European Social Survey
Special fast call for short cross-national question design proposals – COVID-19

Brief summary of call

The purpose of this call is to invite applications to design a short set of questions (up to 5 items) related to the COVID-19 pandemic that will be fielded on the European Social Survey (ESS). Successful applicants will have their questions fielded in Round 10 of ESS (ESS10), which will be conducted in around 30 European nations in 2020-21 as part of a voluntary initiative in around 20 of the countries1.

As this is a late addition to the ESS10 questionnaire development process, there is limited time to select and finalise questions. As such, proposals are required by Tuesday 16 June 2020.

Introduction to ESS

The ESS is a biennial, academically-driven cross-national social survey that charts and explains the interactions between Europe’s changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. Nine rounds of the survey have already been conducted covering over 30 nations and employing the most rigorous survey methodology. Fieldwork is conducted face-to-face and based on a random probability sampling design. A fully-documented multinational dataset is publicly available from the ESS Data Archive. Fieldwork for Round 10 is expected to be conducted between September 2020 and December 2021 (this is longer than normal due to anticipated delays in face to face interviewing restarting). Further information about the ESS is available at www.europeansocialsurvey.org. This is a longer timetable than normal due to uncertainty about when-face-to-face fieldwork can restart.

Following an application to the European Commission, the ESS was awarded European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) status on 30th November 2013. ESS ERIC is funded by participating countries - its Members, Observers and Guests.

ESS ERIC, directed by Professor Rory Fitzgerald, has its Headquarters (HQ) at City, University of London. ESS HQ is supported in the design and implementation of the survey by six other institutions that collectively comprise the ESS ERIC Core Scientific Team (CST): NSD, Norway; GESIS, Germany; The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP, Netherlands; Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain; University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; University of Essex, UK.

1 ESS countries are permitted to add a small number of country specific questions at the end of the main ESS. In Round 10 around 20 volunteer countries have agreed to suspend that and instead agree to include these items.
ESS ERIC is advised by a Methods Advisory Board (MAB) and a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB).

The questionnaire for the main survey consists of two elements: a **core module** of substantive and socio-demographic items (around 100 in all); and two **rotating modules**, each including up to 30 items. Each rotating module covers a single academic and/or policy concern within Europe and is drafted by a competitively selected team.

A list of the topics covered by the rotating modules in Rounds 1-10 and applications from the successful QDTs can be found on the ESS website. The full questionnaires for Rounds 1-9 are also available there.

This special call has been issued in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the opportunity to collect important data on its societal impacts in a high-quality cross-national survey.

**Question requirements**

ESS ERIC plans to select two short modules (5 items each) that address societal issues in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Note that separately the national teams in this initiative will be including a number of questions directly on COVID-19. The precise topics and questions from the NCs have not yet been agreed but will be tailored as necessary depending on the successful modules from this open call.

Since ESS10 will take place some time after the initial phase of the pandemic, applicants should tailor their responses appropriately. It should also be considered that fieldwork for ESS10 is likely to vary somewhat between participating countries (with the earliest potential fieldwork start dates in September 2020 and the latest in October 2021) so any proposals that rely on questions being fielded at the same time across countries will not be appropriate.

Applicants should ensure compliance with the following criteria when considering questions:

- Most questions should be relevant to, and asked of, all respondents with little or no filtering.
- Only closed questions can be included; no open questions will be considered.
- The same questions should be asked in all countries.
- Questions should not result in producing any data that are potentially disclosive.
- It must be possible to develop equivalent questions to be fielded in a range of cultural and institutional settings across Europe, including countries outside of the EU.
- Proposed questions should address a key academic and / or policy concern within the European arena in relation to COVID-19, add significantly to the European knowledge base, and have wide appeal within academia and beyond.

Successful applicants will need to work with members of the ESS ERIC Core Scientific Team to develop and finalise questions. It is expected that questionnaire development will take place between the start of July and middle of August 2020.
Questions should be developed in English, the ESS’s working language.

Final decisions on questions are the responsibility of the ESS ERIC Director, taking into account the views of the QDTs, comments from National Coordinators and the CST, as well as translation considerations. The ESS ERIC Director will have the power of veto of any individual questions should they be deemed to be inappropriate for use on ESS. The ESS ERIC Ethics Board will also be required to give their approval to the questions.

The ESS is committed to free, open and non-preferential access to all data collected as part of its surveys. ESS10 data will be released via the ESS website as soon as possible following completion of fieldwork.

Following publication of data, successful applicants will be required to produce a short publishable research note in collaboration with ESS ERIC HQ. The applicants are also expected to plan an academic publication using the data.

No budgetary provision exists to cover salary or associated costs for the team designing the questions.

Who can apply?

- The call is open to individual researchers and teams of researchers.
- At least one applicant must be from an ESS ERIC Member or Observer country.
- No CST or SAB member may apply (or be part of an extended team that applies) for a question module.

When you can apply

Applications must be submitted by 17:00 UK time on Tuesday 16 June 2020. ESS ERIC aims to inform successful applicants by 1 July 2020.

How to submit a proposal

Proposals must:

- Be sent to ess@city.ac.uk by 17:00 UK time on Tuesday 16 June
- Focus on the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic and its societal impacts
- Be written in English
- Contain names, contact details and short CVs of applicants (maximum of 4, minimum of 2)
- Contain the research questions and a scientific motivation
- Specify the draft content of the survey questions
- Ideally show how these 5 items will be linked with other items in the ESS core questionnaire.
Proposals should be a maximum of 2 pages, excluding half page CVs and the draft survey questions, and be submitted in PDF format.

An assessment committee, formed by the ESS ERIC Director, will evaluate proposals based on the criteria given below. The decision will be final and no feedback will be given to unsuccessful applicants.

Criteria

- Relevance and originality (30%)
  - Does the proposal contain new and/or significant research questions that justify the collection of primary data on the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - Is the proposed topic relevant and timely to academic and policy debates in Europe?
  - Why is cross-national data important?
  - Does the proposal draw on the ESS core questionnaire in a significant way to strengthen its aims?

- Methodology (40%)
  - Is the ESS methodology appropriate for meeting the research aims?
  - Are the proposed questions appropriate (wording, sensitivity, design) and feasible?
  - Are plans for data analysis and dissemination robust and clearly explained?

- Impact (30%)
  - How will the module add to our understanding of the topic?
  - Does the proposal clearly identify any implications for research, practice, and/or society in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - How will wider context be accounted for eg by including contextual country level data such as number of COVID cases or changes in GDP.

Participating Countries

So far the following countries have provisionally agreed to take part. This list is subject to change at any time and some countries still need to obtain funder permission. These are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

Further information

If you have any queries regarding the call please email ess@city.ac.uk.