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Press release

The federal and state governments are investing millions of euros in the establishment of a national platform for the analysis of Big Data in the economic and social sciences

Over the next five years, the BERD@NFDI consortium will build and develop a national cloud-based platform for the application of artificial intelligence, machine learning and complex analytics in the field of economics and social sciences. This platform will enable new insights to be gained from large unstructured data sets.

Today, scientists around the world are already generating data volumes of unprecedented scale. The quantity of this data and its complexity make a simultaneous and machine analysis of different data types (image, video, text, audio) necessary. This multimodality requires the use of artificial intelligence and extensive storage and computing capacities. For this reason, the federal and state governments agreed in 2018 to establish a National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) to network research data and make it more usable.

In order to establish an adequate and sustainable platform as a research infrastructure for innovative Big Data projects, the consortium BERD@NFDI has joined forces under the leadership of the University of Mannheim with the participation of the University of Hamburg, University of Cologne, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, the Institute for Employment Research, the ZBW - Leibniz Information Centre for Economics and GESIS. BERD@NFDI has now been awarded funding in the double-digit millions by the Joint Science Conference (GWK) of the federal and state governments for the next five years to establish such a National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) for structured and unstructured economic and social science research data. A cloud-based system of services and resources is to be created through which data and algorithms can be collected, made available, merged, analysed and shared. Authenticity and security as well as sovereignty over the data should be guaranteed in all steps of the data lifecycle.

Prof. Dr. Florian Stahl, spokesperson for BERD@NFDI: "This is a turning point in the economic and social sciences. With the funding, the GWK recognises the need for a forward-looking and powerful data analytics platform. Our goal is to become independent of commercial providers in the use and analysis of data. In this way, we are making an innovative contribution to the National Research Data Infrastructure."



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The establishment of the National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) is an initiative of the Joint Science Conference, which is funded proportionally by the federal and state governments. The aim is to improve the currently still deficient data management in the various research disciplines. For BERD@NFDI, the focus is not only on data, but also on algorithms and technologies with which the data can be collected, processed and analysed. Through the involvement of the central scientific societies in the economic and social sciences and through a survey of young researchers, the specialist community is to be involved and user needs identified and taken into account.

The website provides information on the progress of the project: <https://www.berd-nfdi.de>.

The list of all participating institutes is available at: <https://www.berd-nfdi.de/index.php?id=consortium>

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