Popular Vote 21.05.2017, and Sicherheit 2016, Aussen-, Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitische Meinungsbildung im Trend.

During the annual survey 2016/17, 406 new project descriptions were added to the research inventory. Most of these new research projects are situated in five core disciplines (sociology, education science, political science, economics, and psychology). All in all, the research inventory currently comprises nearly 11'000 published project descriptions.

Various improvements were made to FORSbase in 2017, including the attribution of DOIs to all datasets deposited in the system. The number of active users of FORSbase went up to 4'400, compared to about 2'000 in 2015 and 3'300 in 2016.

Data Promotion

The data promotion group maintained and reinforced its regular activities of direct promotion (FORS bulletin, social networking, presentations) and indirect promotion (development of materials, trainings, methodological research and data management reflections). In particular, the group intensified its work around qualitative data archiving and re-use issues, and it started a pilot study together with the University of Lausanne to develop expertise in day-to-day data management. The group also made significant progress with the preparation of the ch-x data, and it began a SNSF-funded research collaboration with the Faculty of geography of the University of Lausanne, based on the ch-x data (see chapter 4 "Scientific collaborations").

Qualitative data

2017 notably involved several new collaborations with respect to archiving and the reanalysis of qualitative data. First, new contacts were made with researchers having completed studies and wishing to archive their data (e.g., within the IEPHI). DARIS actively contributed, in partnership with researchers, to reflections concerning ethical conditions (consent and anonymisation), methodologies (data and metadata, etc.), and policies (e.g,

embargos) relating to the archiving and sharing of these data. Second, new contacts were made with researchers having just begun their studies and wishing to involve DARIS in their reflections regarding the management of qualitative data (e.g., transcriptions, documentation), especially within international research teams. These collaborations should lead to the archiving of the data produced within these studies.

2017 also involved the establishment of different publication and research projects in the domain of archiving and re-use of secondary data. A working paper on disciplinary differences concerning archiving and re-use was started. This work aims to help FORS to develop its strategy regarding which disciplines to target and to support. A second working paper was started with the goal of testing the re-use of “old” qualitative data. Last, DARIS was asked to coordinate a special edition of the journal *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology*, which should be published in 2019.

Data management

DARIS continued to reinforce its expertise in data management during 2017, with a special focus on day-to-day data management. In order to better assess researchers' needs and practices with respect to data management as well as reinforce practical know-how, DARIS started a three-year pilot study with the Faculty of social and political sciences of the University of Lausanne, as well as a second pilot study with the Faculty of psychology of the University of Zurich. DARIS also engaged in discussions with key stakeholders in Switzerland on Open data and data management planning. The establishment of formal Data Management Plans (DMPs) by the SNSF has provided new opportunities to support researchers and establish FORS as a centre for expertise in research data management. In June, DARIS was invited by the SNSF to provide a one-day workshop on data management in the framework of the r4d programme. DARIS also collaborated internationally with CESSDA partners to develop an online training module for junior researchers, which went live in December 2017.

With respect to training materials, DARIS staff prepared three mini-guides intended for master and bachelor students. These consist in an introduction to the world of data, guidelines for accessing data at FORS, and an introduction to data management.

Other activities of DARIS

DARIS staff members gave various presentations at several Swiss universities and institutions during 2017 and participated in a range of national scientific events. For example, during the yearly conference of the Swiss Society for Research in Education (SSRE) in June 2017, DARIS organised a symposium

on “The re-use of research data in the educational sciences”. The aim of the symposium was to shed light on the potential of re-using research data for empirical analyses and to promote the educational data available at DARIS. As in past years, in 2017 DARIS staff members participated in a variety of international projects related to archiving and research infrastructure, including the CESSDA European Question Bank project, and the Horizon 2020 projects SERISS and CESSDA-SaW, to name just a few. The SERISS project – Synergies for European Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences – aims to improve methodologies and tools for large-scale cross-national surveys. The CESSDA SaW project – Strengthening and Widening – aimed to reinforce existing capacities of national European data archives, and to assist other European countries in developing their own archives.

4. Scientific collaborations

Host University The University of Lausanne supports FORS based on a scientific and an administrative contractual agreement, signed for four years. The agreement on the research collaboration was renewed in 2017. From the administrative side, several central services are involved, mainly the Human Resources and IT departments as well as the facility management. In addition, an agreement with the neighbouring Faculty of social and political sciences (SSP) of the University of Lausanne has been established, which covers scientific, institutional, organisational, and financial topics. Two meetings were held in 2017 between the FORS directorate and the Dean's Office of the SSP Faculty. During 2017 the work on the re-establishment of the joint research program between FORS and the SSP Faculty continued. This program, with a new structure and a new governance will be in place in 2018. It will involve many researchers from the SSP Faculty as well as FORS to engage in joint research programmes.

One of the activities of this collaboration is the jointly organised Methods and Research Meetings where invited guests as well as researchers from FORS or from the University of Lausanne exchange on methodological issues on a regular basis. The invitational programme sponsored by the University of Lausanne funded two postdoctoral fellows, one family sociologist, and one qualitative researcher, who were involved in joint research activities with FORS and LINES (Life course and inequality research centre) of the University of Lausanne.

FORS and the SSP Faculty also established an additional agreement in 2017 to conduct a pilot study on research data management. The aim of this project is to jointly assess the concrete needs of research projects in order to facilitate research data management in the future. This pilot study will take place over a period of two years and will lead to enhanced ways to facilitate research data management.

National and international commitments

FORS is also involved in number of international and national projects.

National commitments

- » In 2017 the fifth cohort of students started in the master programme Public Opinion and Survey Methodology (MEOP) of the Universities of Lausanne, Lucerne, and Neuchâtel in partnership with FORS, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, and the vsms-asms. This program is important for FORS because it teaches key competences related to FORS activities,

and FORS participates in the Scientific Council in charge of running the program. Two senior members of the FORS staff teach in this programme. FORS offered internship positions for master students in 2017 as well.

- » In November 2017, the Human Research and Ethics Section of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) mandated FORS to conduct a survey about knowledge and attitudes of the Swiss population towards human research and legislation in this field. FORS will conduct this web/paper-survey entirely in-house, from the development and programming of the questionnaire, to the organisation and monitoring of the fieldwork, to the processing, analysing, and storing of the resulting data. The final results will be presented to the FOPH in July 2018.
- » In the context of an SNSF-funded project “Do members of Parliaments have accurate perceptions of public preferences?”, FORS was mandated in September 2017 by Prof. Frédéric Varone from the University of Geneva to conduct a survey on the attitudes of voters on specific policy questions. The project, which is part of an international collaboration, aims at assessing whether MPs correctly evaluate what voters in general and voters of their own party in particular think about a set of policy issues. The data collection will take place in early summer 2018 among 4'000 Swiss voting age citizens using a sequential mixed mode web / paper design.
- » An important milestone was achieved in 2017 with the end of the data collection of the 2016-17 Swiss Federal Surveys of Adolescents (ch-x). DARIS staff started the cleaning of the data, and a first version of the dataset was established. The SNSF collaboration with the Faculty of geography was initiated, based on the ch-x data, as well as the preparatory work for the forthcoming ch-x public report. It has been decided to align the ch-x report with the SNSF research project and to include our partners in the drafting of the report.
- » FORS is member of the Swiss association of market and social research (vsms/asms), representing the client side in the Managing Board and responsible for the domain 'Methods'. The following two subjects were central in 2017: the revision of the data protection law in Europe and Switzerland, and the Swisscom callfilter. The callfilters were also a hot topic for WAPOR (the World Association for Public Opinion Research), where FORS is member and participates in an adhoc committee.

International commitments

On the international level FORS continued its involvement in building and developing the European and international research infrastructure:

- » The SERI has delegated the official representation of Switzerland in the social science European Research Infrastructure Consortiums (ERIC) to FORS for some time. Switzerland has an observer status in each of these ERICs. The FORS director represents Switzerland in the General Assemblies of the CESSDA ERIC and the ESS ERIC, which each held two meetings in 2017. The CESSDA meeting in June 2017 in Bergen (Norway) involved the funding of CESSDA ERIC as an European Research Infrastructure Consortium. The head of the Survey unit represents Switzerland in the General Assembly of SHARE. SHARE had one meeting of the General Assembly in 2017. FORS staff also actively takes part in the coordinating bodies of all the three organisations.
- » FORS is also responsible for representing Switzerland in various other European and International projects. FORS staff represents Switzerland in the ISSP Annual meeting, which decides on modules for the coming period. The 2017 meeting was hosted by FORS in Lausanne. Switzerland currently also chairs the ISSP Methodological committee through FORS. FORS collaborators represent Switzerland in governing bodies of various political science networks, such as the Comparative Study of Electoral System (CSES) and the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS). FORS, represented by Prof. Dominique Joye, is also member of the EVS Methodology Group that takes care of the quality of the study.
- » The FORS Director also represents Switzerland in the ESFRI Strategic Working Group on Social and Cultural Innovation. This working group is responsible for drafting the ESFRI Landscape analysis and to evaluate existing as well as new projects to get on the ESFRI roadmap in the coming years. During 2017 two meeting of the Strategic Working group took place in Brussels.
- » FORS concluded its mentoring activities for the “Balkan Electoral Comparative Study” funded by the Regional Research Promotion Program (RRPP) in 2017. The project conducted a candidate survey in four Balkan countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia) and ran a citizens survey. A final international conference was organised in February 2017 in Budva with Swiss and international contributions.
- » The work around the ERA.Net PLUS RU-funded project “PAWCER – Public Attitudes to Welfare, Climate Change and Energy in the EU and Russia”, won by FORS, the ESS and international partners in 2015, continued as planned. Two meetings were held, one of which was

organised in December by FORS in Lausanne. Together with ESS, FORS is also involved in the 'Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences' (SERISS) project, addressing some of the key challenges facing cross-national data collection.

- » Besides its core business of soliciting and disseminating research information and data, DARIS was actively involved in 2017 in the Assessment of Basic Educational Competencies, carried out by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK). Within this educational large-scale assessment, DARIS was responsible for the establishment and coordination of data management processes and complex data cleaning, as well as the distribution of the data. DARIS' involvement includes attending regular meetings and workshops as well as a set of diverse day-to-day coordination and communication tasks. The participation of DARIS in the UGK project was formalised in 2017 with a two-year mandate for the cleaning and distribution of the student test data, which resulted in the hiring of a new staff member.
- » FORS currently covers the fee of the Luxemburg Income Study (LIS). This contribution allows Swiss researchers to gain access to the LIS data resource. FORS continues to pay the Swiss membership fees to the Cross-National Data Centre in Luxembourg LIS so that the data are accessible for free to researchers in Switzerland. In July the head of DARIS attended the bi-annual meeting of the international board of directors (ASBL) of LIS.
- » The head of the IT group was actively involved in two international projects as a technical expert, namely SEEDS and SERISS, as well as in CESSDA Technical Working Group and CESSDA Product and Service catalogue. The SEEDS project – South-Eastern European Data Services – ended in April.

5. Methodological Research

Switching surveys to the web

A major challenge at FORS is to test possibilities to switch surveys to the web mode. Main drivers are the increasing landline undercoverage of households in Switzerland that raise quality concerns as well as the increased use of the internet for everyday interactions. In particular the SELECTS team designed a large number of experiments in the 2015 SELECTS to analyse this switch. Findings were presented at the ESRA conference with the aim to submit an article to a peer-reviewed journal by the end of 2018. The SHP team finalised the SHP IV mixed mode pilot survey which is in the field (Jan/Feb 2018). And finally, there were many experiments conducted with the EVS and MOSAiCH surveys (see chapter 2.2).

- » The SELECTS team is exploring if an extension to a web panel survey is feasible. Panel surveys offer significant methodological advantages to identify causal relationships. Unfortunately panels based on probability samples typically need costly recruitment procedures involving interviewers. The SELECTS 2015 survey included different variants to test mail as the only contact mode, strategies to communicate to recruited people that they are part of a panel survey, and different incentives on participation in the first wave, enrolment in the panel, participating in subsequent waves, and possible biases in socio-demographics and key estimates. Using mail as the only contact mode is possible but requires a careful design. Letters should not put too much emphasis on the panel aspect. Conditional incentives, when combined with unconditional ones, work well to boost enrolment as well as retention rates.
- » Non-probability samples can be a cheap alternative to probability-based online panels. However, respondents recruited by such panels may only scarcely represent the general population. The SELECTS team compared two of the SELECTS 2015 surveys with samples drawn from three different opt-in panel providers. We used data from the register-based sampling frame to assess the representativeness of the responding samples on socio-demographic variables and the SELECTS post-election survey for political variables as benchmarks. Because point estimates from non-probability panels are not suitable to estimate the general population, we analysed relationships between variables instead, as this is what is more interesting in scientific studies. By calculating the average error in bivariate estimates, we find that the accuracy of non-probability panels varies widely depending on the variables and on the providers. On average they perform worse than the two probability-based surveys.

We conclude that using non-probability samples to model opinions and behaviour is unreliable and can lead to wrong conclusions. A scientific article will in addition include the incentive aspect of the experiment.

- » Web surveys often face the problem of measurement issues across different data input devices. The EVS team designed a web survey for mobile phone users, based on which a POSM master thesis resulted. The thesis identified question formats from the EVS likely to be problematic for mobile web administration, and conducted usability tests to compare survey software (Qualtrics and LimeSurvey) in terms of their potential to optimally adapt questionnaires for mobile web administration. An additional challenge for the EVS was an optimal split of the one-hour web questionnaire to keep reasonable response rates while being able to impute missing information in a meaningful way. A session about this topic was organised at the ESRA conference and a cooperation agreement signed with GESIS to investigate the 'Statistical Modelling of Design Missingness in Modular Questionnaire Designs for Social Surveys'. In Switzerland experiments were added to investigate the feasibility of longer web surveys and the effect of different ordering of questions, which will be analysed as soon as results are available.

Fighting nonobservation

Nonobservation with its components non-coverage, noncontact, and non-cooperation remains a major problem in our surveys, and FORS continued doing research to improve observation at all of these three stages. At issue are increased measurement errors by mixing modes sequentially.

- » Undercoverage of migration groups may be improved by offering additional survey language(s). Up to now, logistic and financial reasons rather than effects on representation bias have been the main drivers for deciding which language(s) are offered. However, since adding a survey language is costly, there is a need to understand which languages come with the best potential to reduce representation bias. FORS elaborated a framework to investigate the potential of additional survey languages to reduce representation bias. We showed that the link between survey languages and representation bias is multidimensional. By using Swiss administrative data as a potential study, we showed that the choice of an additional language depends primarily on the interactions between the survey topic and the language mastery necessary to complete the survey, and least so on the socio-demographic composition of the sample. While results of previous work will be published soon, another paper which elaborates the framework is planned to be published in a peer reviewed journal.

- » Refusal conversion in the SHP aims to decrease non-cooperation. In total, more than six thousand households underwent refusal conversion between 2005 and 2015 leading to an increase in the sample size of 2% to 18%. Moreover, upon conversion on the household level, the information on individual level is collected from around half of the household members of the converted households. The fact that 60% to 80% of converted households participate in the wave following conversion makes refusal conversion in the SHP also longitudinally successful. These results were published as a Swiss Household Panel working paper.

- » Mixing modes aims to increase response and reduce selection error because a significant part of the population cannot be reached or does not want to participate in certain modes. Yet if measurement error increases as a result of measuring differently in different modes, it is possible that the net increase in the total survey error of estimates will outweigh the benefits gained from reducing selection errors. Based on data from the LIVES-FORS mixed mode experiment conducted in 2012-13, which uses auxiliary data from the sampling register and a single mode mail survey as a benchmark, different components of the mean squared error of a range of sociodemographic and target variable were estimated from different mixed mode survey designs. Mixing modes was effective at reducing selection error in estimates and although measurement error increased as a result of mixing modes, the increase did not result in a net increase in the total survey error. Estimates from the sequential web plus mail survey contained less error than those from the CATI plus mail survey. An article was published in a special issue on Total Survey Error in the Journal of Official Statistics. Still based on the LIVES-FORS mixed mode experiment, members from FORS and the University of Lausanne used R-indicators to assess the representativeness of samples responding at different phases of fieldwork, to different modes and mode combinations. They find that switching modes indeed helps to improve response rates and improve the representativeness of the samples but that the effectiveness of this strategy varies by mode and subgroup. The article is currently being revised for resubmission to the journal Sociological Methods and Research.

In addition to decreasing nonobservation and possibly associated measurement issues per se, FORS is constantly working on improving post-survey adjustments to correct for selective unit nonresponse. Such adjustments are commonly based on socio-demographic variables, although these variables may be poorly correlated with response propensities and with variables of interest. Nevertheless, FORS surveys have the advantage that socio-demographic variables are included in the sampling frame and thus available for all sample units.

- » Adjustment information can be extended by nonresponse follow-up surveys which typically include a small set of survey variables correlated with response propensities. However, information collected through these follow-up surveys is only available for sample members who participated either in the survey or in its nonresponse follow-up. FORS used the Swiss ESS 2012 to compare efficiency of these two sets of variables as nonresponse adjustment tools. Unfortunately variables of both groups showed a poor performance and differed only slightly with regard to their effect on bias correction. These results were published in 'Mathematical Population Studies'.
- » Post-survey adjustments in panel surveys (longitudinal weights) rely on transition probabilities of sample members. Interviewers' assessments of respondents' ability and reluctance to participate are often ignored but relevant to calculate longitudinal weights. FORS extended prior research which has shown that these assessments are associated with next-wave response behaviour in face-to-face surveys to telephone surveys, where an interviewer typically has less information on which to base an assessment. In addition, we looked at next-wave participation as well as longer-term participation sequences. While we found that interviewers are able to distinguish between the most extreme sequences of immediate refusal in the next wave and long-term participation, interviewer evaluations are less successful at predicting other sequences. Multivariate models confirm that interviewer assessments can help predict response at later waves, also after controlling for commonly used predictors of survey nonresponse. Predictive power is, however, weaker in the long-term perspective. Interviewer assessments thus seem to provide useful information, which may be used to improve nonresponse adjustment and in responsive designs in longitudinal surveys. Preliminary results of this research were presented at the SHP and the ESRA conferences and final results submitted to 'Public Opinion Quarterly'.

Missing variables

In addition to socio-demographic variables from the sampling frame, surveys at FORS increasingly are considering the possibility of matching new samples with income variables from the Swiss social security register. Results from both projects described were presented at the ESRA conference.

- » The first survey thus enriched was the 2015 post-electoral survey from SELECTS. Main findings are that income and socio-demographic variables explain a small part of the participation to the survey only, and unit non-respondents earn on average a little less than respondents. The amount of income has no influence on the item missing incomes. The difference between reported and registered income has only marginal correlation

with socio-demographic and political variables. The next step will be to repeat these analyses with data from the EVS survey (2017) matched with register income, and to present a consolidated paper at the first Bigsurv18 conference (Barcelona), before submitting it to a peer-reviewed journal.

- » In the framework of the PAWCER-project ('Public Attitudes to Welfare, Climate Change and Energy in the EU and Russia'), FORS did important methodological tests regarding opportunities and limitation of multiple imputation in real-life applications. This work included a comparison of before-and-after analyses to investigate the effect the application of multiple imputation can have on the results. Multiple imputation may reveal problems in data regarding unfortunate distributions or even mistakes in data. Thus, using multiple imputation may not only improve the accuracy of results regarding the issue of missing values but also of other data quality issues. The aim is to publish a paper in a peer-reviewed journal.

Equivalence issues

As already mentioned above in connection with the LIVES-FORS mixed mode experiment, mixing modes risks confounding selection effects with measurement effects. Multi-national studies even add one dimension, the comparability of estimates across populations. Where multiple modes are used between countries, the question of how to assess measurement equivalence poses an important challenge for the field of comparative survey methodology.

The total survey error approach attempts to evaluate the relative amount of error from different sources. In a comparative context, for example, it makes sense to compare the impact of differences between modes with the impact of other methodological differences between countries that may affect measurement equivalence. FORS attempted to address this challenge by analysing measurement invariance across countries and across modes using confirmatory factor analysis. Using data collected as part of a methodological experiment conducted during round three of the ESS, we assessed the implications of mode choice (face-to-face versus telephone surveys) on measurement equivalence of multi-item measures of subjective wellbeing in participating countries (Germany, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland). First results were presented at the ESRA conference and the team is now in the process of finalizing these analyses and preparing a manuscript for publication.

The comparability of translated agreement and satisfaction scales poses a significant challenge to data quality in multilingual survey data. For example, a question can be whether the end-point label 'extremely' of the satisfaction

scale should be translated literally even if in the target language this expression is not idiomatic.

FORS explores the equivalence across translations, languages and countries of two scales often used in the ESS. We compare three different translation variants in German and French in a single country (Switzerland) and across countries sharing the same language (Switzerland, France, Belgium, Germany and Austria) from the third round of the ESS. To assess the equivalence, we apply different analytical approaches such as test-retest reliability, measurement invariance and distance estimation by a log-multiplicative association model.

Switzerland has implemented additional split-ballot tests of three different translations in addition to the usual ESS MTMM test questions. Results show how far the different translations influence the responses and which translations are most comparable within Switzerland and possibly within European countries sharing the same languages. Results were presented at a GESIS Symposium in Mannheim. A hypothesis still to investigate is whether the impacts of scale translation variants are stronger in case questions are subject to social desirability, unclear understanding and weak opinions compared to questions appealing to strong opinions.

FORS staff devoted considerable time to reviewing papers on methodology for scientific journals on survey methods, such as Sociological Methods and Research, Survey Research Methods, Public Opinion Quarterly, methods-data-analyses; Survey Methods, Insights from the Field, the FORS and the NCCR LIVES working paper series, the journal Advances in Life Course Research, and the Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology, just to mention a few.

6. Output, knowledge transfer and events

Publications and websites

Dissemination strategy

FORS disseminates its data and research findings through different channels and publications. The current dissemination channels and publications are various and are increasing. Spring 2017 was marked by setting up a dissemination strategy and by reviewing them all with the aim of deciding which are kept or merged, and whether it would be possible to create new ones. Measures were defined between the FORS direction and the communication team to improve their visibility.

We divided our publications in several categories:

- » Scientific methodological and technical publications like the SHP Working Paper
- » Series, and the online journal Survey Methods, Insights from the Field (SMIF)
- » Scientific substantial publications like various contributions to scientific publications written by our staff and the FORS Working Paper Series
- » Platforms with publications addressing a public outside of academia, like the online platforms DeFacto, VOTO Swiss, and the online journal Social Change in Switzerland.
- » Institutional communications, like the FORS Annual Report, the FORS bulletin and the FORS website.

The dissemination of our outputs via the social media proved to be an effective means of reaching the public. During 2017 FORS further increased its presence on the internet by regularly diffusing relevant research information (new datasets, events, calls for papers, etc.) to a larger audience by means of Facebook (781 followers; +10%) and Twitter (324 followers; +29%).

To increase the visibility of our data and research findings, FORS adheres to the principle of Open Access. Data and publications resulting from research projects at FORS or with implication of FORS collaborators have to be accessible on the web for free as far as copyright allows for it. In September FORS has elaborated Open Access guidelines that give insight into how open access to data, book publications and articles in scientific journals should be handled.

Another valuable measure to improve the visibility of our outputs was the redesign of the FORS website. As the current website presents various technical problems, it was decided that a new FORS website should be set up. The communication team presented a concept to the Direction for a new structure of the FORS homepage and its subsequent subpages, including a thematic online portal. Their suggestions were based on the comprehensive feedback of some of the users of the website and their own analyses of the content. The publishers of the different FORS units were then informed to review their current pages and to cut down on the number of subpages (1'400 in total comprising three language sites, notably French, English, and German). In 2017 the restructuring process was done with the aim of publishing the new website in the second half of 2018.

Another measure is the restructuring of the annual reporting system from 2017. The content of the report was made more readable by restructuring it and including, where possible, visually appealing graphs and tables. Also, a new design of the annual report was chosen. Like in previous years, the annual report only exists in electronic version.

The FORS Guides to Survey Methods and Data Management

As a result of the dissemination strategy, the need for a new series came up that allows a quick publication and promotion of the existing methodological knowledge at FORS in a fast and straightforward way that demands less time and effort than the writing of an entire scientific article. The FORS Guides to Survey Methods and Data Management assure knowledge transfer within and outside FORS in the domain of survey methods and data management with the aim of strengthening the role of FORS as the centre of expertise in the social sciences in Switzerland. Unlike the FORS Working Paper Series, the FORS Guides do not serve as a primary stage for a later publication in a scientific journal. They are short descriptive papers that go beyond the documentation of specific surveys or data management tools, but address more general topics, like sampling, non-response, the use of incentives, or data sharing. They mainly address the Swiss research community in way that similar international series and journals cannot. The guides are written in English by the FORS collaborators who are experts in the field and will be published on the FORS website. Further, the SHP Working Paper Series will be abandoned and as far as possible integrated into the FORS Guides. The first issue of the FORS Guides will appear in the second half of 2018.

The following two pages show the performance reports per journal, series and website.

Survey Methods, Insights from the Field

The peer-reviewed online journal Survey Methods, Insights from the Field (SMIF) organised an editorial board meeting at the ESRA Conference in Lisbon. So far edited jointly by FORS and GESIS, the journal welcomed a new partner, namely PUMA (Plattform für Umfragen, Methoden und empirische Analysen) from the University of Vienna to give the journal a fresh impetus. The main focus of the meeting lay on the setup of the new governance and a slightly revised review process, with the establishment of a new review process involving associate editors, i.e. collaborators from FORS, GESIS, and PUMA.

In 2017, nine new papers were submitted to the journal. All papers handed in went through the review process. Seven papers were published in 2017. Two authors withdrew their paper after the first round of reviewing, due to a change in their career. By the end of December, seven papers were in production, thus either in the process of revision by the authors or at the review stage by the members of the editorial board.

From January 1 to December 31, the website of the journal was visited 14'064 times (compared to 12'041 times in 2016). Most visits came again from the United States, 4'275 (compared to 5'628 in 2016), followed by Germany, 1'486 (1'251 in 2016), and the United Kingdom, 962 (725 in 2016).

FORS Working Paper Series

The FORS Working Paper Series publishes papers related to survey research, from both methodological and substantive viewpoints. The series is intended to provide an early and relatively quick means of publication prior to further development of the work. In 2017 two articles were published, namely Material deprivation from 1999 to 2013 in Switzerland: How index construction impacts on measured patterns of evolution and The impact of assortative mating on income inequality in Switzerland. All published papers can be consulted on the [FORS Working Paper Series](#) webpage.

Social Change in Switzerland

The bilingual online publication series Social Change in Switzerland, co-edited by FORS, the Life Course and Inequalities research unit of the University of Lausanne LINES and the NCCR LIVES, published five articles in 2017. With the exception of one article, the media coverage was very good and it seems that after the 3rd year of its existence the journal is well established. In 2017 promotion was intensified to reach even more people, newspapers, and institutions in Switzerland. All publications, press, and media releases can be consulted on the journal's dedicated webpage.

The number of visits of the journal's website has risen from 6'600 in 2016 to 8'800 in 2017, and the number of single clicks went from 12'300 in 2016 to 17'500 in 2017. The top ten articles downloaded the most date from 2015 and 2016, which shows that the journal publishes articles that remain current for long periods. Most visits came from Switzerland, followed by Germany, France, and the United States.

DeFacto

DeFacto publishes articles related to important and relevant political issues in Switzerland in order to make political science research more visible. Until 2016 DeFacto was an AGORA-Project funded by the SNSF. The continuation of the platform in 2017 was financed by FORS, the Institute of Political Sciences of the University of Zurich, the Institute of Political Science of the University of Berne, and the Department of Humanities, Social and Political Sciences at the ETH Zurich. FORS contributed by hosting and maintaining its website. In 2017 DeFacto has published 77 articles (since its start in October 2015 a total of 247 articles). FORS collaborators published five articles in 2017. In autumn DeFacto started to publish the short versions of the articles already published in the online journal Social Change in Switzerland. All articles can be viewed on the [DeFacto website](#).

The DeFacto website obtained 30'000 single visits in 2017. Most visits came from Switzerland, followed by Germany, the United States, and France.

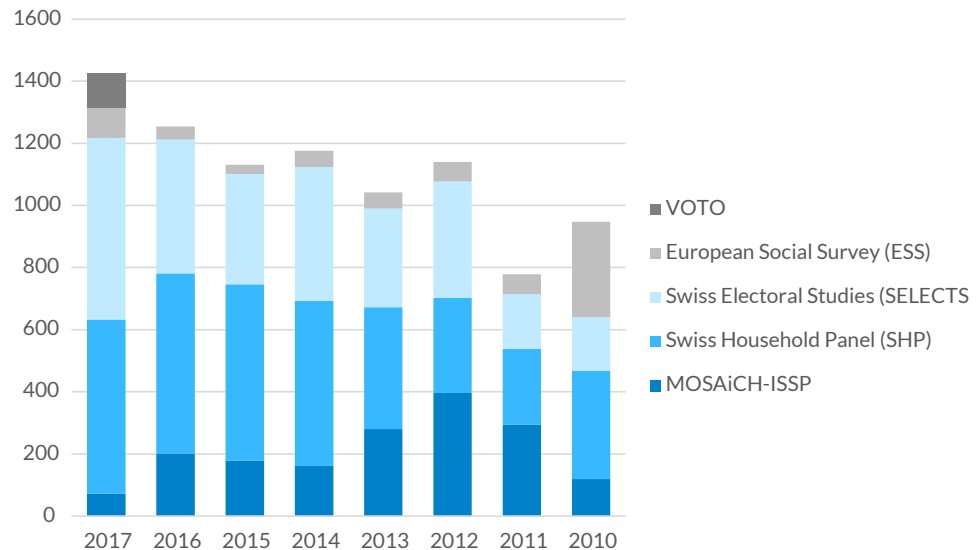
In 2017 the Swiss media in all parts of the country commented on our work. Most press releases were collected from the three VOTO studies published in 2017 that had an excellent response in TV, radio, newspapers, and online. Especially the report analysing the Swiss Pension 2020 Reform attracted a lot of media attention, followed by the articles published in Social Change in Switzerland. FORS Director Georg Lutz was regularly solicited by the media to comment on Swiss political issues.

Performance indicators

FORS maintains a set of indicators that allow us to assess our accomplishments and progress on different fronts. Below are various results for 2017:

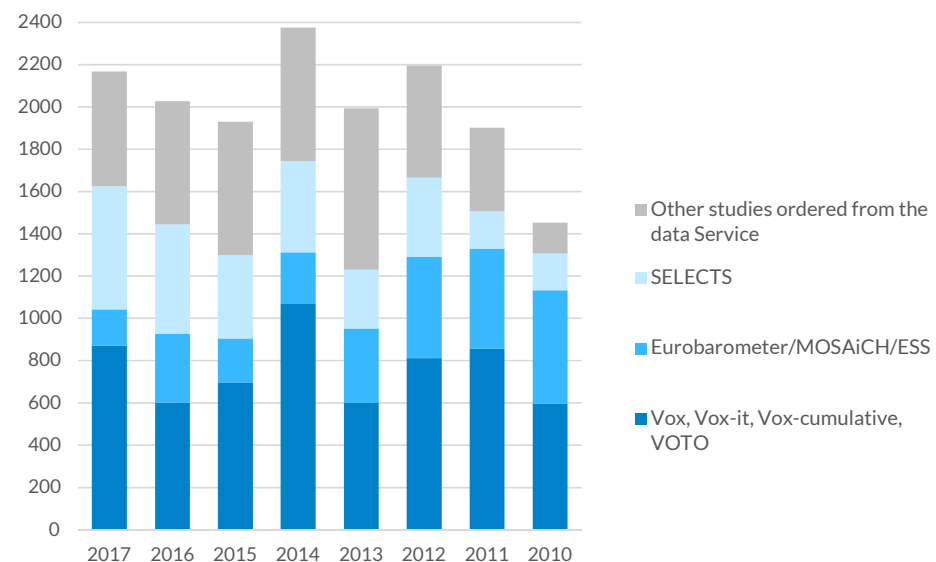
Number of datasets produced by FORS surveys that are distributed to researchers

A total of 1'427 FORS-produced datasets were distributed by FORS to researchers in 2017. This year includes datasets from VOTO, the first full year that these data have been distributed by FORS.



In addition to the distribution by FORS, the Swiss parts of the studies ESS and ISSP data can also be downloaded from the international websites of these projects. The data for the European Values Study (EVS) and the Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), both conducted by FORS, are only available in this way.

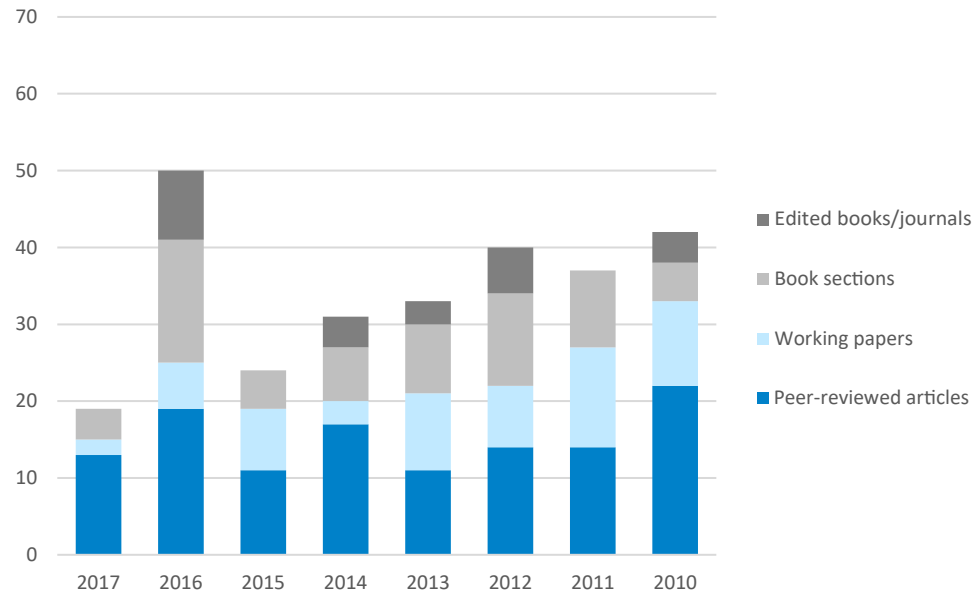
Number of datasets from the FORS data service distributed to or downloaded by researchers



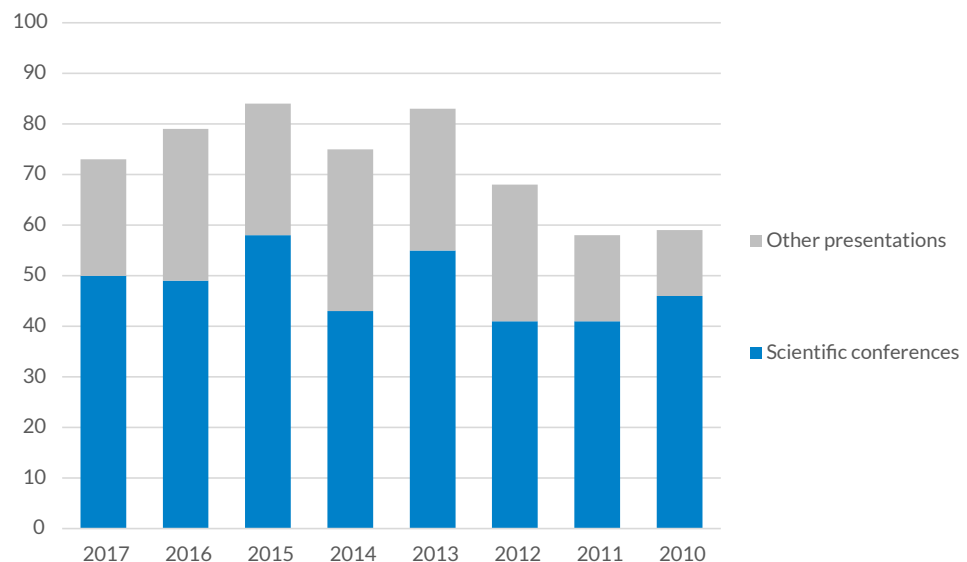
Number of new research project descriptions in the research inventory

During the annual survey 2016/17, 406 new project descriptions were added to the research inventory, compared to 454 during 2015/16. Most of these new research projects are situated in five core disciplines (sociology, education science, political science, economics, and psychology). All in all, the research inventory comprised at the end of 2017 10'951 published project descriptions.

Publications by FORS staff



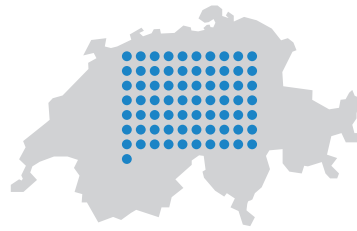
Presentations by FORS staff at conferences and scholarly meetings



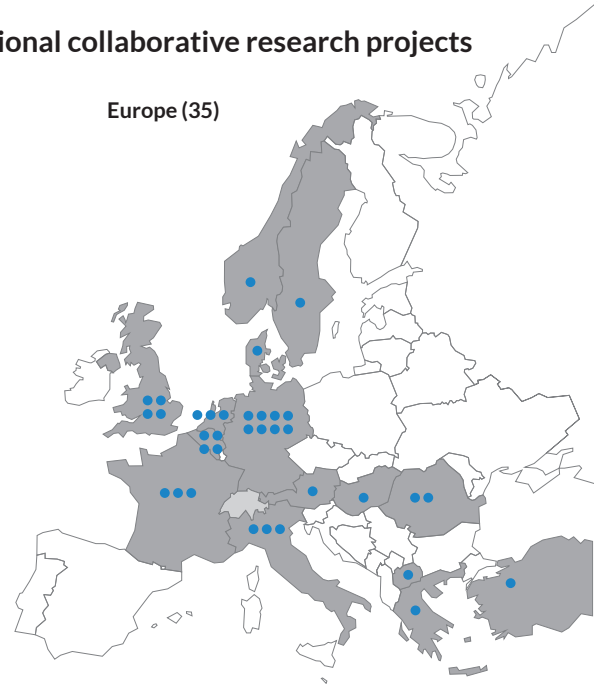
Also see [the full list of 2017 FORS publications and presentations by FORS staff](#).

Number of national and international collaborative research projects

Switzerland (71)



Europe (35)

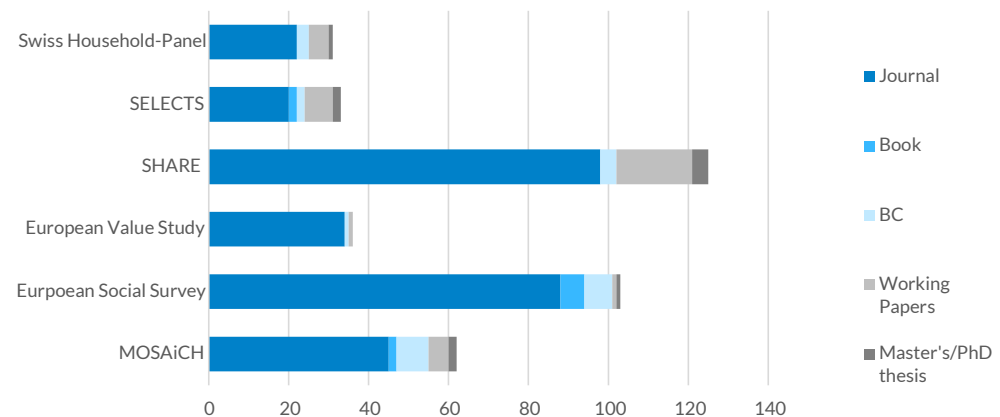


Outside Europe (9)

- North America
- China
- India
- New Zealand
- Taiwan

Only includes projects aiming for publications in peer-reviewed journals. Some projects involve several countries.

Number of publications based on FORS-produced data



Number of hours devoted to teaching by FORS staff

In total, nine FORS staff members taught in 2017. They gave 268 teaching hours in 12 different courses at all academic levels (bachelor, master, and doctoral), as well as in the context of continuing education. The topics covered concerned predominantly data analysis and data management, but also survey methodology. A little more than two-thirds (71%) of the teaching hours were provided in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, about one eighth (13%) in the German-speaking part, and the others (16%) were given abroad (Sri Lanka, Portugal, Morocco).

Events

FORS continues to establish, maintain, and develop scientific networks nationally and internationally.

In 2017 FORS organised again the Swiss Summer School in Social Science Methods and conducted five different conferences and workshops in 2017. In addition, the FORS/LINES research and methods series and the FORS lunch seminars hosted a wide range of speakers.

Swiss Longitudinal Data Fair

The Swiss Longitudinal Data Fair (SDLF) took place in Berne on January 27 and was organised by FORS, NCCR LIVES and our partner infrastructure TREE as local organiser. The Fair included presentations and hands-on sessions based on the following surveys: TREE, SHARE, COUPLES, CoCon, SHP, and ProPas. The participants, mainly doctoral students, were able to learn about the above mentioned major Swiss longitudinal studies in the social sciences and find the data they need for their research projects or doctoral work. The Fair was well attended, with over 100 participants. FORS intends to organise a second edition of the SDLF in 2019.

Workshop «Verknüpfung statistischer Daten – Erfahrungen, Möglichkeiten, Grenzen und Perspektiven»

On April 11, 2017 a workshop co-organized by FORS and the SFSO took place in Lausanne on the topic of linking statistical and survey data. Researchers and collaborators from the NCCR LIVES, the NCCR on the move and the SFSO presented concrete data linkage projects and identified challenges and the potential for new discoveries of linked data. In addition, Prof. Rainer Schnell from the University of Duisburg-Essen presented experiences on data linkage in Germany and Great Britain. Further, a representative from the SFSO explained the current legal framework for linking data in Switzerland and through the SFSO.

9th International Conference of Panel Data Users

The 9th International Conference of Panel Data Users in Switzerland took place at the University of Lausanne on June 6 and 7. Sessions were dedicated to a wide variety of topics: health and well-being, education and labour market, inequality and mobility, family, gender, and generations, politics and attitudes, lifecourse analysis, ethnic minorities and migration, and survey methodology.

In addition to the conference, a practical workshop on the use of the SHP weights was organised.

ISSP General Assembly

The ISSP 2017 Annual Meeting was hosted by FORS and the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lausanne. The event took place on the campus of the University of Lausanne from April 29 to May 3, 2017 to replace Turkey because of the instable political situation. 39 countries attended this meeting. The General Assembly discussed and voted the items of the 2018 Religion module and the topics of the 2019 Social Inequality module. For 2020, a majority accepted the Environment module, a topic previously fielded in 2010. The Methodological Committee, led by Switzerland (re-elected), met previously in Prague, and presented several measures to improve data quality and documentation, such as revisions of some background variables, a control process for duplicates and a “Technical Report” to be used from 2018 edition on. Moreover, eight substantial papers were presented at the research session. The next General Assembly venues will be Guadalajara (Mexico, in 2018) and Delhi (India, in 2019).

Summer School

The 21st Swiss Summer School on Methods in the Social Sciences was held from August 18 to September 1, 2017 at the Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano. The following workshops were offered (number of participants in parenthesis; workshops marked with a * were limited to 10-12):

- » Kelvyn Jones: Multilevel models: Practical applications (14)*
- » Peter Schmidt/Eldad Davidov: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) I (21)
- » Duncan Guest: Analysis of Variance (Anova) (14)
- » Eugene Horber: Statistics with SPSS for Social Scientists (19)
- » Sebastian Kernbach: Design thinking for research (12)
- » Elmar Schlüter: Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling (14)*
- » Karen O'Reilly: Ethnographic Methods. Sociological ethnography in practice (12)*
- » Michael Gibbert: Case Studies: Design, Methods, and Reporting (12)*

The optional two-day workshops preceding the Summer School had 13 (E. Horber: SPSS/Statistics refresher workshop) and 9 (S. Kernbach: Visual Thinking for Researchers*) participants.

9% of the 115 participants attended two full-week courses. 78% of the participants were PhD Students. The largest groups of this year's participants are working in the field of Education (19%), Business Studies (18%), Psychology (17%), Communication Sciences (12%), followed by Sociology (9%) and Political Science (7%). 12% of the participants were from foreign

universities or institutions, namely Italy (3), UK (3), Croatia (3), Germany (2), Italy (2), Czech Republic (2), the Netherlands, Poland, and Sweden.

6th edition of the Swiss Qualitative Methods Festival

FORS, the University of Lausanne, NCCR LIVES, the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (ASSH) and the Swiss Association for qualitative social research organised a successful 6th edition of the Swiss Methods Festival, held at the University of Lausanne September 14-15. According to a formula now well established, the Festival presented recent innovations in the field of qualitative and mixed methods. Devoted to ethical questions, there were various workshops and plenary sessions over two days. The debates were lively and the keynote speech and round tables were particularly appreciated. The two-day event attracted over 100 participants. Several new collaborations developed out of the Festival. First, DARIS was solicited to contribute to the organisation of a colloquium on ethics and qualitative methods, in partnership with different institutes of the University of Lausanne in 2018. Second, DARIS was asked to organise a CUSO training on archiving and anonymization of qualitative data, in partnership with the IEPHI and the beQuali team (Science Po, Paris).

12th Conference “Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe”

The theme of the 12th Conference “Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe” at Villa Vigoni, Lovenjo di Mennagio, October 23-25, 2017 was Resilience: An Asset in Difficult Times? In a most general sense, resilience may be defined as the ability to cope with critical states and forces like shocks, conflicts and stress, challenging the stability of systems such as communities, cities and societies, or – at the micro level – possibly also individuals and households. Resilience may thus be considered a desirable quality, particularly in time periods characterised by rapid and far reaching change, conflicts and instabilities. Bringing together 22 experts and researchers from all around Europe, the conference had a focus on the concept of resilience and its measurement in terms of indicators and/or survey instruments. As in previous years, FORS supported the conference financially and by hosting the website. For this year’s conference FORS paid for the welcome dinner for all participants and the travel and accommodation costs for one invited speaker. FORS will not continue this support in the future as a consequence of not continuing with the Social Report.

9th Annual European Data Documentation Initiative User Conference EDDI17

On December 5 and 6, FORS together with GESIS and IDSC of IZA (International Data Service Center of the Institute for the Study of Labor) organised the European Data Documentation Initiative User Conference

EDDI17 in Lausanne. The Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) is an international standard for describing the data produced by surveys and other observational methods in the social, behavioral, economic, and health sciences. The conference brought together DDI users and professionals from all over Europe and the world. Anyone interested in developing, applying, or using DDI was invited to attend and present. DARIS staff served on both the programme and organisation committees. The conference provided presentations on a wide range of topics relating to DDI, like case studies, mature and early implementations, interplay of DDI with other standards or technologies, projects in early phases in which DDI was under consideration, or critiques of DDI. Several conference workshops were organised before the start of the conference on various DDI topics and attended by the conference participants. Keynote speaker Ron Dekker, Director of CESSDA ERIC. The conference attracted 93 participants from 51 organisations (32 academic – thereof 19 archives, 11 official statistics, 4 supranational, 4 commercial) in 20 countries.

Methods and Research Meetings

The Methods and Research Meetings are a joint seminar series organised by FORS and the Faculty of social and political sciences (SSP). The meetings are a discussion platform where talks cover substantive research raising methodological questions. The full list of the speakers and presentations can be consulted on the FORS Methods and Research Meetings webpage.

FORS Lunch seminars

Initially the monthly FORS lunch seminars were held to foster scholarly exchange between FORS researchers and to profit from their diverse scientific and cultural backgrounds. Over time, researchers from outside of FORS were invited to present their research findings, as the 2017 [Lunch seminar programme](#) illustrates.

7. FORS Governance

Foundation Board

[The Foundation Board](#) is FORS' governing body. It is chaired by a representative of the host university, Prof. François Bussy, who serves as President to the Foundation. The Board consists of eight full members representing the key stakeholders (universities, the SFSO, and the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences), and two observers from the most important funding bodies (the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), and the SNSF).

In 2017 the Foundation Board met twice. In March, at a joint meeting with the FORS Scientific Board, the two boards discussed for the first time the future strategy of FORS, however, without taking any decisions. During the March 2017 board meeting, the Board audited the accounts and the Annual Report 2016 and also validated the four-year plan for 2017-2020.

The Foundation Board also formed a committee with five members with the task of developing a strategy on the potential future funding of the FORS surveys. The elaboration of such a strategy was requested in the service contract between FORS and the SERI for the period 2017-2020. This subgroup established a paper that outlined the main requirements for the future funding of the FORS surveys. A long-term perspective for the funding of FORS surveys and an adapted funding and evaluation instruments are of utmost importance. In a joint meeting with representatives from the SERI, the SNSF, the Swiss Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities (SAGW), two solutions were considered as realistic – a continued funding through the SNSF or a funding through the SAGW. The SERI has requested that the SNSF discuss with FORS the future funding of FORS surveys beyond 2020.

During the meeting in November, the Foundation Board welcomed Prof. Petra Klumb to the board as a new member from the SAGW. During this meeting, the Foundation Board also voted on a new mandate for the MOSAiCH commission and elected the members for this commission. The Board approved the FORS budget for 2018.

Scientific Board

[The Scientific Board](#) had a two-day meeting on March 21 and 22 for the first time under its new chair Prof. Mick Couper, who succeeded Prof. Max Kaase. This meeting also marked the last session of several members that served on the scientific board for many years. The new chair and the Director thanked Prof. Klaus Armingeon, Prof. Christoph Mäder, Prof. Roxane Silverman, Prof. Jorge Vala and Prof. Milad Zarin-Nejadan for their valuable contributions to

FORS. The Foundation Board then elected five new members to the board, Dr. Louise Corti, Prof. Eszter Hargittai, Prof. Ben Jann, Dr. Arja Kuula-Luumi, and Prof. Sonja Zmerli.

During the meeting the director presented the Annual Report for the preceding year, and the Scientific Board endorsed the Annual Report 2016. The Board then discussed the possible design of the MOSAiCH 2.0 survey and gave valuable advice on how to build this survey (see chapter 2.2 for further details). While the move towards an online data collection was considered as very feasible, it was noted that FORS should be careful not to design a new long-term online panel but rather opt for one or two follow-up waves. To build a proper online-panel would require substantially more resources than were available for this project. The Scientific Advisory Board also discussed the proposal for an online-experiment around the European Value Study in 2017. The main purpose of this pilot is to test how to deal with long-term surveys. One of the sub-samples will be a one-hour survey, while for other sub-samples the questionnaire is split into different panel waves using a matrix design.

Executive Board The FORS Executive Board is chaired by the Director and comprises the heads of the units Surveys, Data and Research Information Services, and Support. The Executive Board meets twice a month. Decisions are minuted, and the minutes are sent to the President of the Foundation Board to keep him posted on current affairs.

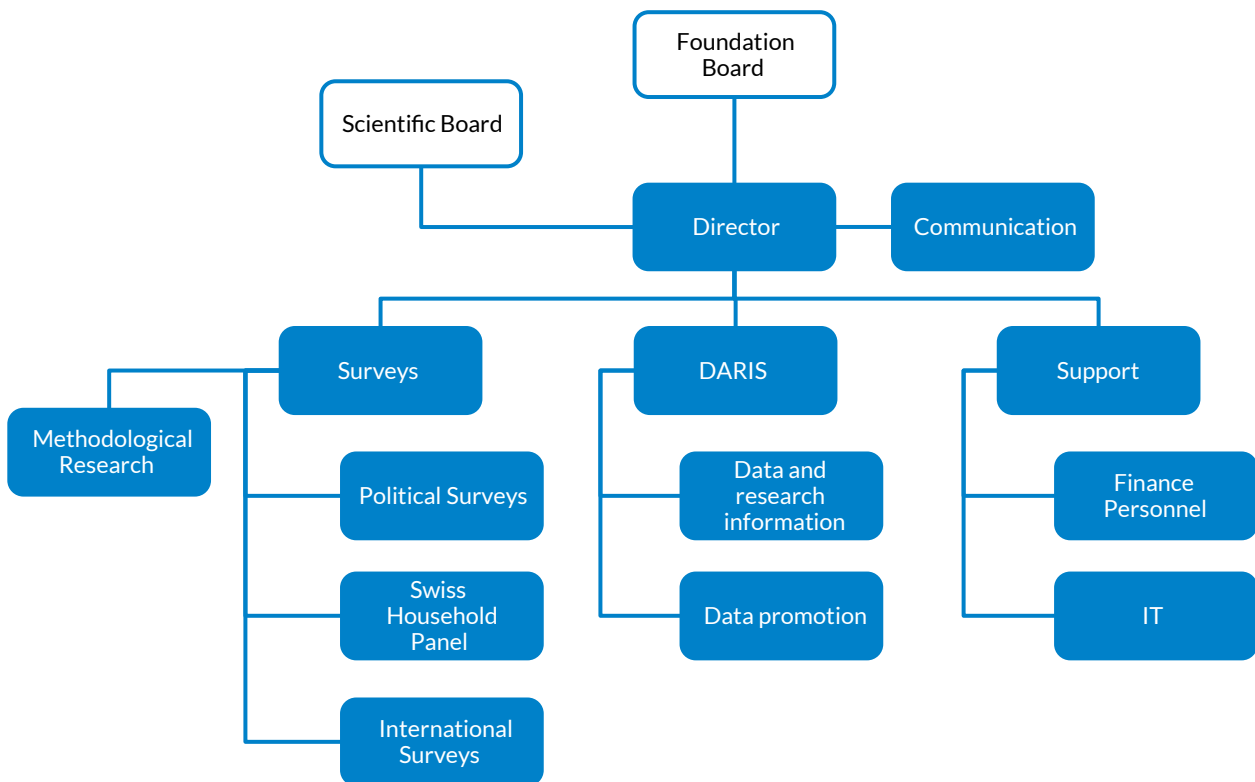
The Executive board discussed on different occasions the general strategic orientation of FORS. FORS will have to respond to various challenges in data collection and services required by the scientific community, as well as find its place for its data services in the Swiss and European information landscape. In 2017 FORS concluded the four-year plan 2017-2020, which is the basis for subsidy from the State Secretariat of Education, Research and Innovation. FORS was submitted to VAT in early 2017 for the first time. This required a change of the bookkeeping software and a transfer to the new software.

Contact points FORS' goal has always been to maintain proximity to research to offer researchers the best possible services and to provide their own expertise to a wide range of interested parties. FORS also aims to work sustainably in a demand-oriented way, to cover local needs, and to design tailor-made services. Regular exchanges with universities and applied universities are, thus, indispensable. With the establishment of the [FORS contact points](#) in 2008, FORS has created a valuable link to the social sciences landscape. Researchers can contact a competent contact person with questions about

our services directly at their own institution. All through 2017, the contact points were regularly informed about our activities, workshops, and other communications.

The network initially comprised 17 contacts. In 2017 the Haute école de santé Fribourg (HEdSFR) joined the network to currently arrive at 29 contacts. In addition to our core discipline, representatives in the domains of educational and political sciences, social work, gerontology, communication, psychology, media studies, journalism, or computational sciences could be engaged.

Organisational chart



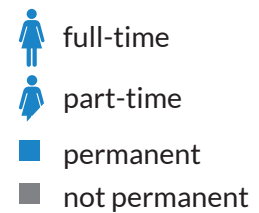
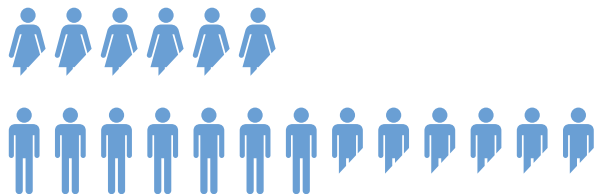
8. Staff statistics & finance

Status of employment

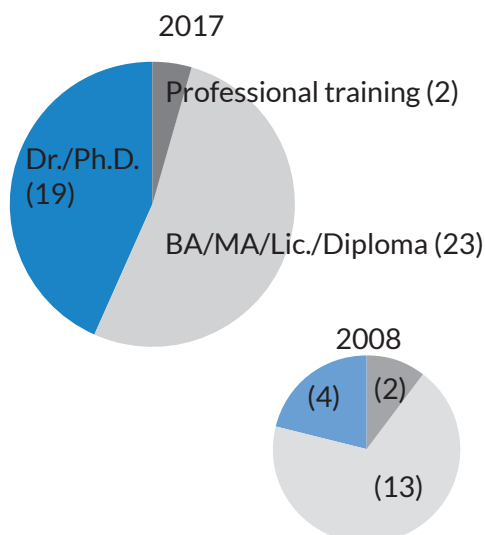
31.12.2017 (44 employees, 35.5 full-time equivalents)



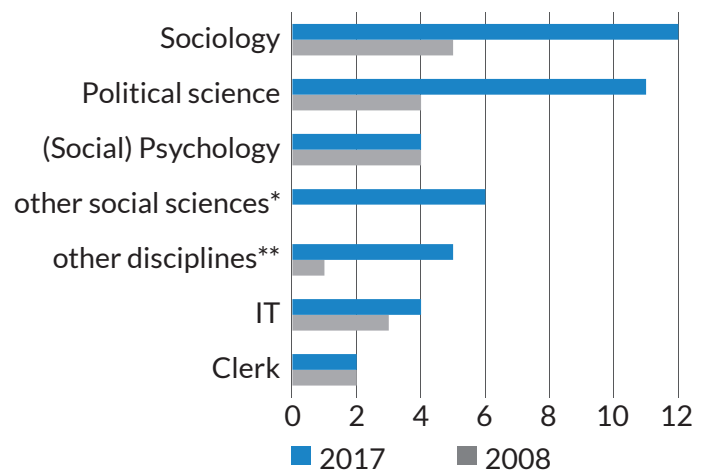
01.01.2008 (19 employees, 15.7 full-time equivalents)



Level of education



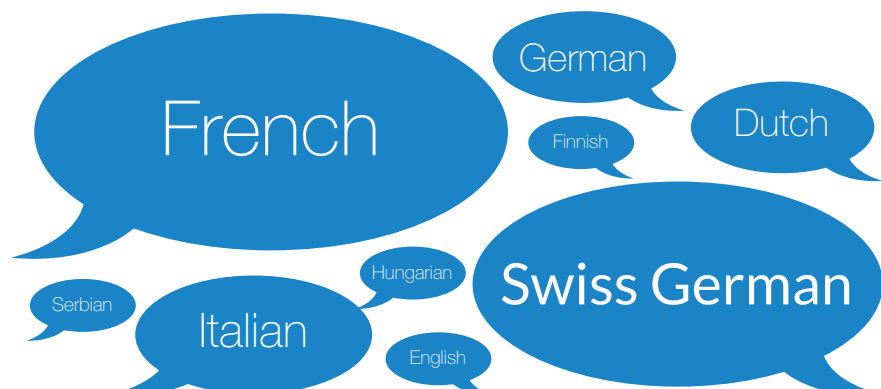
Disciplines



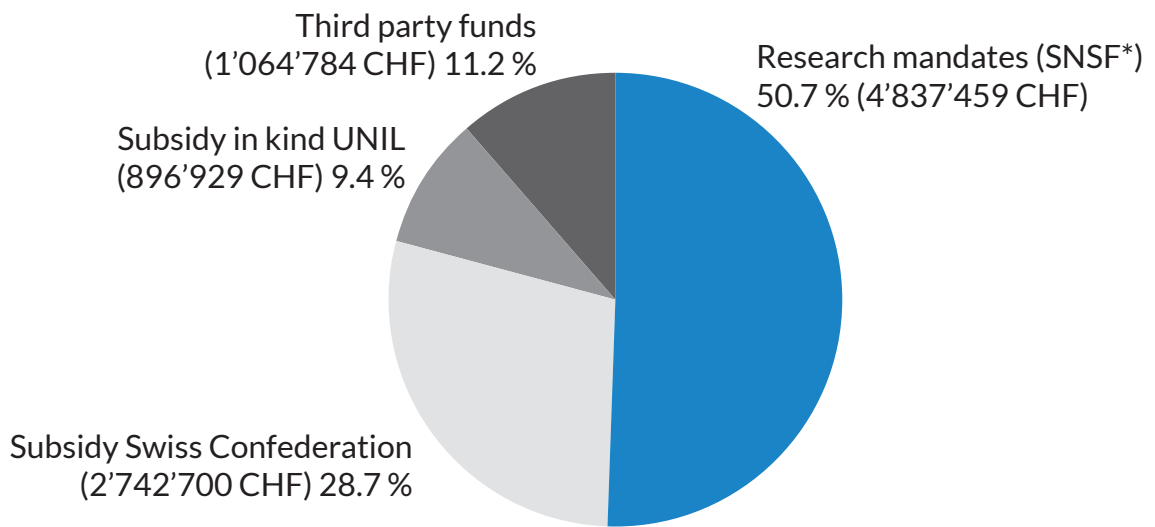
* Economics, communications, education, anthropology, human geography
 ** Statistics, mathematics, linguistics, arts, archival and library science

Nationalities and first languages 2017

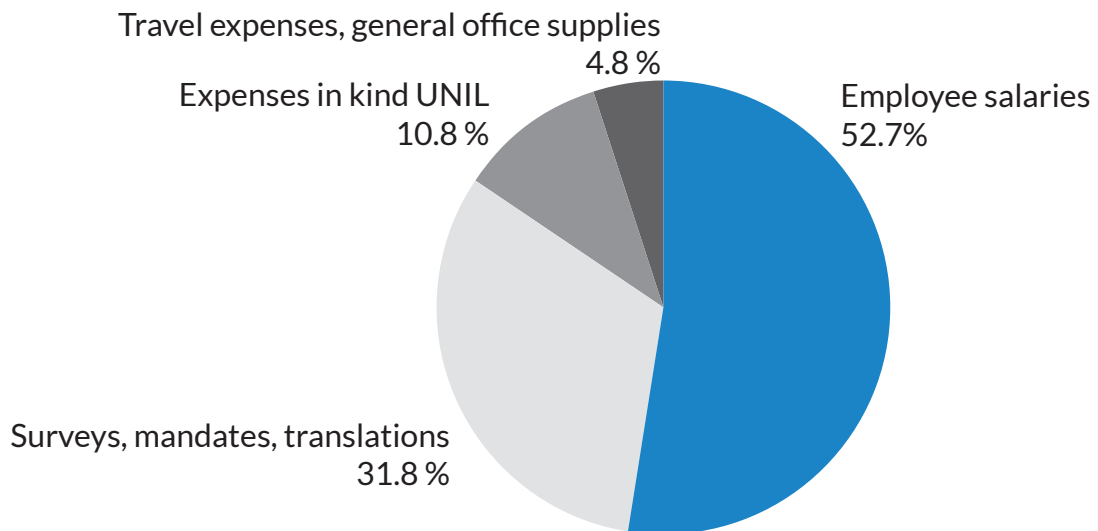
- 32 Swiss
- 3 German
- 3 Italian
- 2 Dutch
- 1 French
- 1 Hungarian
- 1 Luxembourger
- 1 Serb
- 1 American



Income



Expenses



*Swiss National Science Foundation

9. List of Abbreviations

CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CAWI	Computer-Aided Web Interview
CCS	Comparative Candidate Survey
CESSDA	Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives
ch-x	Swiss Federal Surveys of Adolescents
CNEF	Cross-National Equivalent File
CoCon	Swiss Survey on Children and Youth
COUPLES	Cohesion, and Conflict in Contemporary Couples
CSES	Study of Electoral Systems
DDI	Data Documentation Initiative
DMP	Data Management Plan
ERIC	European Research Infrastructure Consortium
ESFRI	European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
ESS	European Social Survey
EVS	European Values Study
FOPH	Swiss Federal Office of Public Health
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IEPHI	Institut d'études politiques, historiques et internationales (UNIL)
ISSP	International Social Survey Programme
LINES	Life Course and Inequality Research Centre (U Lausanne)
LIS	Cross-national Data Center in Luxembourg
LIVES	Overcoming Vulnerability – Life Course Perspectives
MEA	The Munich Center for the Economics of Aging
MEOP	Public Opinion and Survey Methodology
MOSAiCH	Measurement and Observation of Social Attitudes in Switzerland
MTMM	Multitrait - Multimethod design
NCCR	National Centre of Competence in Research
PAWCER	Public Attitudes to Welfare, Climate Change and Energy in the EU and Russia
ProPaS	Professional Paths Survey
PUMA	Plattform für Umfragen, Methoden und empirische Analysen
r4d programme	The Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development
SAGW	Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences
SEEDS	South-Eastern European Data Services
SELECTS	Swiss Electoral Studies
SERI	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
SERISS	Synergies for European Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences
SFSO	Swiss Federal Statistical Office
SHARE	Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe

SHP	Swiss Household Panel
SIDOS	Swiss Data Archive
SMIF	Survey Methods: Insights from the Field
SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
ÜGK	ÜGK Überprüfung des Erreichens der Grundkompetenzen
vsms-asms	Association of Swiss Social and Market Research
ZDA	Zentrum für Demokratie Aarau

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