Dear data users, dear colleagues,

With this second LIfBi data newsletter we are happy to provide you with an overview of recent developments over the past year and inform you about future projects in 2016.

There will be a number of NEPS-related activities happening this year, ranging from the steady expansion of the database through the release of new Scientific Use Files for all six NEPS starting cohorts and the continuation of our well-established series of user trainings to the installation of a user forum for a direct exchange between data users as well as conducting a user survey to improve our services.

An important event in 2016 will be the first international NEPS User Conference taking place at the Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories (LIfBi) in Bamberg on July 07-08. Part of this conference will be an award presentation to honor the best scientific publication generated on the basis of NEPS data.

With this in mind, I would like to remind all NEPS data users to send a short notification to the FDZ-LIfBi to inform us of each publication that refers to NEPS data as well as any changes with regard to the NEPS data use agreements (such as change of affiliation, change of contact details, premature termination, etc.).

With best wishes for a successful New Year,

Daniel Fuß
FDZ-LIfBi

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Data Provision

At present, the LiFbi data portfolio consists of the six starting cohorts and the two additional school-reform studies of the National Educational Panel Survey (NEPS). This research data infrastructure is permanently extended and updated by the continuous release of new Scientific Use Files to the national and international scientific community.

In order to achieve a maximum of usability without disregarding the complexity of NEPS data, the FDZ-LiFbi puts much effort into constant quality and process improvement. All data users are invited to assist us in these efforts. Should you discover any errors or inconsistencies in the data, or if you have any suggestions for optimizing the NEPS data products, please contact us.

Data Releases 2015

With the first release of data from the newborns sample (SC1) in March 2015, the complete range of NEPS studies has become accessible for scientific use. Since the second release of data from this sample in November 2015, all six starting cohorts are now available with longitudinal panel information. In total, six new and two updated Scientific Use Files were published in 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Use File</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Release</th>
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<tr>
<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 1 (Early Childhood)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0.0</td>
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<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 3 (Grade 5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5.1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEPS Additional Study BW (Baden-Wuerttemberg)*</td>
<td>3.0.0</td>
<td>03/2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* cross-sectional survey with three measurements

Forthcoming Data Releases 2016

Several new survey waves are expected to be edited and published within the next 12 months. The data release plan indicates 10 Scientific Use Files in 2016. Due to several reasons, two releases from the last year had to be postponed but will be completed by the beginning of this year (SC4:6.0.0 / SC5:6.0.0). As before, each data publication will be announced by a separate e-mail. By the end of 2016, data from altogether 41 survey waves distributed across six panel and two additional studies will have been made available, thus establishing a rich data source for empirical research on educational trajectories and competence development over the life span.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Use File</th>
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<td>08/2016</td>
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<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 4 (Grade 9)</td>
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<td>7.0.0</td>
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<td>8.0.0</td>
<td>11/2016</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>10/2016</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* postponed from 2015
Availability of the Federal State Variable

It had been a long-standing requirement on behalf of the scientific community to ease existing restrictions on using information about Federal State affiliations in conjunction with data collected in the starting cohorts of schools and higher education institutions (SC2, SC3, SC4, SC5). As a result of constructive discussions, a procedure was approved in agreement with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK) and implemented over the last 12 months. According to this procedure, the Federal State variable is now being provided for NEPS data users via remote or on-site access in the above-mentioned starting cohorts. This information is available for control purposes, for incorporating contextual characteristics or other third-party variables at this level, for sample descriptions, and for comparing aggregated groups of Federal States where at least two states are combined to form a single meaningful group with regard to substantive issues. Although analyses aiming at a direct Federal State comparison, direct conclusions to be drawn about a Federal State, or a reconstruction of the concrete Federal State affiliation of persons, households, and institutions are still not allowed, the integration of a Federal State identifier in recently Scientific Use Files represents a substantial enhancement of the analytical potential of NEPS data.

Federal State Variable

Update to Stata 14

At the end of 2015, all Stata licenses of LIfBi’s remote and on-site services were updated to Stata 14. This license change has two consequences for NEPS data users: First, all Stata files (do-files, dataset files, etc.) that were created in our secure RemoteNEPS or on-site environment need to be converted once to be reused in the new version. Second, all previous and future Scientific Use Files will be provided with converted Stata 14 data files in addition to the conventional SPSS and Stata 12 data files. The same applies to the Semantic Data Structure Files.

This one-time conversion process into Stata 14 is necessary due to a change in Stata’s internal character encoding from ASCII to Unicode (UTF-8). The conversion makes sure that German umlauts (ä, ö, ü) and other non-ASCII special characters are correctly displayed in all syntax and data files. Stata 14 facilitates this process through the “unicode translate” operation; for details please refer to the respective help file in Stata. Furthermore, the FDZ-LIfBi offers two Stata programs named “useold” and “saveascii” to enable a fully automated conversion of older Stata dataset files (but not syntax files). Both programs are available on SSC as well as in our remote services; for more information see “help useold” and “help saveascii”.

Federal State Variable
Data Usage

The NEPS study lies at the center of the data infrastructure of the LIfBi. The aim of promoting longitudinal studies in educational research involves the requirement that this infrastructure is utilized in a broad range of national and international research, including interdisciplinary activities. As described above, a comprehensive database with rich information on learning processes and competence development at different educational transitions and trajectories across the whole life span is already available in the form of Scientific Use Files. With regard to the NEPS user statistics, both the number of data users and the number of research projects have clearly exceeded our initial expectations.

NEPS User Statistics

The positive development with regard to NEPS data usage has continued and further accelerated over the last 12 months. In 2015, a total of 252 new “unique” data users applied to work with the data in 211 new projects. Concerning the latter, this means an increase of growth by more than 30% compared to the previous year. By the turn of the year, a total of 1,027 “unique” users involved in 675 projects were recorded in the NEPS data usage statistics. Not long ago, the broken mark of 1,000 registered “unique” users gave us reason to celebrate. The figure below illustrates the positive demand for NEPS data in the scientific community by plotting three indicators:

- **Users in Projects**: number of all current and former NEPS data users including multiple counts (a single user can be involved in several projects)
- **Unique Users**: number of all current and former NEPS data users excluding multiple counts (every single user is counted only once, regardless of the number of his or her projects)
- **Projects**: number of all current and former research projects based on NEPS data as defined by data usage agreements (regardless of the number of users involved in the projects)

The unique NEPS data infrastructure not only attracts great interest from researchers in Germany but also from the international scientific community. 20 new projects at institutions from abroad with more than 40 researchers involved came along last year. Analyses based on NEPS data are, for instance, conducted in Australia, Austria, Greece, Hungary, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. A detailed list of all projects, including a short abstract, can be found on our website.

Figure 1: Development of data use since the first data release in August 2011

Research Projects
NEPS User Survey in 2015

The decision to make available the Federal State variable in the NEPS starting cohorts of schools and higher education institutions had made it necessary to adjust the existing data use agreement. In January 2015, all 314 data recipients of currently running NEPS research projects at that time received a letter with the adjusted agreement form enclosed. The correspondence gave us the opportunity to ask our data users for some general information with regard to their NEPS projects. Participation in this small user survey was voluntary and, altogether, 209 completed questionnaires were sent back.

The question “To what discipline would you primarily assign your research project?” revealed a strong dominance of sociological issues, followed by projects in the context of educational sciences. Psychological research questions were less prominent in NEPS projects at that time (see Figure 2, multiple answers allowed). Another interesting result emphasized the significance of research based on NEPS data for academic qualifications. According to the survey information, more than half of the projects were carried out in preparation of doctoral or postdoctoral theses (53%).

In order to gain a somewhat deeper insight into the use of NEPS data we also asked the question “The data of which of our starting cohorts or additional studies are primarily used in your project?” with the option of multiple answers. Out of the 269 responses, a majority of 87 projects reported a focus on Starting Cohort 6 (Adults), whereas data of the other cohorts and the two additional studies were used less (see Figure 3, multiple answers allowed). This picture, of course, is just a snapshot that mainly reflects the varying amount of data available at the time of the survey. What might be somewhat more reliable is the fact that for over half of the responding projects—irrespective of the starting cohort analyzed—data are accessed sometimes, often, or exclusively via the secure environment of RemoteNEPS (52%).

A last section in the NEPS user survey addressed the issue of actual and intended research output from the projects. As the figure shows, about 42% of the 209 projects had already produced a scientific publication based on NEPS data at the time of the survey (N = 16) or were in the process of preparing such a publication (N = 72). The picture differs with regard to scientific lectures or poster presentations in terms of a reverse proportion of actual output and output in preparation, indicating the preliminary role of presentations in the process of writing a journal or book article.
User Trainings and Data Workshops

Data-based trainings and workshop events form an integral part of the NEPS user service. Due to the complexity of NEPS data with a multitude of linked data files and the continuous expansion of the database, it is necessary to provide appropriate facilities for existing and potential data users to learn more about the study and how to deal with the data. For this reason, the FDZ-LIfBi offers standard 2-day courses on a regular basis. While the first day is dedicated to general issues such as study design, data structure, data access, data security, and documentation, the second day focuses on data of a certain starting cohort and on selected methodological or theoretical concepts.

Another important function of NEPS user trainings and data workshops is the registration of data users for accessing the data via modern remote access technology (RemoteNEPS). The remote versions of our Scientific Use Files are less anonymized—compared to the download version they provide more sensitive information such as the above-mentioned Federal State variable in the starting cohorts of schools and higher education institutions. Working with RemoteNEPS requires a supplementary contract and biometric authentication. This authentication is based on a certified keystroke biometrics approach for which a one-time enrolment under the supervision of FDZ-LIfBi is obligatory. For more information about the advantages and the procedures of using RemoteNEPS, please refer to our website.

Events 2015

Last year, the FDZ-LIfBi offered eight regular on-site user trainings in Bamberg. Their focus was on each of the released NEPS starting cohorts, including data of Starting Cohort 1 (Early Childhood) that were published for the first time as a Scientific Use File in March 2015. As in the previous year, one training course was usually attended by about 15 participants. These participants represented the whole range of disciplines and all levels of academic experience—from university students to full professors. In order to further develop and improve our user trainings, the FDZ-LIfBi distributes a standard evaluation sheet for anonymous user feedback at the end of each course. The results for the eight user trainings in 2015 reveal widespread satisfaction with the content and structure of the events (80% very good evaluations) and a vast majority of participants who expressed that their expectations were either fulfilled (82%) or even exceeded (11%).

In addition to the regular user trainings, six additional NEPS data workshops were held in 2015. One took place in Bamberg as part of the summer school of the DFG Priority Programme 1646 “Education as a Lifelong Process”, another in the context of the conference of the German Society of Empirical Educational Research (GEBF) at the University of Bochum. Two further workshops were organized for young scientists in Berlin, following an invitation of the graduate networks of the Berlin Interdisciplinary Education Research Network (BIEN), the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), and the College for Interdisciplinary Educational Research (CIDER). A bigger off-site NEPS event with participants from several countries was carried out in Taipei in collaboration with colleagues from the National Taiwan Normal University.

Taking regular user trainings and additional data workshops together, the FDZ-LIfBi has welcomed more than 250 researchers and potential users to its NEPS data courses in 2015.
Worldwide interest in NEPS data

In Summer 2015, LfBi appeared at eight internationally relevant scientific conferences with an exhibition booth in order to attract new data users to the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS):

- 6th Conference of the European Survey Research Association (ESRA) in Reykjavik/Iceland
- 16th Conference of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) in Limassol/Cyprus
- 110th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in Chicago/USA
- 8th SELF Conference (Self-Concept Enhancement and Learning Facilitation) in Kiel
- 12th Conference of the European Sociological Association (ESA) in Prague/Czech Republic
- Congress of the Austrian Association of Research and Development in Education (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen, ÖFEB) in Klagenfurt/Austria
- 16th European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) in Budapest/Hungary
- 80th Meeting of the Working Group for Empirical Pedagogical Research (Arbeitsgruppe für Empirische Pädagogische Forschung, AEPF) in Göttingen

Forthcoming Events

In 2016, we will continue to provide an extensive NEPS user training program, supplemented with a few off-site data workshops. The table shows the schedule for user trainings in Bamberg. Please note that the mentioned foci and modules can be subject to change. A permanently updated list is available on our website. Course participation requires neither a valid NEPS data use agreement nor specific data analysis skills. As long as all participants are German speakers, the courses are carried out in German—otherwise we switch to English. There is no attendance fee, but prior registration by sending us an e-mail with your name, title, and institutional affiliation under the subject line “user training” is required. Single-day attendance is possible if desired.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Focus</th>
<th>Special Modules</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 18-19, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 5 (First-Year Students)</td>
<td>Weighting</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 14-15, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 4 (Grade 9)</td>
<td>Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 07-08, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 6 (Adults)</td>
<td>Decision behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 09-10, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 2 (Kindergarten) &amp; NEPS Starting Cohort 3 (Grade 5)</td>
<td>Self-concept &amp; Competencies</td>
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<td>July 18-19, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS for Advanced Users</td>
<td>Data imputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 15-16, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 1 (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>Direct measures &amp; Learning environment</td>
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<td>October 10-11, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS for Beginners</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 08-09, 2016</td>
<td>NEPS Starting Cohort 5 (First-Year Students) &amp; NEPS Starting Cohort 6 (Adults)</td>
<td>Returns to education</td>
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</table>
Announcements

International NEPS User Conference on July 07–08, 2016

In summer 2016, the first international NEPS User Conference will be hosted at LIfBi in Bamberg. The two-day event will bring together researchers and young scientists to present and discuss their current work or recent findings based on NEPS data. Besides paper and poster presentations the conference program will also include a keynote lecture, a data workshop session, and an award ceremony for the best scientific publication using NEPS data.

The conference addresses an interdisciplinary audience, that is, contributions on all topics of NEPS are welcome. Conference language is English. The “Call for Papers” with detailed information about abstract submission and conference registration will be sent out soon via e-mail. Please mark your calendar and save the date to attend the conference: July 07–08, 2016.

Development of a User Forum

Another project for 2016 is to set up a multifunctional user forum for the exchange among NEPS data users in addition to the existing interaction between data users and LIfBi staff. The platform will be administered by the FDZ-LIfBi once the technical infrastructure is established and the terms of use are defined. This new service will not only allow data users to post messages and comments, but also to make available syntax files or other documents. Further information will be announced as soon as the service is established.

 Provision of Auxiliary Data

Another service that will be further developed concerns the provision of auxiliary data files created by NEPS data users. Such data files are not part of the Scientific Use Files but might be interesting or helpful for the work of other data users. The FDZ-LIfBi offers the opportunity to upload these data files to the RemoteNEPS environment or to our website, provided that sufficient documentation from the provider(s) is available and successful approval by the FDZ-LIfBi has been given. At the moment, the respective portfolio includes a harmonized table of administrative district codes for Germany from 1980 onwards. The data were compiled by Katarina Weßling (University of Tübingen) and Alexandra Wicht (University of Siegen) and are described in NEPS Working Paper No. 54 (see “NEPS Working Papers”). For 2016, we are confident that other auxiliary data sets will complement this offering. If you are considering providing self-generated data to enrich NEPS Scientific Use Files, please contact us via e-mail at fdz@lifbi.de.

User Survey

The FDZ-LIfBi is planning to conduct a more comprehensive NEPS user survey in 2016 in order to better understand our user community and to continuously improve the data and services on offer. The online survey is already in preparation, striving to find a good balance between the time that will be needed to complete the questionnaire on the one hand and the benefits of your feedback that will enable us to further develop the NEPS study and our services to you. As a matter of course, participation in this survey will be voluntary and results will be reported in the LIfBi data newsletter. The invitation to participate will go out via e-mail to all NEPS data users and we are hoping for your broad support.
Publications

Scientific publications are a crucial medium for disseminating and discussing research findings. Thus, bibliographic references demonstrate the scientific value of an empirical database such as NEPS. Please be aware that any kind of publication resulting from the use of NEPS data has to be reported by sending a notification e-mail and an electronic version of the publication to fdz@lifbi.de.

Citation Rules

All publications based on NEPS data must include references to both the study and the used data version according to the recommendations given below and as specified on our website or in each Scientific Use File package. Each Scientific Use File is provided with a unique digital object identifier (DOI) for referencing.

At first, users are obliged to refer to the study and the used data version (DOI) by including in their publication a phrase such as the following example for Starting Cohort 2 (Kindergarten):

• This paper uses data from the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS): Starting Cohort Kindergarten, doi:10.5157/NEPS:SC2:3.0.0. From 2008 to 2013, NEPS data was collected as part of the Framework Program for the Promotion of Empirical Educational Research funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). As of 2014, NEPS is carried out by the Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories (LIfBi) at the University of Bamberg in cooperation with a nationwide network.

In addition, it is mandatory to quote the following reference:


Selection of NEPS data-based publications in 2015


NEPS Working Papers

The following NEPS Working Papers were released in 2015 and are available for download.


No. 55 Rohwer, G.: Competence distributions, latent regression models, and plausible values.


No. 57 Edele, A., Schotte, K., & Stanat, P.: Listening comprehension tests of immigrant students’ first languages (L1) Russian and Turkish in Grade 9—extended report of test construction and validation.


No. 60 Rohwer, G.: Using NEPS Data for comparing math competencies at Grades 5 and 7.
