

**Presented jointly by the Steering Committee and
the Methodology Committee for an ESS**

The European Social Survey (ESS) – a research instrument for the social sciences in Europe

Summary



**Summary version of the Report prepared for the
Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS) of the
European Science Foundation (ESF)**

The full version of this report is also available from ESF

The European Social Survey (ESS) – a research instrument for the social sciences in Europe

3

Contents

	page
The Case for a European Survey	5
Designing the European Social Survey	6
Population to be surveyed	6
Sample	7
Timing	8
Participating countries	8
Themes for the European Social Survey	9
Examples of questions for the core modules	10
Examples of possible module topics	10
Methodological Research	11
Data Management, Archiving and Distribution	11
Organisational Structure	11
Costs	12
Funding	13
Appendices	
Expert Group on a European Social Survey - List of members	14
Steering Committee - List of members	14
Methodology Committee - List of members	16

The Case for a European Social Survey

The social sciences, in common with the natural sciences, aim for generalisations across time and space. They must also, however, pay close attention to the social and institutional arrangements that structure human interaction. Europe's cultural diversity thus makes it a natural laboratory for the social sciences, which can analyse differences in institutions, structures, behaviours and beliefs across European states and relate these to explanations of human interaction.

The social sciences in Europe have a long tradition in empirical analysis. However, most of the empirical research that has been done is not of a truly comparative nature. The result is that essential comparative data are either missing altogether, or are available in such different forms in different countries that the basis for comparison becomes extremely fragile.

Of course, there is a wealth of data on individuals and households that are regularly collected by statistical offices and other administrative agencies. These data, however, are frequently not comparable across nations and are often not accessible to researchers for reasons of administrative self-interest or data protection. Absolutely crucially, however,

they do not deal with the whole range of individual orientations (attitudes, beliefs and behaviours) that are central in understanding modern societies, and that can be assessed by survey research.

Very many individual surveys have been and will be conducted in particular European countries. Inevitably, however, these are tailored to individual projects and interests. The social sciences, if they are to make progress, require regular cross-national surveys that are conceptually well anchored, conducted according to rigorous methodological standards and are available at little cost to the entire research and policy community. Such studies must be designed for use by a broad variety of people for a broad variety of purposes. No such database currently exists in Europe, and this is the essential rationale for a regular European Social Survey (ESS). This will provide a core research infrastructure for a broad range of social science disciplines: political science, sociology, social psychology, mass communication, economic sciences, modern social history and social anthropology. The data will be of value to scholars, politicians, policy-makers and the public alike. As survey builds upon survey, users will be able to construct a long-term account of change and development in the social world of modern Europe.

Designing the European Social Survey

Since the ESS combines its core concerns for international comparison and the study of mid- to long-term change, its design will involve interviewing independent cross-sectional samples of people in each wave of the survey, conducted once every two years, with a common core of questions being asked in each wave. Each wave will also include up to three research modules that will be repeated over much longer time intervals. The ESS will thus steadily unfold its full potential as more and more waves of the survey accumulate.

A major problem in comparative research is the translation of terms and concepts. Even seemingly simple translations of single words give problems that arise from different cultural meanings. Back-translation procedures can be used to aim for *linguistic* equivalence. Yet even excellent translations provide no guarantee that terms are *functionally* equivalent in different societies. The search for comparisons that are valid over time and between cultures strongly implies a need for theory-driven research and a clear specification of the meaning of core concepts. This implies that translation and back-translation procedures should be conducted on the basis of extensive consultations with both expert

researchers and area specialists. The equivalence problem also implies the need for extensive pretesting and very thorough methodological work, as well as context-sensitive documentation.

An innovative high quality survey such as the ESS not only opens up a unique opportunity for methodological research but requires, in order to maintain the highest standards, systematic methodological scrutiny before the data are made available. In addition technology-induced developments in survey methodology, such as computer-assisted interviewing, must be anticipated and evaluated.

The expected high cost of the ESS has given rise to debates whether the data should be embargoed in some way and made available to interested researchers from non-participating countries only at a substantial price that would help recover costs. It is not proposed, however, to charge any but the most marginal cost for ESS datasets. The core philosophy behind the ESS is to enhance the entire social research infrastructure in Europe and anything that undermines this goal must be avoided.

Population to be surveyed

Increasingly permeable European borders make definition of the population from which to sample more complex than it would have been in the past. Since the ESS has a time perspective that looks deep

into the 21st century, the key definition of the sampling population must be made very carefully. It is also vital that equivalent sampling procedures are used in all participating countries.

Taking these factors into consideration, *the survey will cover people 15 years and older, with no upper age limit, who are resident in the country, regardless of nationality, citizenship or legal status.* This definition is important for a variety of reasons. First, in starting at the age of 15, easy sampling from voter registers will not be possible. Nonetheless there are good reasons that derive from socialization theory that imply a lower age limit. Second, “resident populations” include people living in institutions such as old age homes, university or school housing, prisons, hospitals and the military as well as groups such as the homeless. These are typically excluded from major national surveys. The substantial ageing of many European populations, however, means that serious consideration must be given to including people living in old age homes. The same applies to people who spend extended time living in educational institutions. On the other hand, people in inaccessible institutions such as prisons and military barracks can be excluded from the population for practical reasons, although some flexibility will be needed in this matter.

The most important element of the population definition proposed for the ESS is the inclusion of non-national residents. The biggest difficulty that will be encountered in this respect is a language problem. Obviously, when a non-national resident speaks and understands the language of the country of residence, no problem entails. Otherwise, in countries where a minority language is spoken as a first language by 5 % or more of the total population, the questionnaire will be translated into that language and suitable interviewers will be trained. Since a substantial number of tested language versions of the questionnaire will be available, furthermore, there may well be practical solutions to the language problem in many cases where the 5 % threshold is not reached.

Sample

The sample will be selected by strict random probability methods at every stage. The relative selection probabilities of every sample member will be known and recorded on the data set. Quota sampling will not be used at any stage. While random sampling is not equally common in all countries, it can be implemented without major problem and provides a solid basis of comparability across countries.

Even though many commercial surveys are now conducted via the telephone, telephone coverage of private households is nowhere

Designing the European Social Survey

near complete in many European countries. This means that the interviewing mode for the ESS will be face-to-face personal interviews.

A very important decision with a big impact on costs concerns the number of interviews to be conducted in each country. A high-quality survey such as the ESS will need a relatively large sample size to allow for the effective statistical analysis of data relating to relatively small groups. Since, on the other hand, survey cost is such an important factor, some flexibility on sample size may be needed. The recommended sample size is thus 2500 and the minimum is set at 2000 not considering design effects. Therefore, the effective minimum sampling size must be 1500 interviews. The target response rate is high, at a minimum of 75% of eligible sample members. Response rates cannot be legislated, but they can be heavily influenced by insisting on fieldwork procedures that maximise the chances of finding elusive sample members.

Timing

While it would have been attractive for many reasons to conduct the ESS every year, practical arguments of costs and feasibility imply that it be conducted every second year, at least in the preliminary waves. The first wave is planned for the year 2001 in order to allow for high-quality design and

preparation. This timing will of course depend on the speed with which the responsible bodies take their decisions on funding the ESS.

Participating countries

It is not yet clear which countries will participate in the first wave of the ESS. There was very great interest on the part of ESF member countries in the design of the blueprint, but this may not indicate an automatic willingness to bear the costs of joining the ESS programme. The more or less full participation of all ESF member countries cannot therefore be a *sine qua non* for the ESS to proceed. On the other hand, every effort should be made to ensure as wide a participation as possible. Every additional country that joins increases the analytical power and value of the project. For every non-participating country, the decision not to participate will be very costly in terms of not being involved in the detailed design work and, most importantly, in not having access to an important dataset that links it to all participating countries.

Themes for the European Social Survey

The focus of the ESS will be the systematic study of European citizens' attitudes, attributes, and behaviour relating to a core set of economically, socially and politically relevant domains. It will study distributions, differences and changes across time and space in the social, political and cultural beliefs and behaviours of Europeans. The ESS will not be just another public opinion survey concerned with specific current or fashionable themes. Rather, it will be a systematic instrument designed to enable and stimulate innovative research on the basis of existing knowledge, but at the same time flexible enough to cover new ground.

Each wave of the ESS will consist of three parts: a core module designed to tap change and persistence in attitudes; a core module dealing with social and demographic attributes; modules for specific research projects. About 15 minutes of interview time will be devoted to each of the core modules, and about 10-12 minutes to each of the two project modules. This gives a total interview length of about 55 minutes. To increase the power and efficiency of the ESS, a third module will be administered in the form of a self-completion questionnaire. The two core

modules are the basis of the continuous aspect of the ESS and will provide the opportunity to test and develop dynamic approaches analysing the social, political, and cultural beliefs and behaviours of Europeans.

The selection of each project module will be based on three important criteria. First, each element of the ESS will be designed and developed on the basis of *sound theoretical arguments*. Second, instruments used in the ESS will in general have *proven their usefulness* in empirical research (although not necessarily in an international comparative setting). To avoid a conservative bias, opportunities will be provided for innovative topics and questions, but these will require meticulous pretesting and methodological scrutiny. Third, each instrument used in ESS will be relevant for analysing the *dynamics* of the social, cultural, and political beliefs and behaviours of Europeans. Researchers will be invited to submit proposals for modules to be included, and an international competition will be held to decide which project modules are actually put into the field. In this way, the ESS will be a facility that is wide open to the scientific community, demonstrating best-practice standards and stimulating new developments in the social sciences.

Themes for the European Social Survey

Examples of questions for the core modules

Obviously, a listing of questions for the core modules can only be very provisional at this stage, but some indication of the types of question that might be used may be helpful.

● Individual attitudes and attributes

- issues and problems (such as crime, inequality, unemployment, public spending, etc.);
- orientations towards democracy (satisfaction, political trust, confidence in institutions, left-right self-placement, etc.);
- media usage/exposure and communication (reading newspapers and magazines, watching tv, listening to the radio, internet and multimedia usage);
- political involvement (political interest, political participation, voting behaviour, etc.);
- social and political orientations (individualisation, victimisation, postmaterialism, etc.);
- socio-political identity (national identity, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, patriotism, etc.);
- leisure activities, life style issues, etc.
- Sex/gender, nationality, birth, family situation, housing/residence, social class, education, employment/unemployment, religion, occupation, household, personal income, household income, number of people in household, etc.

● Social position and networks

Family structure; involvement in

voluntary associations, interest groups, and church related organisations; informal networks, professional contacts, etc.

● Social context and environment

Social and political embeddedness, economic development, organizational structure (civil society), etc.

Examples of possible module topics

In order to convey at least a flavour of what might be covered, and without prejudice, the following topics are offered from the three realms of the social structure, the political structure and the cultural sphere. They are no more than examples.

● Social structure

- families, primary groups, and social networks;
- mobility, immigration and multi-culturalism;
- social inclusion and inequality;

● Political structure

- civil society and trust;
- democracy and political involvement;
- interest groups and political parties;

● Cultural sphere

- life styles and life course including life-long education;
- media and the knowledge society;
- subnational, national and transnational identities.

Methodological Research

A large and innovative venture such as the ESS requires extensive methodological and quality control. It is important that the ESS routinely monitor and assess the implementation and effect of the questionnaire, sampling design and of non-responses. This will aid interpretation of the data and ensure that high standards and comparability are maintained. In addition to this routine assessment, the opportunity should be grasped to carry out original methodological research designed to extend knowledge (and ultimately to improve best practice) concerning the effects of non-response and the role of the interview in this process:

Data Management, Archiving and Distribution

A decision will be taken about which of the existing European data archives become(s) the ESS archive. Rigorous standards will be defined to ensure the compatibility of ESS national data sets for integration into a common core for international comparison. The national data sets will be checked, cleaned and documented by the survey organization after the completion of fieldwork and then be sent to the ESS archive for integration, documentation, archiving and

distribution of the international ESS data set. Distribution will be via modern media, currently CD ROM or Internet, subsets of data may be distributed via diskette. Given rapid developments in data distribution and retrieval technologies, internet services for easy retrieval and access to ESS questionnaires and data will be developed.

ESS supports a policy of free and easy access to its integrated dataset. Data will be made available to the scientific community at no more than handling charges. Other uses will be subject to agreement with ESS and the Archive.

Organisational Structure

An enterprise of the size and the continuity of the ESS cannot be mustered without a stable support structure. On the other hand, since the survey will serve the social science community as a whole, significant “bottom-up” elements must be integrated into the organizational structure. This indicates the following principles:

- The ESS will have both Steering and Methodology Committees for overall substantive and methodological direction.
- The practical conduct of the survey requires a permanent Methodological Team to supervise the survey, act as a link between

Costs

Principal Investigators and Data Archive(s) and be in regular contact with the Methodology Committee on all ESS-related topics, including methodological research. The Methodological Team will be linked to an experienced and resourceful survey organization. The Methodological Team will comprise:

- a full-time senior coordinator who will stimulate, organise and supervise all aspects of the ESS from design to successful delivery;
- four half-time positions for experienced researchers for
 - (1) pretesting, questionnaire construction and translation;
 - (2) sampling frame development and implementation;
 - (3) data quality check and data for multi-level analyses;
 - (4) data analysis and indicator validation/construction;
- two half-time positions for junior researchers;
- a full-time secretary.

- The Steering Committee, consisting of one senior social scientist from each participating country, will be responsible for selecting themes for the ESS modules by way of an international competition. Steering Committee members will also provide the links between the ESS and their national communities. Finally, the Steering Committee will be the major link to funding organizations and take all general budgetary decisions.

- The Methodology Committee, consisting of 6 to 8 senior social scientists with expertise in social science methodological research,

will be responsible for guiding the work of the Methodological Team and in particular for the design of the ongoing methodological research.

- The most important bottom-up elements in the ESS are the teams of researchers who compete to design the topical modules. These groups should be small in size (3-6), but should preferably have a multi-national composition.

Costs

What follows are educated estimates of expected costs. These are divided in two parts: (1) the total cost of the field work and data preparation in (we assume 16) participating countries, and (2) the fixed cost of the ESS that will occur more or less independently of the number of participating countries (the only major exception here is the cost of half-time Principal Investigator for two years in each of 16 countries, for which the gross amount will, of course, vary with the number of countries involved).

Cost of surveys

Extensive consultation has taken place on fieldwork costs in likely participating countries. The mean estimate for fieldwork in a single country was 262,000 EURO, VAT excluded; the median was 255.000 EURO. Assuming that those 16 countries which provided the Methodology Committee with cost estimates will participate, then the overall field work cost would be 4,200,000 EURO.

Fixed costs

Since the rationale for the various cost elements has already been laid out in previous sections, these are simply itemized and costed below.

In order to obtain an overall cost figure for the first two-year wave of the ESS, all individual items are costed for a two-year period. These costs are (in 1000 EURO):

Costs for first wave of survey – two years	costs (in 1000 EURO)
● one project director, full-time	200
● four senior researchers, half-time	320
● two junior researchers, half-time	130
● one secretary, full-time	70
● auditing and financial control	50
● 16 principal investigators, half-time	800
● overhead 20 % of 1.570	314
	1.884
<i>Methodological research</i>	
● pretest work (600 interviews each in three countries)	225
● methodological experiments	60
	285
<i>Other cost</i>	
● archival work	150
● travel expenses committees (25 members, 2 meetings per year, 1000 EURO each)	100
● travel expenses topic specialists (5 members, 3 meetings, 1000 EURO each)	15
● travel expenses principal investigators (15 members, 3 meetings, 1000 EURO each)	48
● consultancy fees	50
	363
Total fixed cost	2.532
Contingency fund 10 %	253
	2.785
Total cost of European Social Survey (for 2 years)	
● field work	4.200
● fixed costs	2.785
Grand total	6.985

Funding

The working assumption at the time of the writing of this report is that the central (fixed) costs of around 2.8 m EURO per survey (1.4 m EURO per year) would be centrally-funded (ideally via a mechanism such as the EU's Fifth Research Framework Programme). This would leave the

individual National Science Foundations to fund their own survey costs every two years, averaging at an amortised annualised cost of around 130,000 EURO for each participating nation (more in the Scandinavian countries and Germany, less in many other countries and much less in some).

14 Appendix 1.1 Expert Group on a European Social Survey – List of members

**Professor Max Kaase
(Chairman)**

*Wissenschaftszentrum
Berlin
für Sozialforschung
FS Sozialer Wandel,
Institutionen und
Vermittlungsprozesse*
Reichpietschufer 50
10785 Berlin
Germany

Mr. Bruno Cautrès

CIDSP/IEP de Grenoble
Domaine Universitaire
B.P. 45
38402 Saint Martin
d'Hères cedex
France

**Professor Juan Diez
Nicolas**

(Professor of Sociology,
Universidad Complutense
de Madrid)
ASEP
*Paseo de la Castellana 173,
5º I*
28046 Madrid
Spain

**Professor Fredrik
Engelstad**

*Institute for Social
Research (ISF)*
Munthesgate 31
0260 Oslo
Norway

Professor Roger Jowell

Director
*Social and Community
Planning Research
(SCPR)*
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom

**Professor Leif
Nordberg**

Åbo Academy University
Department of Statistics
Fänriksgatan 3B
20500 Turku
Finland

**Professor Antonio
Schizzerotto**

Facoltà di Sociologia
*Università degli Studi di
Trento*
Via Verdi 26
38100 Trento
Italy

**Dr. L. Henk
Stronkhorst**

*Head, Scientific
Statistical Agency*
NWO-WSA
Postbus 93120
2509 AC The Hague
The Netherlands

**Dr. John H. Smith
(Secretary)**

*European Science
Foundation*
1 quai Lezay-Marnésia
67080 Strasbourg cedex
France

Appendix 1.2 Steering Committee – List of members

**Professor Max Kaase
(Chairman)**

*Wissenschaftszentrum
Berlin für
Sozialforschung
FS Sozialer Wandel,
Institutionen und
Vermittlungsprozesse*
Reichpietschufer 50
10785 Berlin
Germany
Tel: +49 30 254 91 293
Fax: +49 30 254 91 318
E-mail: maka@medea.wz-berlin.de

Professor Rune Åberg

University of Umeå
Department of Sociology
901 87 Umeå
Sweden
Tel: +46 90 786 59 60
Fax: +46 90 786 66 94
E-mail:
rune.berg@soc.umu.se

**Professor Jacques
Billiet**

Department of Sociology
Catholic University
Leuven
Van Evenstraat 2B
3000 Leuven
Belgium
Tel: +32 16 32 31 57
Fax: +32 16 32 33 65
E-mail:
Jaak.Billiet@soc.kuleuven.ac.be

**Professor Antonio
Brandao Moniz**

*Faculdade de Ciências e
Tecnologia*
*Universidade Nova de
Lisboa*
Quinta da Torre
2825 Monte de Caparica
Portugal
Tel: +351 1 295 4464
Fax: +351 1 295 4461
E-mail: abm@mail.fct.unl.pt

Mr. Bruno Cautrès

CIDSP/BDSP
Institut d'Etudes
Politiques de Grenoble
Domaine Universitaire -
B.P. 48
38040 Grenoble Cedex 9
France
Tel: +33 4 76 82 60 94
Fax: +33 4 76 82 60 50
E-mail: cautres@cidsp.upmf-
grenoble.fr

**Professor Nikiforos
Diamandouros**

*National Centre for Social
Research*
14-18 Messoghion Av.
11527 Athens
Greece
Tel: +30 1 74 89 123
Fax: +30 1 74 89 127
E-mail: NDiamand@EKKE.gr

**Professor Henryk
Domanski**

Institute of Philosophy
and Sociology
*Polish Academy of
Sciences*
Nowy Swiat 72
Palac Staszica
00-330 Warsaw
Poland
Tel: +48 22 826 96 17
Fax: +48 22 826 99 48/
+48 22 826 78 23
E-mail:
hdomansk@ifispan.waw.pl

**Professor Yilmaz
Esmer**

*Faculty of Economic and
Administrative
Sciences, Bogazici
University*
P.K. 2 Bebek
Istanbul
Turkey
Tel: +90 212 263 15 50
Fax: +90 212 265 63 57
E-mail: esmer@boun.edu.tr

Dr. Peter Farago
Landert Farago
Davatz & Partner
 Grossmünsterplatz 6
 8001 Zurich
 Switzerland
 Tel: +411 265 39 90
 Fax: +411 265 39 99
 E-mail: pfarago@access.ch

Professor Roger Jowell
Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR)
 35 Northampton Square
 London EC1V 0AX
 United Kingdom
 Tel: +44 171 250 1866
 Fax: +44 171 250 1524
 E-mail: r.jowell@scpr.ac.uk

Professor Stein Kuhnle
Department of Comparative Politics
University of Bergen
 Christiesgate 15
 5007 Bergen
 Norway
 Tel: 47 55 58 21 79
 Fax: 47 55 58 94 25
 E-mail:
 Stein.kuhnle@isp.uib.no

Professor Michael Laver
Department of Political Sciences
The Policy Institute
Trinity College
 Dublin 2
 Ireland
 Tel: +353 1 608 20 36
 Fax: +353 1 677 05 46
 E-mail: mlaver@tcd.ie

Professor Guido Martinotti
 Via del Caravaggio, 5
 20144 Milano
 Italy
 Tel: +39 2 861 089
 Fax: +39 2 861 891
 E-mail:
 gmartin@mail.Sociol.unimi.it

Professor José Ramón Montero
Fundación Juan March
Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales
 Castello, 77
 28006 Madrid
 Spain
 Tel: +34 1 435 42 40
 Fax: +34 1 576 34 20
 E-mail:
 Montero@ceacs.march.es

Dr. Karl H. Müller
Institute for Advanced Studies
Department of Sociology
 Stumpergasse 56
 1060 Vienna
 Austria
 Tel: +43 1 59 991 212
 Fax: +43 1 59 991 191
 E-mail:
 Mueller@ihssv.wsr.ac.at

Professor Leif Nordberg
Abo Academy University
Department of Statistics
 Fänriksgatan 3B
 20500 Turku
 Finland
 Tel: +358 2 215 4163
 Fax: +358 2 215 4677
 E-mail:
 Leif.Nordberg@abo.fi

Dr. Niels Ploug
National Institute for Social Research
 Herluf Trolles Gade, 11
 1052 Copenhagen K
 Denmark
 Tel: +45 33 48 08 40
 Fax: +45 33 48 08 33
 E-mail: np@smsfi.dk

Substituted by:
Mr. Torben Fridberg
Socialforskningsinstituttet
 Herluf Trolles Gade 11
 1052 Copenhagen K
 Denmark
 Tel: +45 33 48 08 47
 Fax: +45 33 48 08 33
 E-mail: TF@SMSFI.DK

Professor Shalom Schwartz
Department of Psychology
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
 Mount Scopus
 Jerusalem 91905
 Israel
 Tel: +972 2 588 30 24
 Fax: +972 2 588 11 59
 E-mail:
 Msshach@mssc.huji.ac.il

Mrs. Ineke Stoop
Department of Information and Automation
Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau
 Parnassusplein 5
 P.O. Box 16164
 2500 BD The Hague
 The Netherlands
 Tel: +31 70 340 70 00
 Fax: +31 70 340 70 44
 E-mail: stoop@scp.nl

Professor Françoise Thys-Clement
 Pro-Recteur
Université Libre de Bruxelles
 Avenue F.D. Roosevelt 50
 Case Postale 140
 1050 Bruxelles
 Belgium
 Tel: +32 2 650 41 73
 Fax: +32 2 650 44 95
 E-mail:
 pdekie@resulb.ulb.ac.be

Substituted by:
Mr. Pierre Desmarez
TEF – CP 124
 Avenue Jeanne 44
 1050 Bruxelles
 Belgium
 Tel: +32 2 650 34 30
 Fax: +32 2 650 33 35
 E-mail: Pdesmar@ulb.ac.be

Professor Niko Toš
Faculty for Social Sciences
University of Ljubljana
 Kardelieva Pz. 4
 1000 Ljubljana
 Slovenia
 Tel: +386 61 349 994
 Fax: +386 61 1686 054
 E-mail: cjmmksjm@uni-lj.si

Professor Michael Warren
 30 Cole Park Road
 Twickenham
 TW1 1HS Middlesex
 United Kingdom
 Tel: +44 181 891 3130
 Fax: +44 181 891 1970
 E-mail:
 michael.warren@mrsf.co.uk

Dr. John H. Smith
 (ESF Scientific Secretary for the Social Sciences)
Ms. Geneviève Schauinger
 (Administrative Assistant)
Mrs. Beatriz Garcia Diaz-Ambrona
 (Administrative Secretary)
European Science Foundation
 1, Quai Lezay-Marnésia
 67080 Strasbourg Cedex
 France
 Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 31
 Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32
 E-mail: scss@esf.org

16 Appendix 1.3 Methodology Committee - List of members

Professor Roger Jowell (Chairman)
Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR)
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 171 250 1866
Fax: +44 171 250 1524
E-mail: r.jowell@scpr.ac.uk

Professor Jacques Billiet
Department of Sociology Catholic University Leuven
Van Evenstraat 2B
3000 Leuven
Belgium
Tel: +32 16 32 31 57
Fax: +32 16 32 33 65
E-mail: jaak.billiet@soc.kuleuven.ac.be

Dr. Peter Lynn
Survey Methods Centre Social & Community Planning Research
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 171 250 18 66
Fax: +44 171 250 15 24
E-mail: p.lynn@scpr.ac.uk

Dr. Nonna Mayer
Centre d'Etude de la Vie Politique Française
10, rue de la Chaise
75007 Paris
France
Tel: +33 1 49 54 21 49
Fax: +33 1 49 54 20 25
E-mail: mayer@msh-paris.fr

Dr. Ekkehard Mochmann
Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung Universität zu Köln
Bachermer Str. 40
50931 Köln 41
Germany
Tel: +49 221 394 737
Fax: +49 221 476 9477
E-mail: mochmann@za.uni-koeln.de

Professor José Ramón Montero
Fundación Juan March Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales
Castello, 77
28006 Madrid
Spain
Tel: +34 1 435 42 40
Fax: +34 1 576 34 20
E-mail: montero@ceacs.march.es

Professor Willem Saris
Department of Statistics and Methodology Faculty of Political, Social and Cultural Sciences University of Amsterdam
O.Z. Achterburgwal 237
1012 DL Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 20 525 2091
Fax: +31 20 525 2086
E-mail: saris@pscw.uva.nl

Professor Antonio Schizzeroto
Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale Università di Trento
Via Verdi 26
38100 Trento
Italy
Tel: +39 0461 881 315
Fax: +39 0461 881 348
E-mail: aschizze@gelso.unitn.it

Professor Dr. Jan van Deth
Lehrstuhl für Politische Wissenschaft und International Vergleichende Sozialforschung Universität Mannheim
Seminargebaude A 5
68131 Mannheim
Germany
Tel: 49 621 292 5316
Fax: 49 621 292 5315
E-mail: jvdeth@sowi.uni-mannheim.de

Dr. Joachim Vogel
Statistics Sweden
Box 24300
104 51 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel: +46 8 783 4930
Fax: +46 8 783 4772
E-mail: joachim.vogel@scb.se

Professor Max Kaase (Chairman Steering Committee)
Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung
Reichpietschufer 50
10785 Berlin
Germany
Tel: +49 30 254 91 293
Fax: +49 30 254 91 318
E-mail: maka@medea.wz-berlin.de

Dr. John H. Smith
(ESF Scientific Secretary for the Social Sciences)
Ms. Geneviève Schauinger
(Administrative Assistant)
Mrs. Beatriz Garcia Diaz-Ambrona
(Administrative Secretary)
European Science Foundation
1, Quai Lezay-Marnésia
67080 Strasbourg Cedex
France
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 31
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32
E-mail: scss@esf.org

**Presented jointly by the Steering Committee and
the Methodology Committee for an ESS**

The European Social Survey (ESS) – a research instrument for the social sciences in Europe



**Report prepared for the
Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS)
of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**

A summary version of this report is also available from ESF

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3

Contents

	page
1. Preface	5
2. The Case for a European Social Survey	7
2.1 European diversity and the social sciences	7
2.2 Helping to build a European identity in social research	8
2.3 The data problem	9
3. Designing the European Social Survey: General Principles and Concrete Considerations	10
3.1 General principles	10
3.1.1 No duplication of efforts is acceptable	10
3.1.2. Doing this research is not just a one-time affair	12
3.1.3 Comparability must be based on equivalence	13
3.1.4 Multi-level analyses must ensue	15
3.1.5 Continuous methodological research is essential	16
3.1.6 Flexibility and stability must be amalgamated	16
3.1.7 Data access must be easy and inexpensive	17
3.2 Population and sample	17
3.2.1 Population defined	18
3.2.2 Sample defined	20
3.3 Timing	22
3.4 Participating countries	22
4. Selection of Themes for the European Social Survey	23
4.1 Research focus	23
4.2 Core sets and module topics	23
4.2.1 Core sets	25
4.2.2 Module topics	25
4.3 Choice of topics	26
4.3.1 Procedural rules and criteria	26
4.3.2 Examples of questions for the two core sets	27
4.3.3 Selection and examples of module topics	27
5. Methodological Research	28
5.1 Questions and question wording	28
5.2 Sampling and non-response on the ESS	29
6. Data Management, Archiving and Distribution	31
6.1 Integration, documentation, validation and archiving of the database	32

6.2	Refinement of data base	32
6.3	Data distribution	33
6.4	Event data	33
6.5	Other archival concerns	34
7.	Organisational Structure	35
8.	Costs	38
8.1	General remarks	38
8.1.1	Cost of survey	38
8.1.2	Fixed costs	38
9.	Funding	39
	Appendices	41
	Expert Group on a European Social Survey – List of members	41
	Steering Committee – List of members	42
	Methodology Committee - List of members	44
	Regional variables in cross-national surveys	45
	Letter to national Steering Committee members regarding sampling	46
	Sample Design for the ESS - a draft specification	47
	The necessity of ongoing methodological research in the ESS context	51
	Survey Specification of a Proposed European Social Survey	58

In 1988, the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS) of the European Science Foundation (ESF) had decided to sponsor, in its usual à la carte mode, a research programme aimed at a stocktaking of the political orientations of citizens in the democratic countries of Europe as they had developed from the 50s through the 80s – the Beliefs in Government project. The core idea behind the programme was to base this study on existing data bases because only in this way the analysis of stability and change in these orientations over a forty-year period was feasible.

The project, according to peer assessments in professional journals of the five books originating from Beliefs in Government (see e.g. Comparing European Politics, by Abramson and Inglehart, American Political Science Review, 92, March 1998, pp. 185-190) can be regarded as a success. At the same time, in doing the concrete project work, it had soon become apparent that there was little in terms of national survey evidence which could meet the minimal criterion of at least functional equivalence across countries, plus longitudinality, which would have enhanced the scope of analyses beyond known data holdings like the Eurobarometers (representative biannual surveys conducted since 1974 in the European Union member countries on behalf of the European Commission) and the

International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), conducted yearly by 1998 in almost 30 countries around the globe and based on a loose cooperation of national research teams. As a consequence, the SCSS decided to promote an effort to design an academically driven representative survey involving, if possible, all member countries of the ESF, but in principle being open also for involvement of countries beyond ESF membership, especially considering countries of Central and Eastern Europe (in addition, at the time of writing this report, the United States have expressed an interest in a linkage between the US General Social Survey and the ESS).

In order to prepare the ground for such an ESF-tutored project, the SCSS, in 1995, set up a small expert group led by Max Kaase, one of the two co-directors of the Beliefs in Government project and regular member of the SCSS, with the purpose of developing some criteria for an eventual ESS, (for a list of the expert group members see Appendix 1.1). This expert group proposed in a written report submitted to the SCSS at its April 1996 meeting in Paris that the plan for an ESS should be vigorously pursued and, in due time, should be transformed into a detailed proposal to the SCSS specifying the conceptual, methodological, organisational and financial details necessary to enable the SCSS to take a decision in favour or against the ESS. The

1. Preface

SCSS accepted the expert group proposal unanimously and also recommended that ESF approach its member organisations for participation in an 'à la carte' funding drive for the conduct of the preparatory work for the ESS. It can certainly be interpreted as a sign of the broad interest among member organisations that of the 21 ESF member countries 17, plus the observer country Israel, have financially supported this phase. This is intended to prepare the ground for the SCSS to take a decision on the ESS in 1999.

The expert group had suggested that designing the ESS should be guided by two groups: (1) a **Steering Committee** (for a list of members see Appendix 1.2) in which all of the ESF member countries were to be represented by a senior social researcher proposed by the pertinent national ESF-member, and (2) a **Methodology Committee** (for a list of members see Appendix 1.3). The Steering Committee was chaired by Max Kaase, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin, and the Methodology Committee by Roger Jowell, Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR), London. In order to establish direct communication between the two committees, the chairman of the Methodology Committee regularly participated as a guest in the Steering Committee meetings, and the chairman of the Steering Committee in the Methodology

Committee meetings. Furthermore, Profs. Jacques Billiet and José Ramón Montero served as regular members in both committees.

The tasks of the Steering Committee were basically twofold: (a) to offer general guidance to the work of the Methodology Committee, (b) to communicate the ESS idea to the social science community in their respective countries and be available as liaison and contact nodes between the ESS committees and their national clientele. The main task of the Methodology Committee was to develop the concrete framework for all aspects needed to be considered in designing such a complex and novel survey.

The Steering Committee met four times:

- June 6 and 7, 1997, in Strasbourg;
- December 6, 1997, in Berlin;
- June 8, 1998, in Istanbul;
- December 14, 1998, in Lisbon.

The Methodology Committee also met four times:

- October 30 and 31, 1997, in Paris;
- March 19-20, 1998, in Paris;
- June 14, 1998, in Berne;
- October 8, 1998, in Paris.

The support given by ESF members, by the organisations hosting the meetings, and – last but certainly not least – by the members of both committees

who have enhanced the concept of the ESS through their intellectual contributions, their time and their enthusiasm is highly appreciated. All this certainly is an encouraging example for those who believe in the scholarly, methodological, practical and emotional benefits of comparative survey research in Europe. A word of sincere thanks is also due to the chairman Robert Erikson and members of the SCSS for their continuous support and encouragement of the ESS, and to both John Smith and Geneviève Schauinger of ESF headquarters who have been a never-ceasing source of help for all associated with the ESS effort.

2. The Case for a European Social Survey

2.1 European diversity and the social sciences

Modern democratic societies have differentiated and developed into highly complex structures of constitutional arrangements, political and social institutions, legal regulations, mediating mechanisms, networks of groups and individuals. As these entities interact across time and space, they create those political, economic, social and cultural structures and processes which are the essence of modern western society and, in particular, the nation state.

One of the great questions of our times is what in the light of continuing differentiation, large-scale migration and internationalisation holds contemporary nation states together. Not the least, it is the social sciences to which politicians, the public and individual citizens alike look for guidance in understanding these developments and for help in solving problems originating from them. Obviously, this task cannot even be begun to be approached without systematic continuous empirical study of the phenomena at hand.

As with the natural sciences, also the social sciences aim for generalisations across time and space. However, as disciplines dealing with people and with the interactions and interdependencies between them, they must pay careful attention to the social and institutional arrangements framing these interactions and interdependencies. Therefore, the social sciences can particularly thrive on the enormous richness of constitutional, institutional and cultural variations across and, to a certain extent, also within the European nation states. These variations have emerged over time and, since they often display a distinctive, concrete shape, may in comparison at best be regarded as functional equivalents. Such variability across units like nation states opens up unique avenues for the kind of research, for example, which seeks to

2. The Case for a European Social Survey

investigate the extent to which individual behaviour is shaped by cultural heritage and is constrained by particular social or institutional arrangements. This historically derived cultural diversity makes Europe a natural laboratory for the social sciences in the sense that, while they do not command the important method of large scale experimentation available in the natural sciences, they can at least analyse differences in institutions, intermediary structures and individual beliefs across European states and relate them, to take one example, to patterns of solutions for common problems found in these countries. This purpose would be well served by all measures contributing to a more integrated European social science community with shared goals and high quality standards.

Beyond the challenge in comparing European nations, there is another important dimension to be considered: europeanisation. As Europe moves more and more toward some integrated political entity, research on the preconditions, conduct and consequences of this process will require increasing attention by the social sciences and by political actors. For instance, in political science the internationalisation of governance has already become a major topic of research for some time now, with particular emphasis on legitimacy beliefs and on contrasting concepts of personal identity construction.

2.2 Helping to build a European identity in social research

One of the great achievements of policy makers in Europe after the second world war was paving the way for a process of integration while at the same time maintaining key features of the political, social and cultural identity of the European nation states. With the demise of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe, this process is now reaching out beyond the countries of Western Europe, at the same time creating new challenges, but also new options for Europe.

Starting in the late 60s, the thrust of a Europe slowly growing into more than just a loosely connected set of nation states has also reached into the science community, and over the years new organisations of a general kind - like the European Science Foundation - or reflecting the needs of special research communities - like the European Consortium for Political Research which links more than 200 political science institutes across Europe - have come into being. However, regarding empirical comparative research the situation is less satisfactory. Other than the European Commission and bi-lateral arrangements there are still too few mechanisms which permit a coordinated approach of research funding agencies to deal with multinational research

proposals. Also, many scholars are only slowly alerted to the benefits of studying other than their own country, and the growing interest in comparative research is unfortunately hampered by the fact that the necessary data are so difficult to come by.

This background is important in order to understand why the idea of setting up a European Social Survey has met with so much enthusiasm by those who over the last four to five years have been actively involved in getting this project off the ground. Some researchers have drawn an analogy with the space shuttle which permits a wide range of experiments from different disciplines for many different research groups. Maybe it is this particular feature of the ESS - its potential to answer a broad variety of new research questions - which has already attracted the interest and support of scholars for the ESS from disciplines outside the social sciences.

In particular, the bottom up elements in the design of the ESS (see sections 4 and 7 for details) are hoped to activate research networks across Europe and, in the long run, stimulate the interest of young researchers in the substance and methodology of comparative survey research.

2.3 The data problem

The social sciences in Europe have a long tradition in empirical analysis. Not the least because of the exodus of many outstanding social scientists from Europe to the US motivated by the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy in the 30s, empirical research especially as survey research began to blossom in the US already in the 40s (Paul F. Lazarsfeld, the Austrian sociologist who became a co-founder of the Columbia school of social research, is a telling case in point). Since after the end of the war European social science began to catch up in this respect from the 50s onwards, at present a general scarcity of data as such can no longer be diagnosed. However, the element of European diversity emphasised above as a major asset, at this point turns into a problem because most of the empirical research undertaken in the pertinent disciplines is not of an internationally comparative nature. This is in part true because many, probably most, researchers are not cross-nationally oriented to start with. Often, however, internationally comparative research either does not even get off the ground or remains weak because it is so cumbersome and costly to organize a comparative research project, and because the necessary comparative data are not readily available at all or are available in such a divergent fashion across countries that the basis for comparison becomes extremely fragile.

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

Of course, there is a wealth of public micro data (data on small units, usually individuals, but also higher-level units like households) which are regularly collected by statistical offices or other administrative actors. These data, however, are frequently not comparable across nations because of the lack of functionally equivalent measurement systems. In addition, they are often not freely accessible (e.g. anonymized public use files, as in the US) to researchers for reasons of administrative self-interest or because of data protection regulations. Also, while such data are invaluable for documenting objective developments and can serve – as in the case of the ESS – as important contextual indicators framing individual behaviour, they do not cover the whole wealth of individual orientations (attitudes, beliefs and behaviours) which are so important in understanding modern societies and which can be assessed by survey research.

As far as surveys are concerned, in many instances such information is assembled as a normal part of the research process, but tailored to individual projects and interests. However, the social sciences also require surveys which are conceptually well-anchored, are conducted according to rigorous methodological standards, take place on a regular basis and are made available at little cost to the social science community. Such general purpose

studies need to be designed in a way that they can be used by a broad range of researchers for a variety of research purposes originating from demands from the science system as well as from political actors. At present, in Europe no data base exists which meets all the above requirements, and this is why the plan for a regular European Social Survey is put forward. It aims at a clientele in a broad scope of social science disciplines: political science, sociology, social psychology, mass communication, economic sciences, modern social history and social anthropology, and its findings will be of interest to scholars, politicians and the public alike.

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

3.1 General principles

3.1.1 No duplication of efforts is acceptable

Since it was clear from the beginning that an ESS would involve a large financial investment, a major task for those involved in the planning was to assess the extent to which the ESS might simply more or less duplicate research efforts which were already underway comparatively or, in a relevant fashion, in (groups of) individual

European countries. This assessment was, among other things, also based upon information gathered from member organisations conducted by the ESF Strasbourg office about current projects of the ESS type. The result of this inquiry was that there is a lot of high-quality country-specific survey studies – some of them on a regular basis like the General Social Surveys in Britain and Germany, the Welfare Surveys in Sweden and Germany, the various national election studies or the studies of the Social and Cultural Planning Office in the Netherlands and the many data collections by the national statistical offices. However, these studies reflect specific national information needs and can hardly, if at all, be used for internationally comparative, longitudinal research. The question, therefore, is whether there already exists other research which better satisfies the criteria of cross-national comparability and longitudinality.

Two types of studies can be mentioned here as candidates: the first pertaining to **factual** socio-demographic and socio-structural information, and the second assessing social, political and cultural **attitudes, beliefs and orientations**. Examples of the first type are the comparative studies coordinated by the Statistical Office of the European Union (EUROSTAT) and conducted by the national statistical offices. The two data

collections which must be mentioned here are the European Household Panel Survey and the European Labour Force Survey: these surveys with their focus on socio-economic, behavioural and factual data do not overlap with the ESS.

There is a much closer proximity in approach of the ESS to two other regular survey data collections. The first of these, the biannual Eurobarometer - sample studies of the population 15 years and older in the member countries of the European Union (since 1990, such surveys have also been conducted in varying countries of Central and Eastern Europe) - are run on behalf of the European Commission in Brussels. They are a very useful tool for comparative research in the social sciences because, after some embargo time, they are made available for general use through the network of European data archives. However, since they are designed to meet the information needs of the European Commission, they are not framed with academic research in mind. This situation, in fact, was a major force in developing the blueprint for an academically-driven ESS.

The second comparative survey data collection to be mentioned here is the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), a self-funded academic project presently (by the end of 1998) reaching out into 30 countries on all continents. This major difference

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

in geographical scope between the ISSP and the ESS, which will be confined to Europe, already makes the ESS distinct. But there are other important differences as well. Notably while the ESS will be a one hour stand-alone survey, the ISSP in most of its member countries is a 15 minute supplement to various national General Social Surveys and is conducted in the participating countries in a variety of data collection modes from a self-completion questionnaire after the “normal” survey to independent mail surveys.

There is a further periodic comparative survey (the European Values Survey) but it takes place only about every ten years and concentrates on religious and moral values.

Thus, in sum, it can be stated that at present there is no comparative, long-range survey in existence in Europe, which in its conceptual foundation, methodological rigour as well as innovation and user potential approaches the planned ESS.

This said, it should also be pointed out that the ESS usually will not be able to replace other already existing surveys which have been developed in different, often national, contexts and serve different purposes and clientele.

3.1.2. Doing this research is not just a one-time affair

In the 40s and 50s, the early days of survey research, such studies

were rare and precious, and it was not regarded as a major shortcoming that they could say little about medium- to long-range processes of social, political and cultural change. Instead, the emphasis was on structure and at best on the study of short-term change in individual attitudes and behaviours through the panel method – a series of interviews stretched along the time dimension **with the same respondents**. Here, for instance the innovative six-wave panel study of the 1940 US presidential election by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet is still counted as a major breakthrough.

However, the more widespread and frequent survey research became and its methodology and practices better understood, the more the social science community began to discover the potential of repeated surveys also for the study of macroscopic change. Both the growing numbers of surveys devoted to the idea of exactly replicating previous studies, and the establishment of data archives founded for the purpose of collecting, documenting and disseminating existing data holdings and thereby opening up the field for secondary analysis, have paved the way for the study of **long-term change** based on surveys. The Beliefs in Government project funded by the ESF between 1989 and 1994 epitomizes the analytical potential of this approach.

For the time being, the panel method and the method of accumulating random samples of independent cross sections of the same population over time are still the two most commonly used methods for studying change; both can be regarded as variants of longitudinal research. However, the two approaches differ in the methodology, in the kind of research questions to be answered and in the resources necessary to implement them. The Methodology Committee has discussed at length the option of running the ESS as a (household) panel study, i.e. a study where one or all members of a selected household of a certain starting age are continually interviewed over time, like in the British Household Panel Study which began in 1991, or the German Socio-economic Panel which started in 1984. While this kind of a panel approach is clearly more powerful in the options it offers for analysis, it is also extremely complex and requires, as the panel progresses over the years, large and increasing resources for administration, field work and particularly data handling. The Methodology Committee felt, therefore, and the Steering Committee agreed, that the complexity of the ESS as a comparative survey in terms of methodological sophistication, the number of countries and need for consistent administration across countries is already so high that a decision in favour of a panel approach would have jeopardized the whole project.

This rationale, it was felt, holds its ground at least until some waves of the ESS have been carried out in the independent cross section mode and enough expertise has been assembled to assess whether a change to a panel mode is feasible and justified in terms of the additional resources necessary and in relation to its larger analytic potential. With the particular emphasis of the ESS on the study of mid- to long-term change, and in terms of parsimony and cost effectiveness, the method of interviewing independent cross sections across time is the one best suited for the ESS, at least in its initial phase. This does not, of course, exclude the selective use of panel elements especially for methodological purposes. It must be emphasized that the logic of this approach implies by necessity that a decision for an ESS should assume the principal understanding that the ESS will realise its full potential as more and more waves of this survey will accumulate.

3.1.3 Comparability must be based on equivalence

A major problem to be encountered in cross-national comparative research (both cross-sectional and longitudinal) is the translation of terms and concepts. Even seemingly straightforward translations of single words provide complications due to different cultural meanings of these words. For identifying semantic errors in translations several variants of back-

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

translation procedures can be used aiming at *lexical equivalence* or *linguistic equivalence*. Yet even excellent translations would only imply *literal equivalence* and provide no guarantee that the terms used are equivalent in different languages. Excellent translations and back-translations are the starting point – not the solution for developing comparative measures.

If the same indicators are used for identical theoretical concepts, special efforts are due to control for different types of bias: construct bias, method bias, and item bias. With culture- or nation-specific indicators of concepts there are problems tracing cross-cultural or cross-national differences. If – on the other hand – identical instruments are constructed for various settings, it is unlikely that one obtains an appropriate observation of national or cultural aspects and differences. For the establishment of equivalence a differentiation between the stimuli actually applied and the concepts behind these measures is required. Because comparisons should be based on similar concepts in different settings, the measures should be equivalent and not identical. Most of the time this implies that the stimuli are different in specific national or cultural settings. In the words of Przeworski and Teune, in their seminal work “The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry”

(1970: 108): “An instrument is equivalent across systems to the extent that the *results* provided by the instrument reliably describe with (nearly) the same validity a particular phenomenon in different social systems.”

In order to assess the degree comparability the idea of *functional equivalence* is crucial: similar concepts should be related to other concepts in different settings in more or less the same way. Functional equivalence is based on the notion that comparability is not an attribute of single terms or concepts, but an attribute of the relationships among these terms or concepts. Therefore, comparability can only be obtained if auxiliary information is available from the very beginning of the development of specific measures.

For the ESS the requirement to establish cross-national, cross-cultural, and longitudinal equivalence results in an emphasis on theory driven research (see Section 4.2) and a clear specification of the meaning of the core concepts and the use of context-specific stimuli for different contexts. This implies – in turn – that translation and back-translation procedures should be expanded with extensive consultation of both expert researchers and area specialists. Differentiation of the actual questionnaires in different countries and attuning questions to specific contexts (that is, using

different stimuli in different contexts if necessary) is the only way to maximise comparability of results obtained with the ESS. Needless to say that the equivalence problem implies the need for extensive pretesting and very thorough methodological work (see Section 5 and Appendix 4) as well as context-sensitive documentation.

3.1.4 Multi-level analyses must ensue

Just looking at a set of marginals and discovering that countries substantially differ in their mean position on – to take an example – satisfaction with the way democracy works in the respective countries immediately raises the question about where these differences come from. There may be a whole wealth of factors influencing an individual's position on such a measure within a country (like whether the party he or she identifies with is in or out of government), but this can hardly account for differences in the mean level of democratic satisfaction between countries. In this situation the search for institutional, macro properties of the systems under scrutiny comes into the fore, or – in social science terminology – the need for multi-level analysis for the explanation of country differences (the same argument pertains, of course, when it comes to social instead of political attitudes).

Multi-level analyses are an important instrument of complex

theory building in the social sciences. One pertinent example is the **most similar systems design** (a concept developed by Przeworski and Teune). The basic logic of this design is that in reasonably similar societies – like is the case in Europe – it is possible to study the impact of variations in the institutional (macro)structure of societies on individual behaviour in the countries which are part of the research design. Thus, individual orientations must no longer only be explained by other variables also measured on the level of individuals. Rather, the explanatory scope in multi-level analysis is extended to the social and institutional environment, in which individuals are embedded, thereby considerably extending the analytical scope of survey research.

As a consequence, right from the beginning the ESS must take all necessary steps to ascertain that as many as conceptually meaningful institutional and contextual variables are added to the individual data and that links to data holdings of e.g. EUROSTAT are included which permit the integration of individual and contextual information (for details see Appendix 2). Similarly, political and economic macro indicators on the level of nations must be included early on in the micro data files.

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

3.1.5 Continuous methodological research is essential

There was agreement in both ESS committees that an innovative, high quality survey like the ESS not only opens up a unique opportunity for methodological research, but requires, in order to remain on a high level, systematic accompanying methodological scrutiny before the data are made available.

The scope of this part of the ESS is wide: it involves detailed studies of sampling frames and their effects on sampling error, cognitive tests of the core concepts and their operationalisation, tests of the quality of measurement instruments within and across countries, construction of scales and indices which are equivalent across countries, test-retest and Multi-Trait-Multi-Method (MTMM) studies assessing the validity and reliability of questions, translation studies, and the construction of functionally equivalent indicators for comparison where face equivalence is not available (like with regard to educational systems) (for details see Section 5). In addition, and in anticipation of technology-induced new developments in survey research (see also Section 3.2.2) methodological innovations must be anticipated, taking into account recent experimentations in public opinion research made possible by computer-assisted

interviews (different question format and wordings, stop and think manipulations, source manipulations, counter-argument techniques, etc.).

In addition, the ESS will become a new, indispensable instrument in the training of social researchers across Europe not only in the substance but also in the methodology of comparative research. It should thus help to improve the methodological sophistication of social scientists within their national contexts.

3.1.6 Flexibility and stability must be amalgamated

Given the long-range perspective, the overall magnitude and the need for success for the ESS, there is a temptation to think too quickly about a big, stable infrastructure for the ESS. Both ESS committees therefore from the beginning were aware of the need to find a good balance between stable and flexible elements in the organisation of the ESS. The two committees believe that the concrete proposal for setting up the survey reflects in a good way the perceived tension and benefits between the two principles.

Firstly, it is proposed that – assuming the survey will be conducted every second year as is suggested – two waves of data collection are initially decided upon and that once the second wave has been completed, ESF (SCSS) or any other appropriate

body conducts an assessment review of ESS as a basis for a decision on its continuation or termination.

Secondly, a flexible organisation is envisaged, where the committee structure which has proved useful in preparing this document is maintained and a bottom-up philosophy is to be implemented in designing and conducting the individual national surveys. Elements of stability will be a small permanent staff, a temporarily fixed attachment of the permanent staff to a resourceful academic research institution and the selection of a well-established data archive for all tasks involving the production, documentation and dissemination of the comparative data set (for details of the proposed organisation see Section 7).

3.1.7 Data access must be easy and inexpensive

The expected high cost of the ESS has given rise to debates whether the data should be embargoed in some way and should be made available, for example to interested researchers from non-participating countries, only at a substantial price to recover some of the ESS cost. There were two main reasons why both ESS committees advise against charging any but the most marginal cost (for producing and sending a CD-ROM data set, if applicable): (1) if the philosophy behind the ESS is to enhance social research in Europe, then

any measure counteracting this goal should be avoided; (2) under conditions of almost (at least in academia) ever present access to electronic networks, distribution controls would be close to impossible to implement.

3.2 Population and sample

Europe within and beyond the context of the European Union is becoming increasingly integrated economically, politically and – to a certain degree – even culturally, and because of its wealth and political freedom it appears more and more attractive to people from less advantaged parts of the world. As one example of integration, citizens from those EU countries which are part of the Schengen agreement can now cross national borders without even being questioned about their national identity. As a consequence of this increasing permeability and also of more and more people from non-EU countries living there without official acknowledgement, the question of the definition of the population from which to sample for the ESS is getting much more complex than it would have been in the past. In addition, since the ESS has – if successful – a time perspective which reaches quite a bit into the 21st century, the core definition of the population from which to sample has to be such that it can carry that prospective weight.

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

Related to this, but with a substantial quality of its own is the question of the sampling procedure to be implemented across the ESS-participating countries. Here, the need to implement an equivalent sampling frame is evident.

In some countries, registers of persons, CD ROM telephone directories or voter registers are available from which national samples are routinely and effectively drawn. Key questions, however, will be whether such registers will satisfy the criteria for the defined population completely, or at least reasonably well, even under conditions of growing migration and immigration and what acceptable alternative sampling frames are available. These are difficult problems which have taken up a large part of the debates in the two ESS committees. Regarding the definition of the population as well as the appropriate sampling design, the conclusion was that it is very important to set inclusive high quality criteria, that will make the ESS distinct from other surveys. However, it is recognised that under resource constraints some minor compromises may be necessary. This is tolerable for the purpose of the ESS as a **general social survey** provided that the compromises are regulated, documented and evaluated. For example, if the survey is to be a practical proposition, there are certain to remain some small ambiguities in the definition of

the population to be sampled and the acceptance of what would constitute equivalent sampling frames.

3.2.1 Population defined

Definition: The survey will cover persons 15 years and older, with no upper age limit, who are resident in the country regardless of nationality, citizenship or legal status.

It must be understood that this is a rather consequential definition for a variety of reasons. First, one needs to consider the age limit of 15 years. In most countries, for instance, the age limit for voting is still 18 years (although in some a lowering of this limit is under debate). In starting at the age of 15, easy sampling from voter registers will not be possible. Still, the committees agreed that under socialisation theory perspective it is necessary to set the lower age limit.

Second, the concept of resident populations ALSO includes persons living in institutions like old age homes, university or school housing, prisons, hospitals and the military as well as the so-called "fluid" parts of the population like the homeless. These are groups which are often not included in current national sampling designs although in principle they belong there. On the other hand, some of these groups of persons are generally not available to survey research for various reasons, and it was felt

that setting up an “ideal” population concept would in the end make the conduct of the ESS unmanageable. For instance, people in inaccessible institutions like prisons and the military are to be **excluded** from the population definition. (Some flexibility in this matter, though, may have to be built in the scheme to allow for country-specific problems which cannot be anticipated at this point; Israel may here be a special case because of the number of the people in military service.)

Regarding such inaccessible parts of the population, one has to keep in mind that in most of the countries the above mentioned groups constitute only a small part of the population and would therefore, even if they could be sampled, be represented in the surveys in numbers so small as not to be fit for separate quantitative analysis. There was therefore agreement in the committees that such groups need not be part of the statistically defined ESS population from which the sample will be drawn. However, if one considers specifically that quite a few countries in the coming decades will experience a substantial ageing of their populations, then the inclusion into the sampling frame of people living in old age homes will from the beginning have to be given serious consideration. The same applies to people who spend extended time in educational institutions and live there.

The most important element of the population definition proposed for the ESS is the inclusion of non-national residents. There was absolute agreement in the two committees that the kind of emerging Europe briefly addressed above (Section 3.2) requires to include from the start non-nationals who reside in an address in the country in question. The biggest difficulty which the ESS will encounter in this respect is a language problem, and this in two ways: (1) the language of the interviewee, and (2) the language of the interviewer. Here, again, parsimony is a guiding light. Obviously, in case a non-national resident speaks and understands the language of the country of residence, no problem ensues. Otherwise, in countries where a minority language is spoken as a first language by 5 % or more of the total population, the questionnaire will be translated into that language too, and suitable interviewers will be trained to administer it.

Given the fact that – should the expected number of countries participate in the ESS – a substantial number of tested language versions will be available (hopefully in the Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI)-mode), even in cases where the 5 % minority language threshold is not reached, one can still expect that in quite a few instances such individuals can nevertheless be included in the

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

survey; more can be said about this problem only after the first round of the ESS is concluded.

3.2.2 Sample defined

Definition: The sample is to be selected by strict random probability methods at every stage. The relative selection probabilities of every sample member must be known and recorded on the data set. Quota sampling must not be used at any stage.

The Methodology Committee has prepared this recommendation based on a survey in all countries represented in the ESS steering Committee (see Appendix 3.1). The result was that random sampling, while not equally present in all countries as a routine procedure, was a sampling method which can be implemented without major problems in all countries. At the same time, it has become clear that sampling modes across countries will at best be functionally equivalent in the sense that the criteria in the above definition are met.

One point of major consideration was the mode of interviewing, given the fact that in many European countries almost half of the surveys (with an emphasis, however, on commercial surveys) are by now already conducted through the telephone. In addition to the fact that not in all European countries alike telephone coverage of private households has come close to the

full coverage mark, the major consideration in favour of **face-to-face personal interviews** as the preferred mode for the ESS was that the ESS, in order to reach a good balance between cost and substantive scope, has to include at least two topical modules, in addition to the two core standard demographic and attitudinal questions, and preferable one additional module to be covered in the self-completion mode (for details see Section 4).

Here, the respondent himself/herself either in the presence of the interviewer or at a later point of his/her liking - in the form of a drop off questionnaire - answers the questions in the third module and the questions posed for methodological purposes. Such an approach is not possible in regular telephone interviews which as a standard research routine usually may not last for much more than 30 minutes before the respondent quits.

Obviously, new developments in electronic networking such as interviewing through the Internet may in the future require a change in the present decision in favour of face-to-face personal interviews, but this appears premature in the case of the ESS for about the next decade.

A very important and cost-relevant decision refers to the number of interviews per country in the ESS. In general social surveys, it has been argued that

their multi-purpose character makes it advisable to have a larger number of respondents than in single-purpose surveys because research interests are more divergent and statistical analysis of groups less prevalent in the population becomes possible (this is why the German ALLBUS between 1980 and 1990 has had an average of about 3000 respondents). While such a large number may be desirable, this philosophy is not shared everywhere, and therefore there was no agreement on a specific number in the two ESS committees regarding the optimal sampling size (for those who are not statistical experts it may be worthwhile to point to the fact that in terms of standard errors and confidence limits there is practically no relationship between the absolute size of the population and the size of the sample necessary for a specific set of desired confidence limits).

The most important point originating from the discussion in the Methodology Committee regarding sampling and sample size was the observation - for non-sampling experts somewhat surprising - that different sampling designs have a considerable impact on standard errors, independently of sample size. In other words, the effective sample size can be considerably smaller than the actual sample size (effective sample size is the size of a simple random sample which produces the same standard errors

as the design actually used). This effect is commonly caused by the use of different selection probabilities in household samples and by geographical clustering (for details see Appendix 3.2).

Obviously, this has to be taken into account when determining the size of the national samples. Since, on the other hand, survey cost is such an important factor, the Methodology Committee felt that some flexibility for the individual countries regarding sample size is in order. It therefore proposes a recommended sample size of 2500 and a minimum of 2000 **not** considering design effects. However, it strongly endorses the requirement that the **effective sample size** must not fall below 1500 interviews.

In order to properly calculate the effective sample size and the necessary statistical estimated (standard errors), each step of the selection process will have to be documented in detail by the national surveying organisation and the supervising team of the principal investigator. This is also necessary for the computation of the completion rate, that is the share of successfully conducted interviews in relation to the initial sample of valid addresses. Our target response rate must therefore be high, and the Methodology Committee has set it at a minimum of 75 % of eligible sample members. We realise that this target level might not in the end be attained in all

3. Designing the European Social Survey: general principles and concrete considerations

countries, but believe it is appropriate to aim as high as possible in order to lift the lowest response rates higher and not to depress the highest ones. Response rates cannot of course be legislated for, but they can be heavily influenced by insisting – as the specification does (see Appendix 5) – on certain fieldwork procedures that maximise the chances of finding elusive sample members.

3.3 Timing

It would have been attractive for many reasons, in particular for the chance to obtain a wider topical coverage, to propose doing the ESS every year. Since the purpose of the ESS is mainly to study mid- to long range change, the practical arguments of cost and major increase in necessary research infrastructure for a one-year rhythm resulted in the unanimous recommendation by both ESS committees to plan the ESS, at least in the beginning, such that it will be conducted **every second year**. Its start is envisaged for the year 2001 in order to design and prepare the study in the necessary precision and quality. This timing will, of course, depend on the speed by which the responsible bodies will take their decision on the ESS.

3.4 Participating countries

At this point it is not yet clear which countries will decide to participate in the first wave of the ESS should the SCSS recommend its start. While the interest of ESF member countries to get involved in the design of the blue print has been very high, this cannot and does not indicate that all will automatically join the ESS. Therefore, it must be clear from the beginning that a more or less full participation of all ESF member countries cannot be a *conditio sine qua non* for the ESS to begin. On the other hand, all efforts should be made to ascertain as wide a participation as possible. The ESS deals, in essence, with the social and political health of the nations of Europe. Every additional country which joins will increase the theoretical and practical input into the project and will enhance its analytical power and usefulness, not to speak of the potential for methodological innovation for the national research communities and for student training. By contrast, for each non-joining country a decision not to participate will be costly in terms of not being involved in the detailed planning of the work, in missing out on the opportunities for the study of change and in not being able to locate its position in relation to the other, participating countries.

4. Selection of Themes for the European Social Survey

4.1 Research focus

From the very beginning of planning the ESS, it was clear that its research focus should further the development of European comparative social research. Neither specific national interests nor current topics or issues can be the main concern of ESS. Instead, the focus has to be the systematic study of European citizens' attitudes, attributes, and behaviour relating to a core set of economically, socially and politically relevant societal domains. The general theme of ESS, then, is **the study of distributions, differences and changes in the social, political, and cultural beliefs and behaviours of Europeans across time and countries as well as the explanation of these differences and changes.**

Structure and selection of substantive topics for the ESS should therefore reflect this emphasis on the need for European comparative and longitudinal research in the social sciences. It will not be just another public opinion survey concerned with specific current — or even fashionable — themes, but a systematically designed and developed instrument to enable and to stimulate innovative research on the basis of existing

knowledge, but at the same time flexible enough to cover new theoretical and practical ground. Besides, the ESS will have to meet the highest methodological standards of the profession. On the basis of these considerations the ESS structure as well as the main criteria for the selection of topics can be derived.

4.2 Core sets and module topics

Each wave of the ESS should basically consist of three parts: (1) a **first core set** of questions for the observation of change and persistence in attitudes, (2) a similar **second core set** for social and demographic attributes, and (3) **modules** for specific topics (including space for methodological testing). For the first two parts about 15 minutes of interview time should be available. For each of the two substantive, topical modules 10-12 minutes of interview time will be set aside, amounting to a total interview length of about 55 minutes. In order to increase the power and efficiency of the ESS, the option of a third module should be pursued in the form of a self-completion questionnaire; here the necessary methodological research could find its main place.

The two core sets establish the continuous part of the ESS and should provide the opportunity for testing and developing dynamic approaches to the study of the social, political, and

4. Selection of Themes for the European Social Survey

cultural beliefs and behaviours of Europeans. Obviously, the actual questionnaire does not have to show the envisaged divisions — only for the two core sets a fixed design of the question order can be considered.

The selection of topics for each of the three parts should be based on the following procedural rules or criteria. It should be

- **theory driven.** Each instrument used in the ESS should be designed and developed on the basis of sound theoretical arguments. This implies the use and/or modification of existing approaches as well as a rejection of instruments applied for explorative research or inductive reasoning. The ESS should be directed at the needs of those members of the scientific community searching for explanations of (changes in) social and political beliefs of Europeans from a comparative perspective.

- **based on empirical evidence.** Instruments used in the ESS should in general have proven their usefulness in empirical research. This implies that instruments which already have been applied in empirical research (although not necessarily in an international comparative setting) and have shown substantive results are especially promising candidates for inclusion. To avoid a conservative bias, opportunities must be provided for innovative topics and questions in addition to the use of established

instruments. They will require meticulous pretesting and methodological scrutiny.

Broadly speaking, four main types of empirical evidence can be discerned:

- evidence obtained from instruments which have been applied in comparative research already (for instance in the Eurobarometer, World Values Survey, ISSP, or Political Action);
- evidence obtained in one or more representative surveys in specific regions or countries (for instance in national general social surveys or national election studies);
- evidence obtained on the basis of systematic pre-testing of new instruments or experiments;
- evidence to be obtained for innovative new approaches to be used in ESS for the first time. For these innovations the ESS should offer the opportunity to develop new instruments and facilities; this must be closely connected to the methodological testing of regular ESS-instruments. A procedure to develop and test new instruments similar to the practices used for the American National Election Study might be designed for these innovations.

- **relevant for studying change.** Each instrument used in ESS should be clearly relevant for monitoring and analysing the dynamics of social, cultural, and political beliefs and behaviours of Europeans. For the core set this requirement is self-evident; for the module it implies that the selection of themes should not be

directed at current issues or topics, but instead focus on specific phenomena which do not require continuous monitoring. Obviously, this does not imply that at the operational level references to current issues or fashionable topics should be (or can be) avoided.

4.2.1 Core sets

Along the principal lines of the three procedural rules or criteria mentioned above, the main areas to be covered by the two core sets of questions have to be specified. The usual distinction between 'attitudes' on the one hand and 'background variables' on the other does not seem to be a very promising starting point here. Besides, any *a priori* selection of a specific theoretical approach would immediately threaten the requirement of designing the ESS as an infra-structural 'tool' providing information for a wide variety of scholars. From these considerations follows that the selection of topics for the core set should start with a rough identification of the main areas to be covered. Firstly, these can be summarised in the following way:

- **individual attitudes and attributes.** These areas include all properties which can be attributed to each European citizen, both of an attitudinal and behavioural nature (like trust, satisfaction, expectations, alienation, cultural preferences, political participation) and of a socio-

economic and demographic nature (like age, education, social class, residence, income).

- **social position and networks.**

These areas include all properties which indicate the position each European has in his or her social environment (like family structure, social participation, mobility).

- **social context and environment.**

These areas include all properties of the societies in which European citizens live (like the degree of social inequality, welfare state provisions, public spending, crime rates, or party competition).

Secondly, from a different perspective, when the core set of questions is determined, the dimensions which need to be considered systematically are the location of the individual respondents in the social structure, the political structure and in the cultural sphere of the society in question.

4.2.2 Module topics

The selection of module topics in the ESS should take place on the basis of the expectation that including these topics in a comparative setting will bring evident gains for substantive research. Therefore, these topics should not reflect actual issues, but rather cover those topics which are relevant for understanding the social, political, and cultural beliefs and behaviours of Europeans without the need to collect this information in each wave of the ESS. Researchers should be

4. Selection of Themes for the European Social Survey

invited to submit proposals for topics to be included according to the procedural rules mentioned below (see also Section 7). In this way, the ESS can be a facility open to the scientific community, demonstrate best practice standards and stimulate new developments in the social sciences.

In addition to the inclusion of these substantive topics, the modules should be used for methodological testing of the indicators included in the core set (like the use of different variants or variations in question wording) as well as offer the opportunity for testing new instruments with clearly innovative aspects.

4.3 Choice of topics

4.3.1 Procedural rules and criteria

Even a first selection of topics for inclusion in the core set and as additional modules presents substantial problems if the above mentioned general criteria are used. For each candidate set of questions, one must collect information and evaluate the empirical evidence based on a matrix of the three procedural rules or criteria and the main areas to be covered. This results in the following check-list for the decision which questions to include in the ESS.

Main Areas to be Covered:	Procedural Rules or Criteria:		
	1. Theory Driven	2. Empirical Evidence	3. Relevance for Change
Core Set: 1. <i>Individual Attitudes and Attributes</i> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme (a) ● Theme (..) 	x x	x x	x x
2. <i>Social Position and Networks</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme (k) ● Theme (..) 	x x	x x	x x
3. <i>Social Context and Environment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme (v) ● Theme (..) 	x x	x x	x x
Module Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topic (A) ● Topic (B) ● Topic (C) 	x x x	x x x	x x x

4.3.2 Examples of questions for the two core sets

Obviously, a listing of the questions for the two core sets and also for the module topics will have to be left to the next work stages in preparing the ESS. For the core, typical topics may include:

- **Individual attitudes and attributes**

- issues and problems (national problems like crime, inequality, unemployment, public spending, etc.);
- orientations towards democracy (satisfaction, political trust, confidence in institutions, left-right self-placement, etc.);
- media usage/exposure and communication (reading newspapers and magazines, watching tv, listening to the radio, internet and multimedia usage);
- political involvement (political interest, political participation, voting behaviour, etc.);
- social and political orientations (individualisation, victimisation, postmaterialism, etc.);
- socio-political identity (national identity, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, patriotism, etc.);
- leisure activities, life style issues, etc.
- Sex/gender, nationality, birth, family situation, housing/residence, social class, education, employment/unemployment, religion, occupation, household, personal income, household income, number of people in household, etc.

- **Social position and networks**

Family structure; involvement in voluntary associations, interest groups, and church related organisations; informal networks, professional contacts, etc.

- **Social context and environment**

Social and political embeddedness, economic development, organisational structure (civil society), etc.

4.3.3 Selection and examples of module topics

Both ESS committees strongly believe that the most important function of the ESS is to promote comparative social research in Europe and to create a widespread sense of community and involvement among European social researchers. Therefore, the most important asset in the ESS context is its potential to activate this engagement through the opportunity to play a major role in the selection and development of the module topics. This must be achieved by an open competition for the best proposals.

Further on in the development of the ESS, the Steering Committee will design the procedures most appropriate for safeguarding that from such a competition the theoretically most interesting and methodologically best designed proposals will be selected (see also Section 7). Therefore, the Steering Committee decided not to develop further in detail the paradigmatic proposal for module topics by the Methodology Committee. However, for the first ESS wave,

5. Methodological Research

in the light of the large amount of organisational and scientific work to be done in the beginning phase of the ESS, the Steering Committee has expressed its willingness, if so required, to take on the responsibility for selecting both the 2-3 topic modules and the cross-national groups of scholars to entrust with the job of conceptualizing them.

However, in order to convey at least a flavour of what might be covered, and without prejudice, the Steering Committee offers the following topics from the three realms of the social structure, the political structure and the cultural sphere. They are no more than examples.

- **Social structure**
 - families, primary groups, and social networks;
 - mobility, immigration and multi-culturalism;
 - social inclusion and inequality;
- **Political structure**
 - civil society and trust;
 - democracy and political involvement;
 - interest groups and political parties;
- **Cultural sphere**
 - life styles and life course, including life-long education;
 - media and the knowledge society;
 - subnational, national and transnational identities.

5. Methodological Research

A large and innovative venture like the ESS requires a lot of methodological and practical quality control. This refers first to the design of the questionnaires and the necessary work with respect to translation and back-translation, and second to all aspects of sampling in order to guarantee the quality of the national and comparative studies.

5.1 Questions and question wording

The Methodology Committee has suggested that in three countries large scale pilot studies will be done which allow serious statistical analysis. Furthermore, it was suggested that in all countries in the main study drop off questionnaires will be used for methodological research. This allows for the following studies (for details see Appendix 4):

- before the pilot studies cognitive studies of the most important concepts in the questionnaires should be done so that one can be sure that the questions are understood and answered as they were expected to be answered. Such studies should concentrate on basic terms like social security, the welfare state or democracy. It is probably best to perform such checks in a place where different language forms can be tested and have been tested

before so that comparisons can be made. The Dutch Statistical Office (CBS) performs such tests for European studies;

- during such a cognitive study at least 30 interviews should be taped for an interaction analysis in order to see if there are serious problems with the data collection;
- predictions have to be made which questions of the reformulated questionnaires will cause most serious problems with respect to reliability and validity. These predictions can be done on the basis of previous studies. For those questions which are most problematic, alternative formulations will be tested in the quantitative pilot studies by a combination of split ballot experiments and MTMM (multi-trait-multi-method) studies in order to detect strong method effects and large random errors;
- even though these tests will improve the quality of the measures, method effects, measurement errors and response differences between the different countries are unavoidable. The drop off questionnaires in the different countries allow the estimation of response probabilities and reliability of the most important questions which might vary from country to country and in this way allow for correction of these errors. How this can be done should be provided in the documentation of the data when they are made available for the users;
- the pilot and/or drop off studies should also contain

measures to determine the strength of the opinions of people. Differences in sophistication can cause considerable differences between countries with respect to correlations. Such differences might not exist between people with equal knowledge or sophistication with respect to the issue. One possibility is to ask extra questions concerning the knowledge about the issue at hand. An alternative would be to provide alternative framings or counter-arguments for different opinions. In doing so one can determine the strength of the opinions and compare people with equal strength of opinions;

- after the data have been collected, the most relevant variables have to be screened looking for unexpected results with respect to different background variables and across countries. The data should only be made publicly available after this screening is done and the most serious problems have been solved or documented.

5.2 Sampling and non-response on the ESS

It is important that the ESS should routinely monitor and assess the implementation and effect of the sampling design and the effect of non-response. This will aid interpretation of the data and will ensure that high standards and comparability are maintained. In addition to this routine assessment, the

5. Methodological Research

opportunity should be grasped to carry out original methodological research designed to extend knowledge (and, ultimately, to improve practice) about the effects of non-response and the role of the interview in this process:

- **Sample design quality control:** The form of sampling required for the ESS is likely to represent an increase in quality above usual practice for many countries. In some countries, some components of the sampling method may be completely novel. The introduction of new and improved methods should be seen as a major potential achievement of the survey. However, it is essential to assess the success of the methods employed. First, analysis of the quality of implementation of the sample design must be undertaken. Second, analysis of the impact of the sample design on analysis must be undertaken in a systematic way across countries. Specifically, design effects and their components (due to stratification, clustering, differential selection probabilities etc.) should be estimated and published for a range of variables and estimates. To enable this to be achieved, the survey specification will stipulate that the data set must include indicators of PSU (primary sampling unit) and stratum membership for every sample case, selection probability, and records of any interviewer-administered selection procedure (i.e. number of persons resident at

address, identification number of selected person, etc);

- **non-response quality control:** For each country, an analysis of both the response outcomes and the response effort (number of visits made, by days of weeks and times of day, etc) for all sample cases will be carried out and published because this is essential for assessing the quality of the sample obtained. This analysis will also incorporate covariates such as area characteristics and interviewer-observed items. To enable this to be achieved, the survey specification will stipulate that the data set must include detailed contact and outcome information for all sample cases (respondents and non-respondents);

- **analysis of the effectiveness of response elicitation effort:** This is currently a very important and much-debated topic amongst survey organisations. In recent years, the effort required to maintain response rates on social surveys appears to have increased dramatically in many countries. The measures employed to maximise response vary across countries and contexts, and relatively little is known about the effectiveness of response elicitation efforts. The ESS will provide the opportunity for recent work carried out in the UK and USA to be extended and applied to a cross-national comparative context. The work would consist of relating interviewer calling patterns and effort to non-response bias in order to help

identify which parts of the response elicitation process are most (or least) effective at minimising survey errors. The chance to systematically identify cross-national differences in these relationships adds further to the value of this research. To enable this to be achieved, the survey specification will stipulate that the data set must include, for each call on each sample case (respondents and non-respondents), an outcome code, and the date and time of the call;

- **analysis of the role of interviewer characteristics:** Some important research into the role of interviewers in obtaining survey response, and the ways in which interviewers affect survey error, has been carried out in recent years. The ESS offers the opportunity to extend and enhance this work in some important areas. For example, there is much that could be learned from analysis of the relationships between interviewer characteristics and survey errors (particularly unit and item non-response bias and interviewer-correlated variance), which could be carried out and compared across countries and survey organisations for the first time. To make this analysis possible, the data set will include an anonymised interviewer identification number (which is necessary anyway to aid the data quality control procedures) as well as the responses to a very short form to be administered to all interviewers (collecting basic

demographic and experience information), using the same anonymised number.

6. Data Management, Archiving and Distribution

In due time, through open tender or other procedures, a decision will have to be taken which of the existing data archives in Europe shall become the ESS archive. This choice will have to be made according to the specifications in this section of the report. At this point, it can remain an open question whether one archive or a set of cooperating archives will be the best solution. In the following text only the singular is used as a matter of practicality.

Rigorous standards must be defined to ascertain compatibility of the ESS national data sets for integration into a common core for international comparison. The national data sets should be checked, cleaned and documented by the survey organisation after the completion of fieldwork and then be sent to the ESS archive for integration, documentation, archiving and distribution of the international ESS data set. This requires well-structured procedures involving the Principal Investigators, the ESS Methodological Team, the Methodology Committee, and the ESS Archive (for the proposed ESS organisation and its main bodies see Section 7).

6. Data Management, Archiving and Distribution

6.1 Integration, documentation, validation and archiving of the database

This part of the process involves the following procedures:

- national data sets from participating countries are sent within three months after completion of field work to the archive. The national data sets must be checked for plausibility, cleaned and documented by the team of the national principal investigator and must be documented according to international standards to be provided by the Archive;
- the Archive prepares backup copies of the originals of national datasets and stores them according to archival standards;
- the Archive systematically checks for completeness of data and related materials (field reports, specimen copy of questionnaires, study descriptions) before integrating the national data sets into the common core data set. This includes further checking, cleaning and the construction of derived variables in cooperation with Principal Investigators, the Methodological Team and the Methodology Committee. Integration also requires standardisation of national variables for the international comparative common core data set beyond the level of standardisation to be followed in national data sets already. This

standardisation must be based on culture specific knowledge and therefore must be achieved in cooperation with the Principal Investigators;

- The integrated ESS module with common core data set and codebook in printed or electronic form will be delivered to the Methodological Team for testing and verification. This is scheduled to happen no later than six month after arrival of the last data set in the Archive. After completion of tests based on intensive standard analyses by the Methodological Team, the data set is returned to the Archive for final processing and documentation.

6.2 Refinement of data base

The individual microdata from the surveys then could be merged with geographically referenced contextual data from aggregate statistics agreed upon by ESS and to be provided by the Methodological Team. Another option may be to just supply the users with references in the data set permitting the linkage to other existing data bases (see Section 3.1.4 of the report and Appendix 2). Furthermore, the integrated data are stored into a relational data base according to international archival standards. This is to establish time series and to support the extraction of variables for comparative analyses, including documentation of trends. In addition, the data base management should support scale

and index construction which has to be based on cooperation with the Principal Investigators and the Methodological Team. Various developments are under way like ILSES (Integrated Library- and Survey Data Extraction Service), NESSTAR (Networked European Social Science Tools and Resources) or ACCESS (Microsoft-based Information System) which cover most of the required functionalities. Of course, the integrated data set and documentation including all related materials will be permanently stored according to archival standards.

6.3 Data distribution

Data distribution is organised by the Archive in agreement with ESS via the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) and the International Federation of Data Organisations for the Social Sciences (IFDO). The ESS Archive implements the administration of embargoes (if imposed for a time period of not more than two years by principal investigators) and standard data protection measures.

Distribution will be offered via modern media, currently CD ROM or via Internet, subsets of data may be distributed via diskette. Distribution rights rest with the ESS Archive and are executed in agreement with ESS. Given rapid developments in data distribution and retrieval technologies, internet services for

easy retrieval and access to ESS questionnaires and data will be developed on the variable and study item level.

Since there are substantial differences in data protection regulations across Europe, it may be necessary – like in the case of the German Socio-economic panel study (SOEP) – to make data access dependent on a contractual agreement to be signed by the data archive and the data recipient.

6.4 Event data

It is well known from earlier comparative survey research that in some fields, such as electoral analysis, individual reactions to certain questions will be influenced by contextual factors and by significant events. For example, a question about the subjective interest in politics of a respondent may well be answered differently at the height of a national campaign for a general election compared to a time when no election is imminent. The contextual impact on individual response behaviour will not create major difficulties for the ESS as long as the contexts and events vary individually in an idiosyncratic fashion. The impact, however, of a contextual factor or an event must be considered and, whenever possible, controlled as soon as whole societies are thus influenced in a way which is not uniform across the countries in the ESS.

6. Data Management, Archiving and Distribution

In addition, it has to be remembered that the ESS will in the long run also become an important asset for historical micro analysis. As a consequence, from the beginning an information tool which for the lack of a better term may be called an event data inventory will have to be designed. This inventory must offer to the researchers a brief, pertinent synopsis of major political, social and other potentially relevant events in the ESS countries; this is particularly important for the ESS since its modular approach will in the long run cover a wide area of substantive concerns.

Preferably, this inventory should begin with the starting year of the survey and must be regularly updated. A data archive is the optimal place for this because it could use the support of other data archives in the participating countries in standardizing and providing the relevant information. Details and cost will have to be specified in due time with the archive(s) involved in the ESS.

6.5 Other archival concerns

ESS supports a policy of free and easy access to its integrated dataset. Data should be made available to the scientific community basically at handling charges. Other uses are subject to agreement with ESS and the Archive.

Other surveys central to topics covered by ESS should be acquired by the ESS Archive and should be made available for preparation of new ESS modules and for comparisons within the range of resources the Archive can make available for this purpose specifically. Also, list server and discussion group functions shall be implemented, and data flows detected in the process of further data analysis by ESS groups or the social science community at large will be documented by the Archive. Finally, literature based on ESS data shall be compiled by the Methodological Team and documented by the Archive.

7. Organisational Structure

It was mentioned in the beginning that in the organisation of the ESS a good marriage of flexible and stable elements must be achieved. Undoubtedly, as was observed in the ESS Steering Committee deliberations from the start, an enterprise of the size and the continuity of the ESS cannot be mustered without a stable support structure. On the other hand, since the survey is conceptualized as one for the social science community in Europe at large (and maybe beyond), a lot of bottom-up elements must be mobilized.

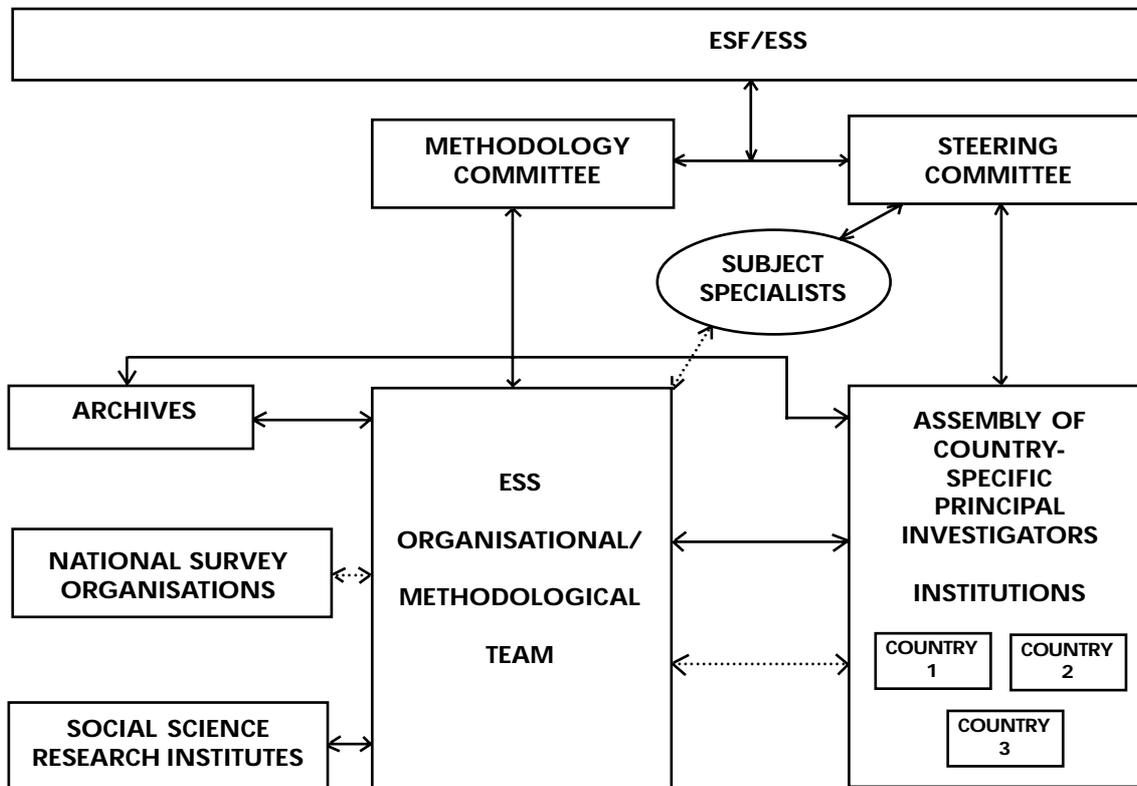
The Methodology Committee has spent a substantial amount of its time in considering the way that the demands of such a big survey can be organisationally met. In this, it has started from the following assumptions:

- both the Steering Committee and the Methodology Committee will have to become Standing Committees in the guidance of the survey;
- the concrete conduct of the survey requires a permanent support group (ESS Organisational/Methodological Team) to supervise the survey, act as a link between the Principal Investigators and the Data Archive (see Section 6) and be in regular contact with the Methodology Committee in all ESS-related topics, including methodological research; the

members of the team will be selected by members of the Steering Committee;

- the ESS Methodological Team must be linked to an experienced and resourceful hosting survey organisation;
- the Steering Committee interacts regularly with the Methodology Committee in all ESS matters; it is responsible for all general dealings with the Principal Investigators and the Assembly of Principal Investigators. In particular, it will be responsible for selecting the themes for the ESS topical modules and for organizing the competition among European social scientists for designing the modules. In addition, the Steering Committee members will have the obligation to link the ESS to their national communities and to act as communication nodes. Finally, the Steering Committee will be the major link to the funding organisations of the ESS and will have to take all general budgetary decisions.
- the Methodology Committee will be responsible for guiding the work of the ESS Methodological Team and in particular for the design of the ongoing methodological research.

The following page contains a graphic demonstration of the core ESS organisational set up. While not all elements in that structure will interact on the same level of intensity (indicated by full or dotted arrows), it is clear that the ESS represents and requires a complex network approach.



It appears somewhat premature to specify the ESS structure very much beyond what was just said. However, a few general considerations or suggestions should be mentioned:

- the Steering Committee should consist of senior social scientists from participating countries and should be nominated by their national ESF member organisations (provided the ESF – as envisaged and deemed desirable – continues to play a major tutoring role vis à vis the ESS);
- the Methodology Committee should consist of 6 to 8 senior social scientists with active

expertise in social science methodological research;

- both ESS committees for reasons of continuity and proven success should continue in their present composition at least for the first ESS wave, should the ESS be funded;
- the Data Archive and the hosting research institute to which the ESS Methodological Team will be attached, should be selected on the basis of an open competition, its criteria being set jointly by the Steering Committee and the Methodology Committee;
- the appropriate national funding bodies would reach a decision, after consultation with the Steering Committee, on the

selection of the Principal Investigator in that country; the Principal Investigator cannot at the same time be a member of the Steering Committee;

- the selection of the national organisation conducting the fieldwork of the survey will be organized by the Principal Investigator; it will be based on the acceptance of the standards set by the Methodology Committee (see Appendix 5);
- the most important bottom-up element in the ESS is the teams of researchers who compete in designing the topical modules (referred to as 'subject specialists' in the table, opposite). These groups should be small in size (3-6), but should preferably have a multi-national composition. It will be one of the most important tasks for the Steering Committee to elicit a vital response from the European social science community to participate in this competition. Obviously, the selection of topics by the Steering Committee will be decisive here because it defines the extent to which researchers from different social science disciplines will become involved in the ESS.

One of the most pressing problems to be solved is that research councils and other funding agencies agree that a minimal permanent staff (permanent in terms of positions, not necessarily in terms of individuals) is absolutely mandatory for running the ESS. A

detailed discussion in the ESS Methodology Committee has resulted in the following recommendations:

- a full-time position for a senior coordinator who would stimulate, organise and supervise all aspects of the ESS from its design to its successful delivery;
- four half-time positions for experienced researchers for
 - (1) pretesting, questionnaire construction and translation, plus related methodological research;
 - (2) sampling frame development and implementation, plus related methodological research;
 - (3) data quality check, liaison with archive(s) data for multi-level analyses, plus related methodological research;
 - (4) data analysis and indicator validation/construction, plus related methodological research;
- two half-time positions for junior researchers;
- a full-time secretary
- personnel resources for auditing and financial control.

8. Costs

8. Costs

8.1 General remarks

Since cost is a particularly touchy subject, a major note of caution has to be introduced in dealing with this part of the proposal. As is evidenced by the previous sections of this document, substantial thought especially by the Methodology Committee has been invested in proposing what can be considered to be a sound structure for the ESS and the way various groups of participants will have to interact in order to make the ESS work. Based on the organisational concept laid out in Section 7, in the following paragraphs an effort is made to at least somewhat reliably estimate the overall cost of the survey. It must be clear from the start that these are educated **estimates** and that the calculation covers **a period of two years**, in accordance with the two-year time frame for the first wave of the ESS. In addition, any changes in the concept for the ESS which emerge during the deliberation process leading to a definite recommendation by the SCSS may affect these estimates. They are divided in two parts: (1) the total cost of the field work and data preparation derived from the information by the 16 countries from which cost estimates were obtained, and (2) the fixed cost of the ESS in the sense that these will occur more or less independently of the number of participating countries (the only

major exception here is the calculated cost of half-time position for Principal Investigators for two years in 16 countries where the gross amount will, of course, vary with the number of countries involved).

8.1.1 Cost of survey

The chairman of the Methodology Committee sent a document (reprinted as Appendix 5) to all members of the Steering Committee asking them to present him with estimates by an experienced survey organisation for the fieldwork cost in the given country based on his detailed specification.

Sixteen of the countries presented in the Steering Committee have responded so that a broad information base is available. If one takes the mean and the median **average** estimates per country **in EURO, VAT excluded**, then

- the mean cost per survey is 262.000;
- the median cost per survey is 255.000.

Assuming that those 16 countries which have provided the Methodology Committee with cost estimates will participate, then the **overall** field work cost is 4.200.000 EURO.

8.1.2 Fixed costs

Since the rationale for the various cost items has already been laid out in previous sections of the report, in the following only the

individual cost positions are itemized and presented with a price tag. In order to obtain an overall cost figure for the first two-year wave of the ESS, all individual items are costed for a

two-year period. According to information from Steering Committee members about their national practices, a 20 percent overhead on the fixed costs is included.

Costs for first wave of survey – two years	costs (in 1000 EURO)
● one project director, full-time	200
● four senior researchers, half-time	320
● two junior researchers, half-time	130
● one secretary, full-time	70
● auditing and financial control	50
● 16 principal investigators, half-time	800
● overhead 20 % of 1.570	314
	1.884
<i>Methodological research</i>	
● pretest work (600 interviews each in three countries)	225
● methodological experiments	60
	285
<i>Other cost</i>	
● archival work	150
● travel expenses committees (25 members, 2 meetings per year, 1000 EURO each)	100
● travel expenses topic specialists (5 members, 3 meetings, 1000 EURO each)	15
● travel expenses principal investigators (15 members, 3 meetings, 1000 EURO each)	48
● consultancy fees	50
	363
Total fixed cost	2.532
Contingency fund 10 %	253
	2.785
Total cost of European Social Survey (for 2 years)	
● field work	4.200
● fixed costs	2.785
Grand total	6.985

9. Funding

The working assumption at the time of the writing of this report is that the central (fixed) costs of around 2,8 m EURO per survey (1,4 m EURO per year) would be centrally-funded (ideally via a mechanism such as the EU's Fifth Research Framework Programme). This would leave the

individual National Science Foundations to fund their own survey costs every two years, averaging at an amortised annualised cost of around 130.000 EURO for each participating nation (more in the Scandinavian countries and Germany, less in many other countries, and much less in some).

Appendix 1.1 Expert Group on a European Social Survey – List of members

41

Professor Max Kaase (Chairman)

*Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin
für Sozialforschung
FS Sozialer Wandel,
Institutionen und Vermittlungsprozesse
Reichpietschufer 50
10785 Berlin
Germany*

Mr. Bruno Cautrès

*CIDSP/IEP de Grenoble
Domaine Universitaire
B.P. 45
38402 Saint Martin d'Hères cedex
France*

Professor Juan Diez Nicolas

*(Professor of Sociology,
Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
ASEP
Paseo de la Castellana 173, 5º I
28046 Madrid
Spain*

Professor Fredrik Engelstad

*Institute for Social Research (ISF)
Munthesgate 31
0260 Oslo
Norway*

Professor Roger Jowell

*Director
Social and Community Planning
Research
(SCPR)
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom*

Professor Leif Nordberg

*Åbo Academy University
Department of Statistics
Fänriksgatan 3B
20500 Turku
Finland*

Professor Antonio Schizzerotto

*Facoltà di Sociologia
Università degli Studi di Trento
Via Verdi 26
38100 Trento
Italy*

Dr. L. Henk Stronkhorst

*Head, Scientific Statistical Agency
NWO-WSA
Postbus 93120
2509 AC The Hague
The Netherlands*

Dr. John H. Smith (Secretary)

*European Science Foundation
1 quai Lezay-Marnésia
67080 Strasbourg cedex
France*

42 Appendix 1.2 Steering Committee – List of members

**Professor Max Kaase
(Chairman)**

*Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für
Sozialforschung
FS Sozialer Wandel,
Institutionen und
Vermittlungsprozesse*
Reichpietschufer 50
10785 Berlin
Germany

Tel: +49 30 254 91 293
Fax: +49 30 254 91 318
E-mail: maka@medea.wz-berlin.de

Professor Rune Åberg

*University of Umeå
Department of Sociology*
901 87 Umeå
Sweden

Tel: +46 90 786 59 60
Fax: +46 90 786 66 94
E-mail: rune.aberg@soc.umu.se

Professor Jacques Billiet

*Department of Sociology
Catholic University Leuven*
Van Evenstraat 2B
3000 Leuven
Belgium

Tel: +32 16 32 31 57
Fax: +32 16 32 33 65
E-mail: Jaak.Billiet@soc.kuleuven.ac.be

**Professor Antonio Brandao
Moniz**

*Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia
Universidade Nova de Lisboa*
Quinta da Torre
2825 Monte de Caparica
Portugal

Tel: +351 1 295 4464
Fax: +351 1 295 4461
E-mail: abm@mail.fct.unl.pt

Mr. Bruno Cautrès

*CIDSP/BDSP
Institut d'Etudes Politiques de
Grenoble*
Domaine Universitaire - B.P. 48
38040 Grenoble Cedex 9
France

Tel: +33 4 76 82 60 94
Fax: +33 4 76 82 60 50
E-mail: cautres@cidsp.upmf-grenoble.fr

**Professor Nikiforos
Diamandouros**

National Centre for Social Research
14-18 Messoghion Av.
11527 Athens
Greece

Tel: +30 1 74 89 123
Fax: +30 1 74 89 127
E-mail: NDiamand@EKKE.gr

Professor Henryk Domanski

*Institute of Philosophy and
Sociology
Polish Academy of Sciences*

Nowy Swiat 72
Palac Staszica
00-330 Warsaw
Poland

Tel: +48 22 826 96 17
Fax: +48 22 826 99 48/+48 22
826 78 23
E-mail: hdomansk@ifispan.waw.pl

Professor Yilmaz Esmer

*Faculty of Economic and
Administrative
Sciences, Bogazici University*
PK. 2 Bebek

Istanbul
Turkey
Tel: +90 212 263 15 50
Fax: +90 212 265 63 57
E-mail: esmer@boun.edu.tr

Dr. Peter Farago

*Landert Farago
Davatz & Partner*
Grossmünsterplatz 6
8001 Zurich
Switzerland

Tel: +411 265 39 90
Fax: +411 265 39 99
E-mail: pfarago@access.ch

Professor Roger Jowell

*Social and Community Planning
Research (SCPR)*
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 171 250 1866
Fax: +44 171 250 1524
E-mail: r.jowell@scpr.ac.uk

Professor Stein Kuhnle

*Department of Comparative Politics
University of Bergen*
Christiesgate 15
5007 Bergen
Norway

Tel: 47 55 58 21 79
Fax: 47 55 58 94 25
E-mail: Stein.kuhnle@isp.uib.no

Professor Michael Laver

*Department of Political Sciences
The Policy Institute
Trinity College*

Dublin 2
Ireland

Tel: +353 1 608 20 36
Fax: +353 1 677 05 46
E-mail: mlaver@tcd.ie

Professor Guido Martinotti

Via del Caravaggio, 5
20144 Milano
Italy

Tel: +39 2 861 089
Fax: +39 2 861 891
E-mail: gmartin@mail.Sociol.unimi.it

Professor José Ramón Montero

*Fundación Juan March
Centro de Estudios Avanzados en
Ciencias Sociales*
Castello, 77
28006 Madrid

Spain

Tel: +34 1 435 42 40
Fax: +34 1 576 34 20
E-mail: Montero@ceacs.march.es

Dr. Karl H. Müller

*Institute for Advanced Studies
Department of Sociology*
Stumpergasse 56
1060 Vienna

Austria

Tel: +43 1 59 991 212
Fax: +43 1 59 991 191
E-mail: Mueller@ihssv.wsr.ac.at

Professor Leif Nordberg

*Åbo Academy University
Department of Statistics
Fänriksgatan 3B
20500 Turku
Finland*

Tel: +358 2 215 4163
Fax: +358 2 215 4677
E-mail: Leif.Nordberg@abo.fi

Dr. Niels Ploug

*National Institute for Social
Research*

Herluf Trolles Gade, 11
1052 Copenhagen K
Denmark

Tel: +45 33 48 08 40
Fax: +45 33 48 08 33
E-mail: np@smsfi.dk

Substituted by:

Mr. Torben Fridberg

*Socialforskningsinstituttet
Herluf Trolles Gade 11
1052 Copenhagen K
Denmark*

Tel: +45 33 48 08 47
Fax: +45 33 48 08 33
E-mail: TF@SMSFI.DK

Professor Shalom Schwartz

*Department of Psychology
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Mount Scopus
Jerusalem 91905
Israel*

Tel: +972 2 588 30 24
Fax: +972 2 588 11 59
E-mail: Msshshch@mssc.huji.ac.il

Mrs. Ineke Stoop

*Department of Information and
Automation*

*Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau
Parnassusplein 5
P.O. Box 16164
2500 BD The Hague
The Netherlands*

Tel: +31 70 340 70 00
Fax: +31 70 340 70 44
E-mail: stoop@scp.nl

Professor Françoise Thys-Clement

Pro-Recteur
*Université Libre de Bruxelles
Avenue F.D. Roosevelt 50
Case Postale 140
1050 Bruxelles
Belgium*

Tel: +32 2 650 41 73
Fax: +32 2 650 44 95
E-mail: pdekie@resulb.ulb.ac.be

Substituted by:

Mr. Pierre Desmarez

*TEF – CP 124
Avenue Jeanne 44
1050 Bruxelles
Belgium*

Tel: +32 2 650 34 30
Fax: +32 2 650 33 35
E-mail: Pdesmar@ulb.ac.be

Professor Niko Toš

*Faculty for Social Sciences
University of Ljubljana
Kardelieva Pz. 4
1000 Ljubljana
Slovenia*

Tel: +386 61 349 994
Fax: +386 61 1686 054
E-mail: cjmmksjm@uni-lj.si

Professor Michael Warren

30 Cole Park Road
Twickenham
TW1 1HS Middlesex
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 181 891 3130
Fax: +44 181 891 1970
E-mail: michael.warren@mrsl.co.uk

Dr. John H. Smith

(ESF Scientific Secretary for the
Social Sciences)

Ms. Geneviève Schauinger
(Administrative Assistant)

**Mrs. Beatriz Garcia Diaz-
Ambrona**

(Administrative Secretary)
*European Science Foundation
1, Quai Lezay-Marnésia
67080 Strasbourg Cedex
France*

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 31
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32
E-mail: scss@esf.org

44 **Appendix 1.3**
Methodology Committee - List of members

Professor Roger Jowell
(Chairman)
Social and Community Planning
Research (SCPR)
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 171 250 1866
Fax: +44 171 250 1524
E-mail: r.jowell@scpr.ac.uk

Professor Jacques Billiet
Department of Sociology
Catholic University Leuven
Van Evenstraat 2B
3000 Leuven
Belgium
Tel: +32 16 32 31 57
Fax: +32 16 32 33 65
E-mail: jaak.billiet@soc.kuleuven.ac.be

Dr. Peter Lynn
Survey Methods Centre
Social & Community Planning
Research
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 171 250 18 66
Fax: +44 171 250 15 24
E-mail: p.lynn@scpr.ac.uk

Dr. Nonna Mayer
Centre d'Etude de la Vie Politique
Française
10, rue de la Chaise
75007 Paris
France
Tel: +33 1 49 54 21 49
Fax: +33 1 49 54 20 25
E-mail: mayer@msh-paris.fr

Dr. Ekkehard Mochmann
Zentralarchiv für empirische
Sozialforschung
Universität zu Köln
Bachermer Str. 40
50931 Köln 41
Germany
Tel: +49 221 394 737
Fax: +49 221 476 9477
E-mail: mochmann@za.uni-koeln.de

Professor José Ramón
Montero
Fundación Juan March
Centro de Estudios Avanzados en
Ciencias Sociales
Castello, 77
28006 Madrid
Spain
Tel: +34 1 435 42 40
Fax: +34 1 576 34 20
E-mail: montero@ceacs.march.es

Professor Willem Saris
Department of Statistics and
Methodology
Faculty of Political, Social and
Cultural Sciences
University of Amsterdam
O.Z. Achterburgwal 237
1012 DL Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 20 525 2091
Fax: +31 20 525 2086
E-mail: saris@pscw.uva.nl

Professor Antonio Schizzeroto
Dipartimento di Sociologia e
Ricerca Sociale
Università di Trento
Via Verdi 26
38100 Trento
Italy
Tel: +39 0461 881 315
Fax: +39 0461 881 348
E-mail: aschizze@gelso.unitn.it

Professor Dr. Jan van Deth
Lehrstuhl für Politische
Wissenschaft und
International Vergleichende
Sozialforschung
Universität Mannheim
Seminar-gebäude A 5
68131 Mannheim
Germany
Tel: 49 621 292 5316
Fax: 49 621 292 5315
E-mail: jvdeth@sowi.uni-mannheim.de

Dr. Joachim Vogel
Statistics Sweden
Box 24300
104 51 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel: +46 8 783 4930
Fax: +46 8 783 4772
E-mail: joachim.vogel@scb.se

Professor Max Kaase
(Chairman Steering Committee)
Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für
Sozialforschung
Reichpietschufer 50
10785 Berlin
Germany
Tel: +49 30 254 91 293
Fax: +49 30 254 91 318
E-mail: maka@medea.wz-berlin.de

Dr. John H. Smith
(ESF Scientific Secretary for the
Social Sciences)
Ms. Geneviève Schauinger
(Administrative Assistant)
Mrs. Beatriz Garcia Diaz-
Ambrona
(Administrative Secretary)
European Science Foundation
1, Quai Lezay-Marnésia
67080 Strasbourg Cedex
France
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 31
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32
E-mail: scss@esf.org

Appendix 2 Regional variables in cross-national surveys

Regional disaggregation is usually a standard procedure in national surveys. These classifications normally follow (larger) administrative and territorial divisions (counties, larger territorial units). Sometimes smaller geographical areas (municipalities, parishes) are clustered by demographic/social/economic characteristics. Regional analysis in comparative surveys is problematic since the measurement of regional variation is affected by national traditions of administrative and territorial classifications. Hence, there are few examples of regional disaggregation in comparative studies.

For the ESS the NUTS-system of EUROSTAT (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics), applied in official regional statistics for EU-member states, offers a new option. NUTS is a five-level hierarchical classification (NUTS I-5) and is used for the production of detailed regional statistics (see Regions: Statistical Yearbook). The NUTS system is also primarily based on existing administrative classification, as well as traditional territorial subdivisions. The principles of regional disaggregation may vary much between countries.

EUROSTAT surveys normally carry the NUTS-code (ECHP, LFS; also the demographic database and most economics statistics).

There is a large variation of regional indicators available in EUROSTATs regional database REGIO and reported in the Statistical yearbook, which can be linked to cross-national surveys which include the NUTS code, such as:

- population structure, population change, density, fertility, migration
- labour force: employment and unemployment; by age, sex, branch
- GDP per capita, selected economic indicators · education
- health services, mortality, causes of death
- housing stock and housing amenities
- consumption: electricity, cars.

Part of this information may give a contextual background relating to general living conditions, social and economic change, and regional marginalisation. However, the comparative value of this information is related to the comparability of the principles of the NUTS-classification itself which have been applied in the member states.

The NUTS code (e.g. the third level) can be used for further territorial aggregation of clusters of similarity, for instance distinguishing between centre and periphery, growing and declining regions, by employment levels, by living conditions, and educational resources. This can be done by using REGIO.

Matching the planned ESS micro data base and REGIO by the NUTS code seems to be a simple procedure. The value of NUTS data has to be judged from the included topics. For comparative analysis it may be of less value, as compared to national research for which it no doubt will be an important standard disaggregation.

Recommendation: Include the NUTS-code in the ESS, but leave it to the individual researcher to match their data with REGIO.

46 Appendix 3.1 Letter to national Steering Committee members regarding sampling

Dear < >

I am writing to you as your country's representative on the Steering Committee for the ESF's project on preparing a blueprint for the European Social Survey (ESS). On behalf of the methodology committee, I would like to obtain some basic information about sampling procedures in < >. Below is a list of questions. I am asking the same questions of all the countries, in order to provide the methodology committee with some systematic information that will help us to devise an appropriate sampling strategy.

If you are not able to answer the questions, please feel free to pass the questions on to an appropriate colleague in your country. If you do this, would you please let me know, preferably including the name and email address of the colleague who will be responding. In order to inform the methodology committee's report to the next steering committee meeting, I need to have your response to the questions by 20 April. The questions should only take a few minutes to answer - I am not expecting lengthy essays!

Please let me have your responses by email if possible, otherwise by fax. If you have any queries or if my questions are unclear, please do not hesitate to email or phone me.

Thank you for your help.

1. Is strict probability sampling commonly used for household/individual surveys in your country?
2. What sorts of survey organisations use strict probability sampling, and in what circumstances/ for what sorts of surveys?
3. When probability sampling is used, for national surveys, are sample designs usually multi-stage (for example, localities sampled as first stage, individuals within localities as second stage)? If yes, how many stages, and what are the sampled units at each stage?
4. Could population registers or population lists of some sort be used for sampling? If yes, in what form and at what geographical level do the lists exist (for example, a single national computerised list, or a list for each town or administrative area)? And are they accessible to all survey agencies, or only government agencies?
5. Is substitution of non-responding households/individuals a common practice in your country? If yes, are preselected lists (random samples) provided as substitutes, or are interviewers just given certain rules to follow?
6. Is weighting of survey data for non-response a common practice in your country?
7. Is quota sampling used for household or individual surveys in your country?
8. What sorts of survey organisations use quota sampling, and in what circumstances/ for what sorts of surveys?
9. If it were to be proposed that the ESS should use strict probability sampling methods, with no quota controls and no substitution procedures allowed, would you anticipate any particular problems in your country? If yes, what?
10. Are there any other features of general population sampling in your country that you think we should take into account?
11. Can you provide a copy of, or a reference to, a publication which documents (in some detail) a typical sample design in your country (for example, a survey technical appendix or other paper)?

Many Thanks!

(Note that in many cases the initial responses to these questions prompted follow-up questions and a dialogue often ensued.)

Appendix 3.2 Sample Design for the ESS - a draft specification

Survey Population

The survey population consists of all persons aged 15 and over (no upper age limit) resident in private households in the country, regardless of nationality, citizenship or legal status*. It is recommended that those persons living in institutions (other than student accommodation and accommodation related to the military and security forces, such as prisons and army barracks) should also be included if possible.

Sampling Method

The sample is to be selected by strict probability methods at every stage. This means that the relative selection probabilities of every sample member will be known, and will be recorded on the data set. No form of quota sampling can be used at any stage.

Substitution

Substitution of either non-responding sample members or vacant addresses is not permitted. The size of the sample to be selected initially will be determined so as to result in approximately the desired number of achieved interviews under realistic assumptions about response rate and ineligibility rate (see below). Once the sample is selected, no selected addresses/ persons may be substituted.

Sample Size

Interviews should be achieved with a minimum of 2,000 persons. It is recommended that the sample size should be at least 2,500 in each country. In addition, it must be ensured that the *effective* sample size is at least 1,500. The meaning of effective sample size is explained below. The exception to this is for small countries with a total population of less than 3 million. In those countries, the minimum requirement is 1,000 interviews and an effective sample size of 800.

Countries will be expected to determine the appropriate size of initial sample to select, based upon realistic estimates of the response rate that will be achieved and likely design effects. Each of the key components of design effect are discussed below, followed by a worked example of how to determine the initial sample size.

Response Rate

To ensure the quality and reputation of the ESS, it is vital that the survey achieves the highest possible response rate in each country. The target should be 75%, though it is anticipated that many countries should be able to achieve response rates in excess of this. The survey organisation must take all reasonable measures to maximise response. In particular, no sample member must be classified as a “non-contact” until contact has been attempted on at least four occasions, including at least one evening and one weekend. Interviewers should be trained in response-maximisation techniques and doorstep interactions.

Over-Sampling

It is perfectly acceptable to over-sample particular subgroups - in other words to use differing selection probabilities - provided that the total sample still complies with the effective sample size criterion. There are two reasons why we anticipate that some countries might wish to over-sample some groups.

First, it may be possible to anticipate low-response strata. For example, if response rate is predicted to be 65% in large cities but 80% elsewhere, it would be efficient to over-sample the

* Later on in the deliberations of the two ESS committees, the definition of the population was changed to aim also at the inclusion of significant parts of the institutional population, like people living in old age homes.

48 **Appendix 3.2**
Sample Design for the ESS - a draft specification

large cities by a factor of 1.23 (80/65). Such use of over-sampling is encouraged. (The resultant non-response weight should largely cancel out with the selection probability weight, thus minimising any precision loss due to weighting.)

Second, it may be desirable to over-sample certain minority groups, to permit separate analysis of them. But it is important to assess the effect of such over-sampling on the design effect due to differing selection probabilities (see below).

Effective Sample Size

The effective sample size (*neff*) is the size of a simple random sample which would produce the same precision (standard errors) as the design actually used. Typically, *neff* is less than the actual number of achieved interviews, *m*, as certain aspects of survey design - for example, clustering, the use of differing selection probabilities - tend to reduce the precision of estimates. The reduction of precision is known as the design effect (*DEFF*):

$DEFF = \text{Actual sampling variance} / \text{Sampling variance with srs of same size};$

$DEFF = m / neff, \text{ so } neff = m / DEFF.$

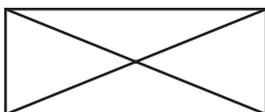
We therefore need to be able to predict the value of *DEFF* for a proposed sample design, in order to determine how many interviews should be achieved in order to produce a particular value of *neff*. We suggest that two components of *DEFF* should be taken in to account at the design stage - the design effect due to differing selection probabilities (*DEFF_p*) and the design effect due to clustering (*DEFF_c*).

Then, $DEFF = DEFF_p \times DEFF_c$. We then also need to predict the survey response rate (and the proportion of ineligible on the sampling frame, if relevant) in order to determine the size of initial sample, *n*, to select in order to achieve approximately *m* interviews.

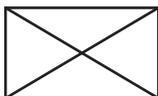
Design Effects due to Differing Selection Probabilities

In some countries which have accessible population registers, it will be possible to select an equal-probability sample from the survey population. In other countries, it will be necessary to select the sample in stages, with the penultimate stage being residential addresses. In this case, each person's selection probability will depend on their household size. Another reason for having differing selection probabilities would be if important minority groups were to be over-sampled.

If differing selection probabilities are to be used - for whatever reason - the associated design effect should be predicted. This can be done very simply, using the following formula



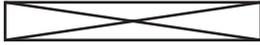
where there are respondents in the selection probability class, each receiving a weight of



(this formula assumes that the population variance of survey variables will not vary over selection probability classes - a reasonable assumption in most situations)

Design Effects Due to Clustering

It is anticipated that in most countries it will be efficient to select a multi-stage, clustered, sample. In such situations there will also be a design effect due to clustering.



where b is the mean number of respondents per cluster and ρ is the intra-cluster correlation (or “rate of homogeneity”) - a measure of the extent to which persons within a clustering unit are more homogeneous than persons within the population as a whole (see Kish, *Survey Sampling*, pp. 161-164). This design effect can be estimated, at least crudely, from knowledge of other surveys and/or the nature of the clustering units.

In practice, all elements of the overall design effect, including that due to differing selection probabilities and that due to clustering, will take different values for different survey estimates. For sample design purposes, an average value should be used.

Example: How to determine the size of sample to select

We have prescribed $neff > 1500$.

To determine m , we must first estimate

$$DEFF = DEFF_p \times DEFF_c$$

1. Suppose the proposed clustering units are administrative areas of around 5,000 households on average and that based on data from other surveys, we expect that for these areas, ρ will take values of around 0.02 for many variables. Then, if we are proposing a design with a mean of 15 interviews per cluster:

$$DEFF_c = 1 + (15-1) \times 0.02 = 1.28.$$

[Note: If there is no available empirical evidence at all upon which to base an estimate of ρ , then we suggest that a value of 0.02 should be used.]

2. Suppose that the only available sampling frame is a list of addresses and that these must be selected with equal probabilities. The proposed design is then randomly to select one person to interview at each address. This is the only aspect of the proposed design that involves differing selection probabilities. Then, we can use population statistics on the distribution of household size to estimate the number of respondents in each selection probability class, thus:

No. of persons aged 18+ in household i	Proportion of households in population H_i/H	No. of achieved interviews m_i	Relative weight w_i	$m_i w_i$	$m_i w_i^2$
1	0.35	0.35m	1	0.35m	0.35m
2	0.45	0.45m	2	0.90m	1.80m
3	0.12	0.12m	3	0.36m	1.08m
4	0.06	0.06m	4	0.24m	0.96m
5	0.02	0.02m	5	0.10m	0.50m
				1.95m	4.69m

50 Appendix 3.2 Sample Design for the ESS - a draft specification

The population distribution of household size appears in the first two columns. From this, we can predict that the sample distribution will be as shown in the third column. We can thus predict $DEFF_p$:

$$\begin{aligned} DEFF_p &= m \times 4.69m / (1.95m)^2 \\ &= 4.69 / 1.95^2 \\ &= 1.23. \end{aligned}$$

3. Thus, we predict $DEFF = 1.28 \times 1.23 = 1.57$. Consequently, to achieve $neff > 1,500$ with this design, we would need $m > 1,500 \times 1.57 = 2,355$.

4. The final stage is to calculate the sample size to select initially in order to be likely to achieve around 2,355 interviews. Suppose we anticipate a response rate of 80% and that 5% of the sampling frame units will be ineligible (e.g. addresses which do not contain a resident household), then:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= (m / 0.80) / 0.95 \\ &= 3,098 \end{aligned}$$

So we would select a sample of at least 3,100 addresses.

Non-response Weighting

It is anticipated that it may be necessary to weight the survey data to correct for non-response bias. To aid this process, a small number of data items should be recorded by interviewers for every selected case (respondents and non-respondents). These items are likely to include characteristics of the dwelling and of the surrounding area, which can be easily observed by interviewers. Each country should subsequently supply a data file containing a record for each *selected* sample case, with an indicator of response outcome, plus these interviewer-recorded items and the appropriate geographical identifier to permit linkage to the geographic data described elsewhere. The weighting will then be carried out centrally.

Documentation

The sampling procedures used, and response obtained, should be fully documented in a technical report of the survey.

As a minimum, the report of sampling should include a definition and description of the sampling units used at each stage, a description of any stratification of the sampling frame and a description of ways in which selection probabilities could have varied at each stage. The survey data file should include a variable(s) indicating the relative selection probabilities of cases, to enable appropriate weighting to be carried out, and indicators of selection stratum and PSU, to enable standard errors and design effects to be estimated and reported.

As a minimum, the report of response should include the number of selected cases falling into each of the following categories (which are intended to be mutually exclusive and comprehensive): not eligible; no contact after 4+ visits; personal refusal; proxy refusal; achieved interview.

The necessity of ongoing methodological research in the ESS context

In order to make the ESS different from normal commercial research, various requirements have to be satisfied. The most important are the following:

- the variables should be related to existing theories or theories which will be tested (see Section 4);
- variables should be included which allow the connection with data of other units like regions (see Appendix 2);
- the results should be maximally comparable across countries (see Section 3);
- the quality of the procedures should be controlled and reported;
- research should be done continuously on the quality of the data and the improvement of the procedures without disturbing the trends in the data.

Given that the first three points are already discussed in other sections of the report, this document will concentrate on the last two points.

1. Routine control of data quality

The key issue in statistical research is standardisation of measurement. This applies to all steps in the production process, including questionnaire design, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data editing, estimation and presentation. Quality controls are designed to check the process of standardisation step by step. In ordinary cross-sectional national surveys normally a standard question program is run. In these cases the same general procedures (a standardized stimulus situation) are applied to all respondents.

However, comparative research adds another dimension to the management of data collection. A large number of national institutes (private business, public as well as research institutes), will be involved. These organisations display a large variation in survey tradition, practical procedures, ambitions, technical experience, and resources. There will be language and cultural barriers which have to be bridged, and national practices have to be sacrificed to support comparability. In addition to the normal quality controls in national surveys cross-national comparability needs to be ascertained.

Hence, the general survey design as well as comparative quality control has to be centralized. A central group is needed to take full responsibility for the design of the ESS as well as for comparative quality control. Optimal comparability is not arrived at by the principle of subsidiary. This has been the experience of most comparative surveys, including the European Community Household Panel and ISSP. Furthermore, the mere number of participating countries demands centralisation of responsibility. This means that one will have to take quality control further than in other comparative surveys only conducted in a few countries. The final data set has to be well cleaned in order to minimize later contacts back to the national level, and to deliver an entry to the subject area in the form of already tested and centrally approved basic tables. For this purpose the ESS team and the Methodology Committee will have to closely interact.

The quality program must include three steps:

- clearly defined **quality goals** approved by each participating institute, granting maximum comparability and quality. These goals should take the form of a written contract;

The necessity of ongoing methodological research in the ESS context

- a detailed **quality control programme** for the various steps in the survey, defining action at national as well central level;
- developing a standardized set of (cross-national) **quality indicators** derived from the first two points, a set of cross-national **basic tables**, and a **technical report**.

The following list covers the major steps in a general quality control program:

- **questionnaire design**: English master questionnaire; two-way translation; functional equivalent items have to be negotiated at central level; a standardized questionnaire with additional national options; including basic information on the interview context;
- **population and sampling**: same universe; strictly probability samples; representativeness allowing for variant sampling procedures; standardized post-stratification using available demographic sources;
- **field work**: same method (personal interview); response rate improvement program; national commitment to high response rates; agreed upon registration of variables for non-response analysis, comparative analysis of the structure of non-response; defined rules concerning item non-response treatment;
- **measurement**: standardized pretests; fixed common questionnaire (allowing for additional national modules), limited test-retest studies in all countries to estimate reliability (see below); consistency with other comparative statistics (demographics, etc);
- **editing**: standard program developed and executed at central level (this program should also define the initial editing procedures at national level); controlling/editing the cross-national structure of data by using standard tabulation (joint activity of the subject matter and methodology groups); feed back to the national level and correction; developing basic derived variables;
- **timeliness**: a centralized quality control program requires strict conformity of the participating countries to a common contracted timing of data collection/editing and delivery of the national data sets;
- **activities related to the dissemination of the data set and archiving**: a general **technical report** including cross-national comparison of applied methods, quality indicators, and quality control activities/corrections;
- production of a **comparative basic table compendium** in standard format including a) population/percent estimates for all variables by country, b) three-way tables (indicators by country and basic background variables).

2. Continuous methodological research

There are three major problems which have to be taken into account in the design of the ESS. The first is the problem of method effects which always occur; the second is the problem of comparability of data across countries, and the third is the problem of lack of a crystallized opinion.

2.1 Method effects

Starting with the first issue it is well known that any method has a specific effect on the data which

are collected. Sudman, Bradburn and Schwarz (1996), Schuman and Presser (1981), Billiet et al. (1986), and Saris and Schwarz (1996) and others have illustrated this problem with many examples. Thus, it is possible to get differences of 20% in response distributions depending on the use of the word “allow” or “forbid” in the question (Schuman and Presser 1981). It would also be very unfortunate to collect data where 50% of the correlations found is due to method effects. This is not impossible as MTMM (multi-trait-multi-method) studies have shown. This being so, one has to be concerned to choose a method which has the least artificial effects. Thus, continuous methodological research is needed. There are four well-developed procedures for this research which can be applied. The first is the testing of questionnaires in cognitive laboratories in order to determine how different words are interpreted by the respondents. Sudman, Bradburn and Schwarz (1996) discuss several different methods to evaluate the process by which the respondent comes to an answer. For the basic concepts of the questionnaires such tests are very important to make sure that people from different countries interpret the questions in the same way and derive their answer in approximately the same way. Such a test can be done in an early stage of the design of the questionnaires before the pilot studies.

The second approach is the interaction analysis of the communication between the interviewer and the respondent. Careful analysis of this communication can show what goes wrong in the data collection. This approach is recommended for the pilot studies in three countries in order to avoid serious problems.

A third possibility is the use of split ballot experiments where different subgroups of the sample get different questionnaire forms in order to see if large differences in responses are obtained with the different forms.

The fourth option is MTMM research which allows to study the effects of the methods on the correlations between the variables.

All four methods should be used to evaluate the core questions in order to avoid serious problems with these questions.

The cognitive studies and the interaction analysis should be done for only a limited number of interviews. The interaction analysis can be applied on the whole interview, screening also the questions for the specific issues. The cognitive analysis should only be done for the most crucial parts.

The other two procedures have to be planned in detail and should be concentrated on the most important variables in the studies.

2.2 Cross-cultural comparability

Comparative research is not yet so established that it is well-known which questions can be compared across countries and which not or how the formulations have to be adapted. Many differences in cross-cultural research are due to the lack of equivalence of procedures used in the different countries. Several problems and approaches mentioned for research in general also apply, of course, to comparative research. But the problems of cross-cultural studies have not been discussed so widely. Therefore, in this paper they will get some special attention, starting with the differences between response distributions.

2.2.1 Differences between response distributions

If the probability for a specific response given the opinion one has, is different in one country from that in another country (for example because of a different sensitivity to social desirability), then

54 **Appendix 4**
The necessity of ongoing methodological research in the ESS context

the response distributions will not be the same even though the distributions of the opinions in the different countries might be the same.

That this is not unthinkable has been shown in a study related to questions of the Eurobarometer (chapter 6 and 9 in Saris and Kaase 1997) .

As an example, the question on “satisfaction with the way democracy works” was discussed. The formulation in English is:

On the whole , are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied / not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (our country)? Would you say you are (1) very satisfied, (2) fairly satisfied, (3) not very satisfied / (4) not at all satisfied (5) DK/no answer?

Latent class analysis showed that people with opinion (3) “not very satisfied” answered differently in the three different countries. If p_{ij} stands for the probability to give answer i if one has opinion j, below only the probabilities of the answers 1 to 4 for the group with opinion 3 are given because the probabilities for all other categories were the same. The results were:

	P_{13}	P_{23}	P_{33}	P_{43}
France	.00	.000	.669	.330
Belgium	.000	.072	.422	.507
Spain	.000	.067	.656	.277

This table shows that the probabilities in Belgium are significantly different from those in the other two countries. It will be clear that the distribution of the observed variable will also be different if the response probabilities are so different. The same has been found for all satisfaction variables in the Eurobarometer experiment and for questions concerning interest in the EU and knowledge about the EU.

In these cases the explanation seems to be the translation. In Spain, the English labels have been used. In Dutch questionnaires in Belgium the labels used are:
very satisfied, rather satisfied, not so satisfied and not at all satisfied.

and in French it is:

très satisfait (= very satisfied), plutôt satisfait (= rather satisfied), plutôt pas satisfait (= rather not satisfied) and pas du tout satisfait (= not at all satisfied).

Although these labels were seen as functionally equivalent, the results were quite different. Several other examples of the same kind can be found in chapter 9 of Saris and Kaase (1997).

These differences in response probabilities will cause differences between countries, which are normally interpreted as substantial differences. Before one can draw this conclusion one has, however, to first correct for these differences in response probabilities. This can be done but it requires repeated observations from the same people and afterwards a transformation based on the obtained response probabilities. How these corrections can be done has been discussed in chapter 11 of Saris and Kaase (1997). The conclusion from all this is that research on the response probabilities is needed in order to say if one can compare the data from different countries directly without correction or not.

2.2.2 Difference in correlations

As a consequence of different response probabilities in different countries not only the distributions will be different, but also the relationships between variables. In a different study, using correlations to describe the relationships between several variables, the results presented in Table 1 have been found (Scherpenzeel 1995).

This table shows that the method can have strong effects on the results. Comparing the correlations between the two countries on a 10 point scale one sees that the correlation between satisfaction with life in general (GLS) with all three other variables is smaller in the Netherlands than in Hungary, but that is not true anymore for two out of the three correlations looking at the table for the 5-point-scale.

This cannot be explained by sampling fluctuations because in both countries the same people gave answers on both scales. The explanation for the differences is a specific combination of random errors and method effects.

Differences in response probabilities, method effects and random measurement errors can be determined using repeated observations. On life satisfaction and many other variables studies have been done on the effects of these errors in the USA and by the International Research Group on Methodological and Comparative Survey Research (IRMCS) in 13 different countries of Europe. The methodology has been discussed in Saris and Munnich (1995), and an application on cross cultural life satisfaction research has been reported in Saris et al. (1996).

Table 1:
Correlations between four satisfaction variables measured with four different methods obtained from the same respondents

Netherlands	GLS	SH	SF	SC	GLS	SH	SF	SC
	10 points scale (polychoric corr)				5 points scale (polychoric corr)			
GLS	1.00				1.00			
SH	.458	1.00			.381	1.00		
SF	.456	.434	1.00		.445	.349	1.00	
SC	.491	.325	.333	1.00	.462	.232	.270	1.00
Hungary	GLS	SH	SF	SC	GLS	SH	SF	SC
	10 points scale (polychoric corr)				5 points scale (polychoric corr)			
GLS	1.00				1.00			
SH	.490	1.00			.341	1.00		
SF	.637	.468	1.00		.664	.380	1.00	
SC	.519	.254	.308	1.00	.296	.182	.247	1.00

This is the kind of research which is absolutely necessary for the most important variables in comparative research. Without such studies, correlations across countries cannot be compared. Therefore, for all variables used in the ESS information should be available about what corrections are needed in order to make the results comparable across countries.

56 **Appendix 4**
The necessity of ongoing methodological research in the ESS context

2.3 The strength of the opinions

In the USA there has been a debate for a long time about the question whether people have sufficient information to participate in political decisions. Converse (1964) started this discussion which has led to a number of methodological papers suggesting that the uncertainty in the opinions might be due to random measurement error (Achen 1975; Judd, Krosnick and Milburn 1981) but recently this issue is again taken up by Zaller (1992) and Sniderman et al. (1991). European scholars hardly took part in this debate; it seems that European social scientists did not see the lack of opinion as such a serious problem. However, especially in European issues it can be shown that the opinions of the people can be changed quite easily. In an experiment (Saris 1997), two extra questions were sufficient to change the opinion of the Dutch population from pro veto rights to a position against veto rights, as is shown in table 2.

Table 2:
The effect of information of the right of veto question on the response distributions in the first subsample

Subsample 1 before Pro -European information		Subsample 1 after Pro-European information	
The countries within the European Union have a right of veto, which means that a country is able to block a decision of the European Union.		On the basis of these experiences one can ask the question of whether the right of veto should remain or whether it should be adjusted to majority decision-making.	
Do you think that The Netherlands should maintain its right of veto with respect to important decisions, even if that it is done at the expense of decision-making in the European Union?		Do you think that the current form should remain or do you think that a form of decision-making based on a majority should be introduced (for example 2/3 of the countries have to agree).	
	%		%
don't know	25.3	don't know	13.8
maintain the right of veto	55.5	maintain the right of veto	26.7
give up the right of veto	19.2	decisions by majority rule	59.5
total (n=833)	100.0	(n=833)	100.0

The information about the strength of an opinion is very important. A weakly developed opinion can easily be changed as was shown above. Billiet et al. (1986) suggest that also for the prediction of behaviour the information about the strength of an opinion is very important.

Given that all three problems lead to the same conclusion that repeated observations are necessary, continuous methodological research connected with the development and routine performance of the ESS using repeated observations would be very desirable.

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58 Appendix 5 Survey Specification of a Proposed European Social Survey

Introduction

The proposed European Social Survey would be carried out to the highest academic standards in all participating countries, to an agreed common specification. It would be supervised by a small full-time central methodological team who would in turn report to a Steering Committee comprising members from all participating nations. Each country will also appoint a Principal Investigator to oversee the conduct of its proposed survey. The PI may or may not be associated with the survey agency which is selected to carry out the survey work.

Given the nature of the proposed project, every participating country will doubtless have to adapt or change several of its routine procedures, standards and methods in order to achieve cross-national comparability.

The sample

The survey will cover persons aged 15 and over (no upper age limit) resident within private households in each, regardless of nationality, citizenship or legal status. The sample is to be selected by strict random probability methods at every stage. The relative selection probabilities of every sample member should be known and recorded on the data set. Quota sampling will not be used at any stage.

Substitution of either non-responding sample members or vacant addresses is not permitted at any stage.

The minimum number of interviews to be achieved is 2,000, but the recommended number is 2,500. In countries whose total population is less than 2 million, the minimum number is 1,000 interviews. In any event, the minimum number of 'effective' interviews (after discounting for design effects) will be 1,500. Each country will determine the appropriate size of initial sample to select, based upon realistic estimates of the response rate that will be achieved and the eligibility rate (if appropriate).

The sampling procedures used, and response obtained, will be fully documented in a technical report of the survey. The report of sampling should include a definition and description of the sampling units used at each stage, a description of any stratification of the sampling frame and a description of ways in which selection probabilities could have varied at each stage. Reports of response will include the number of selected cases falling into each of the following categories (which are intended to be mutually exclusive and comprehensive): not eligible and why; no contact after 4+ visits; personal refusal; proxy refusal; achieved interview (partial); achieved interview (full).

The survey data file will include one or more variables to indicate the relative selection probabilities of cases, so that appropriate weighting may subsequently be carried out.

The questionnaire

There will be a face-to-face interview questionnaire and a self-completion questionnaire, both administered by the interviewer within the respondent's household (in some cases the self-completion questionnaire may be left behind for subsequent return by post). It will be designed in English by the PIs collectively, in consultation with cross-national groups of subject specialists, the central methodological team and the survey agencies in each country. The questionnaire may

be administered either via paper and pencil or computer-assisted interviewing, preferably by the latter in those countries where it is already cost-effective to do so.

The face-to-face questionnaire will consist of roughly 240 items (a one- hour interview, including an extensive socio-demographics section). The self-completion questionnaire will consist of around 40-50 items (10 - 12 minutes).

Each country will translate the questions into its main language or dialect. If any other minority language is spoken as a *first language* by 5% or more of the population of a country, it should be translated into that language too. If, however, that other minority language happens to be the main language of another participating country, then that translation may be adopted, where appropriate. Translations will be done iteratively (back and forth between English and the other language by different independent translators) until a satisfactory accommodation is reached, but may be carried out by proficient rather than professional translators if available, such as from within the survey team.

In addition to three large pilot tests (600 cases each) in at least three participating countries, plus the use of cognitive laboratories to test the main concepts to be used, pre-tests of 50 interviews will take place in all countries. They will be conducted in at least five different areas of each country by at least five different interviewers. All pilot interviewers will be de-briefed in the presence of the PI for that country.

Fieldwork

Detailed standard interviewer instructions will be prepared (and translated).

Interviewers' assignment sizes will be set to ensure that the average assignment size per interviewer does not exceed 20 interviews, and that no interviewer carries out more than two assignments per survey.

Field outcomes for each call at each address (or other primary unit), will be documented and ultimately keyed from a standardised set of summary codes.

Non-response will also be defined and calculated according to a standardised set of categories. Of these, 'non-contacts' must be kept to a maximum of 3% of all sampled units, and the target overall response rate in every country will be 75% of eligible units. To achieve these targets, a minimum of four personal visits to each unit will be made, including at least one in the evening and one at the weekend, spread over at least two different weeks. Since it may later be necessary to weight the survey data to correct for non-response bias, a small number of data items will be recorded by interviewers for every selected case (respondents and non-respondents). These items will include characteristics of the dwelling and of the surrounding area observable by interviewers.

To allow for difficult-to-contact people, the overall duration of fieldwork will be a minimum of 30 days and a maximum of 90 days.

Quality control back-checks (by telephone or in person) must be carried out and documented in a standardised form on 10% of refusals and 10% of non-contacts.

60 Appendix 5 Survey Specification of a Proposed European Social Survey

Coding and editing

The centrally-produced questionnaire will be accompanied by a code-book specifying the codes that must be used by each country. All questions will be pre-coded, except occupation and education, which will be coded either by interviewers or in the office. Occupation and education will be coded for both respondent and spouse, the first to ISCO, the second to an agreed cross-national schema.

Each country team will implement a set of range and logic checks that will be specified centrally. Some of these may be implemented via CAPI where applicable.

Each country's 'clean' data-file will conform both to the full code-book specification and have 'passed' the specified range and logic tests. The data-file will also contain a record for each selected sample case, indicating response outcome plus all interviewer-recorded items referred to above, as well as an appropriate geographical identifier.

Overall timetable

The survey period will split into four periods, each of six months' duration, as follows:

Months 1-6:

Preparation work, inc. final design, translation and planning

Months 7-12:

Main field work (intended to be same three months everywhere), followed by supply of clean data to central archive

Months 13-18:

Archive to prepare a combined, fully-documented data-set

Months 19-24:

Data-set to be proved and approved by the central methods team prior to its general release.