National Development Plan

LATVIA

November 2017

The Latvian Social Sciences Data Archive

LSZDA
Latvijas Sociālo zinātņu datu arhīvs
The Latvian Social sciences data archive

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Introduction

This first plan for establishing a national data service for the social sciences in Latvia has been developed by a task force of Latvian Sociological Association (LSA):

- » Dr. sc. soc. Jānis Daugavietis, Member of the Board of the Latvian Sociological Association; Researcher at Department of Theatre, Music and Cinema Art, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art – University of Latvia, Riga (Janis.Daugavietis@lulfmi.lv);
- » Dr. sc. soc. Baiba Bela, Chair of the Latvian Sociological Association; Associate Professor and Senior Researcher, University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology and Advanced Political and Social Research Institute, Riga (Baiba.Bela@lu.lv);
- » Ma. sc. soc. Ilze Lāce, Data Manager/Research Coordinator Social Sciences at the Swedish National Data Service, Gothenburg, Sweden, and Member of the Latvian Sociological Association (Ilze.Lace@gu.se);
- » Dr. sc. soc. Miķelis Grīviņš, Member of the Board of the Latvian Sociological Association and Researcher at the Baltic Studies Centre, Riga (Mikelis.Grivins@gmail.com).

The plan was also informed by informal talks and consultations with other local stakeholders and representatives of the potential data archive service (DAS):

- » Prof. Jānis Ikstens, Vice-rector of social and legal sciences at the University of Latvia – as a representative of a possible host university for a data archive/institutional repository serving as a national social sciences DAS;
- » Dr. Andrejs Ivanovs, head of the Statistical Laboratory of Riga Stradins University – a possible co-host for a national social and health sciences data archive;
- » Jānis Kreicbergs, Digital Services Project Manager at the Maintenance Department of the National Library of Latvia;
- » Kirstīne Robežniece, Head of 'Academia'– academic open access repository of the National Library of Latvia (https://academia.lndb.lv);
- » Retired prof. Aivars Tabuns, founder and head of the Latvian Social Science Data Archive (1996-~2009)[1];
- » Ilga Rampāne, system librarian of The Library of the University of Latvia (http://www.biblioteka.lu.lv/eng), representative of 'E-resource repository of the University of Latvia' (https://dspace.lu.lv), consultant at the National Open Access Desk (http://www.napd.lu.lv).

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1   https://web.archive.org/web/20050205145544/http://www.lszda.lv:80/index.php?akt=40&val=ENG (acc. 03.10.2017)

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This plan was created within the project CESSDA Strengthening and Widening (http://cessdasaw. eu) following the *Guide for the elaboration of national data service development plans[2]*. The plan is divided into three main sections (Mission statement, General features of the data service and Resources and challenges), which address larger strategic considerations in conceiving and establishing a national data service. In the first two sections we develop a "concept" for a future national data service, that is, the model and key features that are to be put into place. In the third section, the previously developed concept is evaluated in relation to realities on the ground, including probable resources and challenges for setting up and maintaining a viable data service over time.

The recent activities of the Latvian Sociological Association (LSA) towards establishing an archive

The Latvian Social Sciences Data Archive (LSSDA or Latvijas Sociālo zinātņu datu arhīvs in Latvian) was established and functioning at a basic level since 1996 until ~2009. Since 2016, LSA is actively meeting key actors and opening discussions about the establishment of a new national data archive for the social sciences in Latvia.

After discussing with several institutions/agents (most often representatives of the structures of the biggest public university – University of Latvia – such as the University Library, DSpace repository and National Library of Latvia) that have shown interest in this project, we feel that there is support for the idea at an institutional level.

12.02.2016 Open discussion on the accessibility of publicly funded research data in the social sciences in Latvia. Not counting prominent participants from academia and private sociological research firms, the event was attended by high-ranking state officials, such as the director of the State Chancellery Mārtiņš Krieviņš; Director of the the Higher Education, Science and Innovation Department – Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia Agrita Kiopa; Head of division at the Cross-sectorial coordination centre – Vladislavs Vesperis. Riga, Latvia.

02.06.2016 Informal meeting between Max Petzold (Director of the Swedish National Data Service) and two members of the Board of the Latvian Sociological Association – Miķelis Grīviņš and Jānis Daugavietis. Riga, Latvia.

18.08.2016 Discussion on archiving of social science data with officials of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia – Vairis Lejiņš and Kaspars Veldre, ICT Department; Agrita

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2   https://www.cessda.eu/content/download/1065/9156/file/CESSDA%20SaW-3.3-guide.pdf (acc. 26.10.2017)

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Kiopa, Dmitrijs Stepanovs and Inese Ilmere-Grospine, Higher Education, Science and Innovation Department; Kristīne Robežniece and Jana Ķikāne from the National Library; Baiba Bela, Miķelis Grīviņš, Inta Mieriņa, Oksana Žabko from the Latvian Sociological Association. Riga, Latvia.

23.05.2017   Discussion on archiving social science data with the leading stakeholders from academic and public institutions, including Prof. Jānis Ikstens (vice-rector of social and legal sciences at the University of Latvia), leading scientists from the social sciences (sociology, political science, education and psychology), University of Latvia Library specialists, experts from the Ministry of Education, Central Statistical Bureau, the National Library of Latvia and the Riga Stradiņš University. Riga, Latvia.

14.06.2017   Consultations and advocacy for interests of social science community with the State Chancellery Department for Public Administration Policy Change Management Division and their work on the Third National Action Plan of Latvia on Open Government Partnership (https://www.opengovpartnership.org). Riga, Latvia.

2017   Attendance of CESSDA SaW meetings in Zagreb, Lisbon and Dublin by Jānis Daugavietis (Member of the Board of LSA).

The aim of this plan

The aim of recent activities (including elaborating this plan) of LSA is the establishment of a functioning national archive for social science research data, with the goal of joining CESSDA ERIC. We, users of data (researchers at public and private institutions and students amongst others), feel an urgent need for FAIR[3] social science data.

Social science researchers in Latvia often encounter the situation whereby data for secondary use can only be accessed via personal contacts, and that the formal and transparent channels do not work, meaning that there are no systematic solutions or routines for archiving and publishing data for secondary analysis. The previous DAS initiative did not succeed due to several reasons, including a lack of economic and institutional sustainability and a general lack of understanding of the importance of open access to research data. However, today, the principles of open science and related aspects are gaining wider recognition. Open access to research data is an essential and necessary precondition for full integration of Latvian research community in the European Research Area. Data archiving on a national level facilitates accessibility of data for

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3   Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-usable (See for example 'Guidelines on FAIR Data Management in Horizon 2020' http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h202_0/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt_en.pdf; acc. 17.11.2017).

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secondary analysis, increases the impact created by research projects, and contributes to the practical application of research results, fair competition in research, research integrity and the quality of social science research in general.

This plan plays an essential part in restoring a functioning social science data archive in the country. It can and will be used in negotiations with relevant stakeholders, and can be used as a starting point to elaborate cooperation agreements, and also estimate costs and resources for different functions.

It should, therefore, be considered as a 'living' document, and will be updated following new developments.

Mission

The mission of the Latvian Social Sciences Data Archive is to provide access and preserve social science data in the long-term. The value which we will bring to the national scientific community is to reduce fragmentation as well as to provide easier access to high-quality research data and a more effective use of limited resources. We also intend to achieve national coverage in the provision of data and to join relevant European Research Infrastructures.

The definition of an archive's work and its benefits provided by the previous Latvian social sciences data archive is complete and full of sense in our view:

> *"Archive has cultural and historical (acquisition and long-term preservation of standardized and highly processed social science data, which describe Latvia or social investigators who study Latvia), social (facilitate the development of Latvian social science and provide open and equitable access to the results of researches, promote disseminating data and documentation), scientific (make data easily accessible for secondary analyses, increase quality of researches and credibility of research results), educational (serve for informative base of teaching activities in social sciences), financial (promote in better utilization of finance resources assigned to the investigation) objectives."* (LSSDA description, 2005)[4]

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4   https://web.archive.org/web/20050205145544/http://www.lszda.lv:80/index.php?akt=40&val=ENG (acc. 14.10.2017)

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General features of the data service

Definition of organisation

The Latvian Social Sciences Data Archive (Latvijas Sociālo zinātņu datu arhīvs in Latvian) will acquire, preserve and disseminate publicly-funded (primarily, but not only) social science research data produced in Latvia, about Latvia, and/or by Latvian researchers.

Scope of collection

The Latvian social sciences data archive will primarily archive social sciences data. This includes traditional-scale quantitative and qualitative data. The primary focus will be on quantitative data (surveys and several registers) in the disciplines of sociology, political science, education science, communication science, psychology, library and information science, public health, and economics. Qualitative data will be collected at a later stage, with more careful selection and with consideration given to available resources.

Services and activities

The main services will be:

- » selecting and acquiring data;
- » processing and cataloguing data and documentation;
- » data dissemination;
- » digital preservation and the development and maintenance of technical systems;
- » education and support for depositors (how to manage data, data management plan) and users (how and why to use data for secondary research).

Additional services and activities to be developed at a later stage when the archive has established itself in the academia and reached some organizational maturity, include support, advice and trainings for data depositors (how to prepare data for inclusion in the archive, how to deposit prepared data) and for data users (how to find data in the catalogue, how to download data), as well as data management trainings for researchers, promotional and outreach activities, and setting up regional collaboration and network of service users.

Beneficiaries

The services offered by the archive are aimed at university researchers and lecturers, as well

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as students (doctoral, master and bachelor), researchers from other public institutions (e.g. scientific institutes, government agencies), researchers from private institutions (NGOs, private research companies, newspapers, businesses, associations, etc.), secondary school teachers and pupils, as well as policy makers, journalists and the general public.

Governance structure

As the data archive is currently only in the developmental phase, i.e. an informal interest group with negotiations with potential host institutions, this section is rather vague. To ensure the successful functioning of a social science data archive, it is necessary that the data service is closely related to/embedded in the social science research community. This will be achieved by establishing a Scientific Advisory Board with an advisory function in strategic decisions. Representatives of other relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Education and Science, National Library of Latvia, other national research infrastructures, etc.) may also be included.

To ensure effective administrative governance, a Board/Working Group (or another governance structure) should include representatives from host institution(s). Another aspect of successful functioning is administrative access to efficient IT-development resources and an appropriate technical infrastructure. If these resources are provided by an organisational unit or institution outside LSSDA (for example, by another organisational unit of host institution), this unit or institution should be included in decision-making bodies as well.

Financing schemes

Currently there are no funds and all preceding activities have been on a voluntary basis. When planning the next steps, we will look for seed money (grants) and/or political and technical support as follows:

- » Latvian Council of Science grant schemes
- » University of Latvia
- » Latvian Sociological Association
- » Bi- and multilateral EU, Nordic, EES schemes
- » CESSDA (active lobbying of CESSDA ERIC to become part of National ESFRI roadmap of Latvia would mean stable financing to the data archive as a Service Provider)

Resources and challenges

State of the art and recent developments

Support to archiving and to providing access to the results of scientific activity and research data are mentioned in several Latvian political planning documents on science and cultural heritage policies. However, support to archiving and providing access to research data in these documents seems to be somewhat marginal and general. Several initiatives to implement these ideas have emerged and existed over time. A short overview of the policy framework for archiving and dissemination of social science research data as well as open access to research data in Latvia is available in CESSDA SaW deliverable 3.2[5].

Host institution of the future data service

The data archive should be housed within a larger existing public/research organisation (most probably – a publicly funded university, institute or library), but its services will be available to the whole community, national and international.

Alternatively, an institutional repository in a smaller academic (sub)institution using DataVerse could be a temporary solution to the situation or a starting point to develop a systematically-funded project. This alternative could require having a solution for sustainability issues, as that would most probably be project funded.

We have, until now, identified a list of potential stakeholders that could be involved in the development of LSSDA, namely, the University of Latvia, Riga Stradiņš University, the National Library of Latvia (see list of LSA activities in the beginning; see CESSDA SaW D 3.2., National report Latvia). Another important stakeholder is the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Latvia (IMCS UL). It provides sustainable e-Infrastructure for research, and has longstanding traditions in developing and maintaining progressive ICT infrastructure and providing public services in related areas (http://www.lumii.lv/resource/show/181). It has recently been chosen as the partner that will be developing infrastructure for the national CLARIN centre of Latvia.

Human resources and internal structure

The archive is currently being developed by an informal group of activists. The initiative does not have any official employees or internal structure. However, we have been discussing the level of functioning achievable with the resources that we judge to be realistically available, i.e. what would be realistic in potential host institutions, and what the data flow would be, and what level of service could be achieved in each of them.

Until LSSDA is formally established and receives stable funding, the localisation, documentation and archiving of social science research data could be started via small-scale projects with a focus on particular collections, professional organisations of academics, research institutes, etc. That would provide time to train researchers in RDM, test workflows in data documentation and archiving, and identify appropriate archiving solutions. These activities should not need too much external funding and could, hopefully receive support from national research funders, academic organisations, or crowdsourcing in research communities.

Partner support and cooperation

Whichever institution will take the leading role, the wider network should be established. Potential national partners and main stakeholders are state-funded higher education institutions (those with social science faculties and research institutes) – the University of Latvia, Riga Stradiņš University, Daugavpils University, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Riga Technical University, The Latvia University of Agriculture, as well governmental bodies dealing with science and data production and preserving – the Ministry of Science and Education, Cross-sectoral Coordination Centre, Ministry of Culture, the National Library of Latvia and the Central Statistical Bureau.

Within a wider network of stakeholders – private research organisations/enterprises – the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, the Baltic Study Centre, etc. (doing a lots of publicly-funded research); professional associations of social scientists (such as the Latvian Sociological Association or the Latvian Association of Political Scientists); the Association of Latvian Young Scientists; data activists such as Datuskola (part of the School of Data international network) and other NGOs like Providus or the Latvian Centre of Human Rights, which are also carrying out research or are interested in the use of social science research data.

Under present conditions and given the amount of state funding for the social sciences in Latvia, there is little hope for financial support from possible partners, at least, as long there are no financial incentives for data management and data dissemination by research funders.

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However, cooperation is of great importance to ensure that scientists really use an archive as data depositors and that potential users are informed about possibilities offered by the archive. The declaration of interest and cooperation in social science data archiving itself could be seen as partner contribution and as evidence that the idea to establish a social science data archive can be taken seriously by possible future funding institutions.

At an international level, closer cooperation and involvement in CESSDA ERIC activities could be established. Broader cooperation can also be developed with national social science data archives in other countries at a later stage.

Specific local resources and challenges

Specific local challenges and obstacles:

» Latvia has the third smallest gross domestic expenditure on R&D.

» The social sciences were not one of the prioritised research disciplines in the previous national science planning periods.

» The shrinking population of Latvia: Universities have been facing a shortfall of students in recent years, as a result of a drop in the number of young people in the country. It means both a reduced budget for and income in academia. For this reason alone, a data archive would be a good solution to focus on intensive reuse of already existing data (instead of extensive and often redundant data collection activities).

» The preoccupation of some stakeholders with a simplified and idealistic ideology of free and open access, whereby: data should be available for free and the process of data depositing can rely on the voluntary actions taken by the scientific community, with a little help from librarians and archivists, and without the need for additional resources.

» A few state- or university-owned repositories and information systems/networks already exist or are in the process of being built. These provide a basic level of services in acquisition, preservation and dissemination of different data. They are, however, universal and not sophisticated, not adapted (and not adaptable) to the special needs of research data. Those projects have received significant financial support and the responsible institutions (e.g. Ministry of Education) are not currently prepared to support another new and specific data archive/information system.

» Current national legislation requires that the data of publicly-funded research is deposited and made available. However, it would appear that the rules are not sufficiently clear or detailed enough to ensure that this actually takes place.

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Possible solutions:

» Start to (re)build an archive on a grant or project basis. Since it's (re)established and got some credibility, start to apply for longer-term grants.

» Change the discourse and praxis in the field of data depositing by using national and EU level documentation and strategies as arguments.

» Clarify legislation regarding the deposit of publicly-funded data and lobby for more specific requirements from research funders regarding data management and publication, in line with Open Access guidelines (e.g. EU Horizon 2020 Open Data pilot or the OECD guidelines from 2009). The issue, however, might be that the Research Council as funder is far from only one.

Opportunities:

» The Latvian Social sciences data archive (Latvijas Sociālo zinātņu datu arhīvs) was established and functioning at least at some base level since 1996 until ~2009. It gives us institutional memory and at least virtual structure, some already archived data sets, some international contacts and after all – we can learn from the past mistakes and successes.

» The Latvian social science community is relatively small and networked.

» "Research data production in Latvia can be regarded as developed, as there are well established traditions of producing both national and international research data."[6]

» Data sharing is quite commonly practised in the Latvian social science community, although mainly informally contacts.

» The framework around the social sciences in Latvia desperately needs to achieve next level – enter the western/global academic field. A social data archive, which is connected internationally and is active within established networks, would improve the credibility of Latvian scientists.

» National funding institutions recently started to require a Data Management Plan from the research projects that they fund. Furthermore, national legislation requires that the data of publicly-funded research is deposited and made available. The Third National Action Plan on Open Government Partnership has commitments related to data archiving.

» The social sciences were not one of the prioritised research disciplines in the previous national science planning periods. However, they receive increased attention in the country's new strategy, where five out of eight of Latvia's Research Priorities 2018-2021 include the social sciences to some extent[7].

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6   http://cessdasaw.eu/content/uploads/2017/07/D3.2_CESSDA_SaW_v1.3.pdf (acc. 18.10.2017)
7   http://izm.gov.lv/en/highlights/2616-latvia-s-research-priorities-2018-2021 (acc. 18.10.2017)

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