

## Journal for labour market research: special issue PASS

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In January 2005 the Social Code Book II came into effect in Germany. It introduced the new unemployment benefit II (Arbeitslosengeld II) as a major element and final stage of a series of labour market reforms termed the Hartz reforms which aimed at flexibilization of the German labour market and granted (re)integration of persons in need into the labour market precedence over pure economic subsidies. The new means tested benefit integrated the former social assistance (a welfare benefit) and the former unemployment assistance for long-term unemployed persons whose entitlement to unemployment insurance payments had expired. Its paradigm is summarized in the slogan “*support and challenge*” (in German “*fördern und fordern*”). Support for integration into employment was extended to groups that had formerly been far detached from the labour market. On the other hand status protection regulations were disestablished and pressure on recipients to take up any reasonable employment was increased by the introduction of benefit sanctions and active labour market programmes designed to test work motivation.

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In 2006 the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) set up a new household panel survey in Germany: the PASS panel (Panel ‘Arbeitsmarkt und soziale Sicherung’). Its main purpose was to create a new database for research into German Social Code II and the benefit provided under this legal framework, the unemployment benefit II (Arbeitslosengeld II).

The research group at the IAB, advised by the IAB’s Scientific Advisory Council and consulted by Rainer Schnell opted for a complex and flexible study design that allowed research far beyond that scope. It enables researchers using the PASS data to embed their research in international discourses on poverty, the labour market and the welfare state. PASS is an annual household panel survey. Key to its flexibility is its dual frame sampling design. While a sample of recipients of the new benefit is drawn from registers at the Federal Employment Agencies, a second subsample of the resident population of Germany enables researchers to compare recipients to the general population as well as project their results to all households in Germany.

In the fall of 2013, the sixth wave of PASS became available for researchers worldwide via the Research Data Center of the Federal Employment Agency at the IAB. The panel has by now matured sufficiently to have served as a source for a variety of peer reviewed journal articles (as well as for political consulting) in these areas and in the area of survey methodology.

It now seemed about time to devote a special issue of the Journal for Labour Market Research to research based on PASS and bundle some of the latest results. Although the sixth wave of PASS is now available, due to production times for peer-reviewed articles, most of the research articles printed in this special issue rely on the first five PASS waves. While the panel survey is suited for research in economics

as well as sociology it has until now predominantly inspired sociologists. This is also reflected in this special issue.

The first contribution to this special issue by Mark Trappmann, Jonas Beste, Arne Bethmann and Gerrit Müller gives an overview of the first six PASS waves and the research opportunities the study offers. It includes an outlook on new developments like the release of a combined survey and administrative dataset comprising all PASS respondents and variables plus information available for respondents in the IAB administrative data.

The second article by Martin Abraham, Katrin Auspurg, Sebastian Bähr, Corinna Frodermann, Stefanie Gundert and Thomas Hinz utilizes an innovative feature of PASS: In wave 5 of the panel survey a factorial survey module was implemented. It was conceptualized by Martin Abraham, Katrin Auspurg and Thomas Hinz and successfully proposed within the yearly PASS call for questionnaire modules. It is a fruitful example of combining survey research with experimental research. By confronting respondents with randomized stimuli—in this special case job offers with eight randomized traits—it overcomes one of the main weaknesses of survey designs: The “treatment” under scrutiny is in this case not confounded with a set of other measured and unmeasured variables that additionally influence the outcome. The paper investigates how different dimensions of the quality of a job offer (e.g. income, commuting distance, contract duration) influence the stated willingness to accept job offers. It focuses on differences between the employed and unemployed with respect to this willingness and on inter-regional mobility. While it makes use of only the most recent panel wave (wave 5) it still serves as a good example of how the innovative design of PASS can be used in labour market sociology.

In contrast, the third paper by Arne Bethmann makes full use of the panel structure of the data. He investigates the effects of occupational change after phases of unemployment on status mobility as measured by the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI). His dependent variable is the change in ISEI between subsequent panel waves. He uses

random effects regression models including data from the first five waves of PASS to explain this outcome by occupational change (interacted with employment status) as well as a set of control variables. He capitalizes on the large numbers of respondents in PASS who are at least at one point in time unemployed and the resulting large number of job changes and transitions between unemployment and employment.

In a forth paper, sociologists Andreas Damelang and Georgi Kloß use the PASS data to investigate poverty related withdrawal mechanisms of young people. They divide extracurricular leisure activities into fee-based and non-contributory activities in order to investigate whether withdrawal is more likely driven by financial constraints or shame. While their analysis is cross-sectional, using only the third wave of the PASS panel, they nevertheless use comparative advantages of the PASS panel for research: The relatively high number of households below the poverty line allows analysis of even such small subgroups as young people aged 15 to 24.

The last paper by Thomas Gurr and Monika Jungbauer-Gans has quite a different focus. It is not a classical research article but describes how a new questionnaire module for the PASS panel is theoretically and empirically founded, how it was developed and pretested and finally modified for use in the seventh PASS wave. The module under consideration deals with stigma-consciousness among the unemployed and prejudices against them and was successfully submitted to the call for questionnaire modules for wave 7.

In combination these five articles give a nice overview of the potential of PASS for labour market related research. We hope that it will encourage readers to use the data for their own projects in this area. PASS data are available as a Scientific Use File from the Research Data Center (RDC) of the Federal Employment Agency at the IAB. They are well documented ([http://fdz.iab.de/en/FDZ\\_Individual\\_Data/PASS.aspx](http://fdz.iab.de/en/FDZ_Individual_Data/PASS.aspx)) and the RDC as well as the PASS research department at the IAB offer support and regular trainings to users.