

ESS Round 10 SQP Coding

In ESS Round 10, the National Coordinators (NCs) and their teams (hereafter: national teams) will be asked to code some characteristics of a set of items from the R10 Questionnaire. These characteristics are part of the coding scheme of the Survey Quality Predictor (SQP)¹.

The objective of this task, within the ESS life cycle known as SQP Coding, is to prevent unnecessary deviations between the source questionnaire and the country versions by comparing a number of formal characteristics of the items. SQP Coding is meant to improve language versions by making national teams more aware of the choices that are made in translation, and the impact these choices can have on comparability, validity, and reliability of the question.

Members of the ESS team at UPF have completed the coding of the relevant items in the source questionnaire and will compare the resulting codes to those submitted by the national teams in each participating country. UPF will then send a report to the national teams providing information and suggestions that are meant to help improve the comparability across all ESS country versions.

Countries should set aside one working day to complete the task. Next to checking the codes, the UPF team will also conduct some additional checks, particularly making sure that the repetitions of the MTMM questions in Section I are formulated correctly.

The procedure will be as follows:

- Step 1: The national team uploads the post-verification version of the selected questions (including showcards) to the pre-specified folder on the myESS portal. Post-verification versions are those where the entire verification process has been completed (and of course all the preceding steps: translation, review, adjudication, and shared languages harmonisation), that is, all decisions regarding verification interventions have been incorporated.
- Step 2: The national team follows the link provided by the UPF team through the ‘ESS10 [country] – SQP’ forum thread on the myESS portal and enters a short survey about item characteristics.
- Step 3: The national team completes the coding of 11 to 25 characteristics, depending on the item, for a total of 14 items in the form of surveys². For all items together, this will take approximately two hours. In the case of multilingual countries, national teams are required to conduct SQP Coding for the main language version, although it is strongly recommended to do it for all language versions. In case the national team does SQP Coding for various languages, the UPF team will prepare one set of surveys per language.

¹ Saris, W. E. (2015). Survey Quality Predictor 2 [Online software]. Version 2.1. Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. Retrieved from: <http://sqp.upf.edu>.

² The workload for national teams has been substantively reduced compared to previous rounds as a) less characteristics need to be coded due to the new process, b) national teams do not have to deal with a specific tool and c) less items have to be coded by national teams.

- Step 4: The UPF team compares the codes with the coding of the English source version. The codes for the English source version have been coded separately by two different expert coders at UPF, after which a consensus was reached for each code.
- Step 5: The national team then receives a report from UPF (uploaded to the myESS portal) about form differences between the translation and the source. These may fall into one of two categories:

Table 1: Categories of deviations of the SQP codes and suggested actions

Type of deviations (source vs. translation)		Action taken by UPF
A)	A deviation in the formal (psychometric) or linguistic (semantic and grammatical) characteristics that cannot be warranted, for instance a different number of response categories, leaving out a “don’t know” option or an instruction for the respondent.	If it is not a coding mistake, deviations will be reported to the national team asking for corrections.
B)	A deviation in the formal (psychometric) or linguistic (semantic and grammatical) characteristics that may or may not be warranted, e.g. use of complete sentences in the scales instead of short texts. In some languages, it is necessary, in some others this may be a fact of stylistic choice.	If it is not a coding mistake, deviations will be reported to the national team and corrections will be recommended, if feasible. (Amendments in the translation are recommended to keep the principle of functional equivalence in translation if the language structure allows keeping the item characteristic the same).

- Step 6: If there are no differences in the codes or the differences are due to unintended coding mistakes, the process is immediately signed off.
- If there are differences in the codes, national teams should discuss the reasons for the differences with UPF. This discussion will take place on the myESS portal in the ‘ESS10 [country] -SQP’ thread. If items are modified, national teams should provide an updated version of the questionnaire and showcards to UPF by uploading them to the myESS portal. Note that only a set of items are checked in the SQP coding task, but suggestions resulting from the process could also apply to other parts of the questionnaire that were not coded and should be implemented consistently throughout the questionnaire by national teams. Furthermore, national teams should avoid making changes to language versions of items that have been used in previous rounds. In case this seems necessary, proposed changes should be discussed with the ESS translation team at GESIS and HQ by replying to the ‘ESS10 [country] – SQP’ thread on the myESS portal. Once all discussions are closed, the UPF team will inform the national team that SQP Coding is signed off.

In case of any difficulties or queries about the coding process, please contact the UPF team for support via the myESS portal or by sending an email to sqp.ess@upf.edu.