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Press Release

Federal and State Governments Invest Eight-Figure Sum in Development of National Platform to Analyze Big Data in the Economic and Social Sciences

Over the next five years, the University of Mannheim will lead a consortium that develops and builds a national cloud-based platform for using artificial intelligence, machine learning and complex analytical methods in the field of economic and social sciences. This platform will enable researchers to gain new knowledge from big unstructured data sets.

In today's world, researchers across the globe produce incredible amounts of data. This data is highly complex and therefore it is necessary to analyze different data types (image, video, text, audio) simultaneously and automatically. Due to this multimodality, there is no alternative to using artificial intelligence and large-scale storage and computing capacities. For this reason, the federal and state governments agreed in 2018 to develop a National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) which cross-links research data and makes them more accessible.

In order to establish an adequate and viable platform as a research infrastructure for innovative big data projects, the University of Mannheim will lead the consortium BERD@NFDI. Participating institutions are Universität Hamburg, University of Cologne, LMU, the Institute for Employment Research of the Federal Employment Agency, the Leibniz Information Centre for Economics (ZBW) and GESIS. BERD@NFDI was awarded the eight-figure sum of the Joint Science Conference (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, GWK) of the federal and state governments to build a National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) for structured and unstructured research data from the field of economic and social sciences over the next five years. The aim is to establish a cloud-based system with services and resources which can be used to collect, merge, analyze, share or make data and algorithms available. Authenticity and safety as well as data sovereignty are key in all steps of the data life cycle.

Prof. Florian Stahl, spokesperson of BERD@NFDI says: "This is a turning point for the economic and social sciences. By awarding these funds, the GWK acknowledges that a viable and high-performance data analytics platform is necessary. It is our goal to use and analyze data without the help of commercial providers. This will be an innovative contribution to the National Research Data Infrastructure."

The establishment of a National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) is an initiative of the Joint Science Conference which is funded by the federal and state governments. The aim is to improve the deficient data management in the different research fields. BERD@NFDI focuses on data as well as on algorithms and technologies which can be used to collect, process and analyze data. The team will integrate the central scientific societies of the economic and social sciences and will conduct a survey among early-stage researchers in order to include the scientific community and to identify and consider user needs.

This website provides information on the progress of the project: http://www.berd-nfdi.de.

A list with the participating institutes is available here: https://www.berd-nfdi.de/index.php?id=consortium

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