

Obituary

Our friend and colleague Joachim R. Frick passed away in Berlin on December 16, 2011 after a valiant fight with cancer. He was only 49 years old. With his death, the Socio-Economic Panel at DIW Berlin has lost one of its most brilliant minds. It was in large part his hard work and tireless dedication that made the SOEP the internationally networked research infrastructure that it is today. His numerous publications made a major contribution to applied economic research, particularly in the field of distributional analysis. His decades of unflagging commitment to the training of new generations of SOEP users will leave behind a major void.

Joachim R. Frick was born in Trier on August 13, 1962. He studied economics, business, and sociology at the University of Trier and received an MA in Economics (Diplom-Volkswirt) in 1988. On a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), he attended graduate studies at Clark University in Worcester, MA (USA), where he gathered international experience that would play an extraordinarily significant role in his subsequent work developing the SOEP study. In 1996, he received a PhD in Social Science (Dr. rer. soc.) from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Ruhr University Bochum with a dissertation entitled "Determinants of Regional Mobility." In 2006, he was awarded his habilitation (venia legendi) qualification in empirical economic research at the Berlin University of Technology (TU Berlin), where he served as Acting Professor of Empirical Economics in the Faculty of Economics and Management (Faculty VII) from 2008 to 2009. Joachim R. Frick began his work at DIW Berlin in January 1989. In 2004, he became Deputy Director of the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) and Head of the SOEP Research Data Center (SOEP-RDC), where his responsibilities included coordinating the integration of SOEP data into international comparative panel databases (CNEF, ECHP, and CHER).

Over the past ten years, Joachim R. Frick coordinated numerous externally funded projects, including many EU-financed research and infrastructural studies. He was Co-PI of a large-scale comparative analysis of social inequalities that was funded by the Russell Sage Foundation. His last major project, "Life Courses and Retirement Provisions in Transition," which was funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, again broke new methodological ground in the statistical matching of SOEP data and administrative data.

Joachim R. Frick's research interests centered on questions of social and welfare policy, and his work was consistently based on applied empirical analysis (focusing on issues of immigration, personal income distribution, housing costs, spatial mobility, and subjective well-being). Joachim R. Frick also earned international recognition for his outstanding methodological work on the measurement of income (item non-response, imputation, and non-monetary income components).

His research papers were published in renowned scientific journals such as *Ageing & Society*, *International Migration Review*, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, *Journal of European Social Policy*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Journal of Housing Economics*, *Journal of Population Economics*, *Oxford Economic Papers*, *Population Research and Policy Review*, *Regional Studies*, *Review of Income and Wealth*, *Sociological Methods and Research*, *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv*, *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie*

und Statistik, and Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie. He also published numerous policy-oriented articles in the DIW-Wochenbericht series.

In fall of 2010, Joachim R. Frick was offered a full professorship (W3-Professur) at his alma mater and hometown university in Trier. He came very close to accepting the appointment, but after wrestling with the decision at length, he declined the offer and chose instead to remain in Berlin. This decision was based on DIW Berlin's offer to create a joint professorship (S-Professur) for him that would allow him to continue in his position at the SOEP while holding a full professorship at the Berlin University of Technology (TU Berlin). The TU Berlin Faculty Council had already set the official appointment procedure in motion when Joachim's cancer was discovered and his treatment began. It is tragic that his illness prevented him from attaining this ultimate tribute to his outstanding achievements in research and teaching.

Joachim R. Frick and I shared responsibilities as Deputy Directors of the SOEP since 2004. Together with Gert G. Wagner, we formed a team that—despite our different temperaments and personalities—was united by our absolute commitment to the SOEP project. There is no denying that we were not above the pursuit of our own personal interests or that we each sought, to some extent, a higher formal position and more external recognition; but to my recollection, when it came to questions of loyalty to the department and to the study as a whole, we each set personal preferences aside, and it was only the best arguments that counted. After numerous, sometimes heated discussions behind closed doors, it was the greater good of the SOEP study that took precedence for all three of us.

Joachim and I were probably very similar in our almost fanatical commitment of both time and mental energy to this study. What he was able to do far better than I could was to foster a “corporate spirit” within the SOEP. Joachim had an extraordinary and to me almost mesmerizing ability to integrate talented young researchers into the SOEP community and to instill self-confidence in them—a “we are the champions” spirit that inspired belief in the importance of our work on the SOEP study.

It is for these reasons and many others that my colleagues and I feel so keenly the loss of a good friend in Joachim R. Frick. Since 1989, when Joachim moved from Trier to Berlin and we spent several months living in a shared apartment, our friendship and my appreciation for his character have grown. Even then, Joachim's affection and love for Kristine, who would later become his wife, impressed me as evidence that he is an absolutely reliable partner in both his personal and professional life, and someone who holds steadfastly to his commitments.

In February 2011, Joachim R. Frick and I took on joint responsibility as Interim Department Directors for SOEP through the end of 2012. His terrible illness prevented him from carrying out this commitment. The roller coaster ride of improvements and regressions in his treatment regimen, which at first appeared to offer cause for optimism, came to an abrupt halt in early November, when we were all forced to realize that, regardless of our hopes, we would have to say goodbye to Joachim. Even during this awful phase, we could only marvel at how much affection and concern were expressed for our friend and colleague both directly and indirectly by colleagues and friends from around the world. For weeks, they visited daily; everyone tried to give back some of the warm-heartedness he had always conveyed to others.

Dear Joachim, you will be missed not only by your wife Kristine, by your two daughters Anna and Katharina, by your parents, brother, and sister, and by your many close friends, but also by all your friends and colleagues in the SOEP. The entire SOEP community will be poorer without you.

For the entire team of the SOEP Infrastructure at DIW Berlin

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jürgen Schupp', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jürgen Schupp