



Autumn 2002

[Dear .....]

**European Social Survey 2002**

[You have/your address/household has] been selected to take part in an international study on what people think about various important issues affecting [country]. The study is being carried out simultaneously in 24 countries across Europe and will help to find out how much or how little people in different countries share the same views and beliefs. It is being paid for from both [country] and European sources.

The questionnaire covers a wide range of topics and no special knowledge is needed to answer any questions. Your [name/household/address] has been selected from [sampling frame] by scientific methods to ensure that we get a representative picture of people in [country]. We cannot therefore substitute any [name/household/address]. All information you provide will be treated in strict confidence and will never be linked to your name or address.

Most people taking part in the study find it an interesting and enjoyable experience, and we hope that you will too. An interviewer will [visit] you shortly to explain more about the study and, if you agree, will arrange a suitable time for the actual interview, which will be carried out in person. Interviews normally take just under an hour. We certainly hope we can rely on your co-operation.

Meanwhile, if you wish to have any further information about the study, please feel free to contact me on the number above.

Thank you in advance for your help,

xxx xxxxx

The interviewer who will be contacting you is:.....

## Using the advance letter template

The letter above is provided as a guide for participating countries to formulate their own advance letters. There is no need to follow the contents exactly: countries should adapt the guide letter so that it refers to the most relevant issues to their potential respondents. It may be useful therefore, particularly for new entrants, to see how the letter template was mainly adapted in Round 1:

- in some countries, more details were given about the **particular topics** included in the interview. It is obviously not possible to list all the topics covered, but the letter can mention those with the most appeal to potential respondents in each country.
- a number of countries did not mention the **length of the interview** in the advance letter. It was thought that this could discourage respondents if the estimation was too long, or annoy them if the estimate was too short.
- some countries placed more emphasis on how **respondents' confidentiality** was safeguarded.
- countries using **an incentive** can inform respondents about this in the advance letter.
- as well as contact details for the survey organisation, it could be useful to add contact details about the **survey** itself, e.g. the ESS home website or the individual country website, if there is one.
- it is possible to use the **reverse page** of the letter to provide more information, if NCs do not wish to use a leaflet, although avoid making the letter look too 'crowded'.

These adaptations are, obviously, not exhaustive and there may be other changes that are required in individual countries.

## Using a leaflet

Although not part of the central specifications for the survey, a small number of countries additionally used a leaflet in Round 1. Using a leaflet will not be deemed necessary in all countries, and there are obviously cost and time implications. Some reasons for using a leaflet are:

- to underline the authority or reputation of the survey;
- to provide more, or more detailed, information about the study to respondents (see below for ideas for contents);
- to make the project more salient to respondents as different types of information can be conveyed e.g. the inclusion of graphs or pictures.

### *Ideas for contents*

Leaflets can be used to re-emphasise particular points that may already be mentioned in the advance letter or provide completely new information. For example:

- providing more details about the survey process to the respondent e.g. how they were selected, when an interviewer is likely to call, what procedures the interviewer will follow, how confidentiality is protected.
- including more information about the study, for example, a fuller listing of topics, which other countries are taking part, who will use the data and what for.
- including findings from previous rounds of the survey. This could focus just on the country itself or how it compares with other countries, and could incorporate graphics.