

**Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn**  
**LAUNCH EVENT OF ESS (EUROPEAN SOCIAL SURVEY) ERIC**

**The Royal Society, London, 31 January 2014**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here at the Royal Society and to have the opportunity to say a few words on the official launch of the ESS ERIC.

The European Social Survey is a wonderful example of how we can get better research results and better value for money by pooling expertise, knowledge and resources in Europe.

That's why the European Commission has been so keen to support Member States in setting up the European Social Survey as a European Research Infrastructure Consortium - an 'ERIC' for short.

With pressure on research budgets in most EU member states, it is clear that we need to unite, we need to tackle the fragmented investment in research infrastructures across Europe. So, together with the Member States, the European Commission is committed to launching or completing 60% of the infrastructures on the ESFRI Roadmap by 2015.

As the history of the European Social Survey shows, European data collection and database development is a daunting task, which requires a major coordination effort at national and European level.

The development of the ESFRI Roadmap has helped provide a stronger, long-term perspective for the development of social science data series such as the European Social Survey.

So far, we have made excellent progress in establishing the ESS ERIC and the other four ESFRI research infrastructures in the area of the social sciences and humanities.

With considerable investments of time and resources in the European Social Survey, including from the national funding bodies and the European Commission, we have together started to build a systematic European data infrastructure on changing social attitudes.

This goldmine of information will keep us abreast of the social trends that affect how democracy is working, how policies are made and implemented, and how European citizens see themselves.

Or, if I could borrow from the title of one of the ESS's own publications, the European Social Survey is all about exploring public attitudes to inform public policy

Looking back, it was a real achievement to convince so many countries and national research councils to get involved in the formal establishment of the ESS ERIC.

The journey began in 1998 under the guidance of Professor Max Kaase and the European Science Foundation. The development of the ESS could not have happened without the dedication of the founder director, Professor Sir Roger Jowell, who sadly passed away in December 2011.

His contribution to the ESS ERIC was crucial to ensuring its success. With the United Kingdom as host, thirteen member countries and two observers, the award of ERIC status to the European Social Survey will ensure that this research infrastructure will continue to serve the needs of European researchers, policy makers and civil society alike.

The launch of the ESS ERIC is a real milestone, and certainly something to celebrate. But there is still more to be done to give researchers in Europe the infrastructures they need and deserve.

So the European Commission will also continue to support ESFRI infrastructures, including ERICs, through Horizon 2020, the EU's new seven-year programme for research and innovation.

I am confident that giving researchers access to data will allow us to analyse a broad range of policies, comparing their impact and efficiency, and broadening the scope for action under different aspects of national and European social policy.

Access to high quality comparative data will help us to improve our understanding of the profound social, political, economic and demographic changes occurring in Europe as well as the relationship between Europe and the rest of the world.

I am sure you will agree that this understanding of developments on our continent has never been more important.

As a concrete sign of the "reality" of this new era for the European Social Survey, I would like to present a gift to you and I would be delighted if this plaque could adorn the wall of the ESS -ERIC residence at the City University.

I would like to wish longevity and success to the ESS ERIC. I have no doubt that it will be a major boost to our drive to implement the ESFRI Roadmap and make the European Research Area a reality.

Thank you to everyone involved for all the hard work that has made the ESS ERIC a reality. I wish you every success in the future.