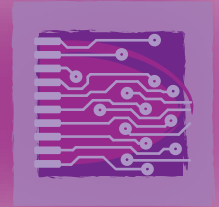




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## ESSi: European Social Survey Infrastructure improving social measurement in Europe

**Bringing Europe ever closer to its citizens is a key aim of the EU Treaties, but this means first of all understanding their attitudes and behaviour and, for that, reliable data on changing social values is a must in modern-day society. An integrated Europe not only needs consistently high standards of social measurement within and between its member nations, but also integrated networks and infrastructures to be able to put them to good use. Building on the success of the European Social Survey (ESS) in mapping long-term attitudinal and behavioural changes in the social, political and moral climate, the ESSi project launched in May 2006 and funded by the EU provides the infrastructure to back up the methodology developed under the Descartes Prize-winning ESS project. Together, ESS and ESSi provide an authoritative and accurate source of data about Europe's changing social values which, in turn, informs academic and political debate and allows the EU to measure changes in citizens' values through the use of new social indicators.**

### ● HIGH SURVEY STANDARDS OF SOCIAL MEASUREMENT

Now that the ESS has led the way in developing rigorous standards of socio-economic research, the ESSi project aims to ensure that these standards are followed in practice and to show just how useful high-quality cross-cultural data can be for social scientists, academics and decision-makers, and how it can help improve governance and quantitative social science in Europe.

This initiative is a good example of how to build on existing research infrastructures by upgrading, expanding and integrating the diverse networks already involved in the ESS, helping them to combine ranks more effectively and improving their performance. It will also enable some 28 European funding bodies to reap dividends from their investment in ESS in the past. It is an ideal launching pad for knowledge transfer, training and methodological advance to the benefit of European social science.

The infrastructure at the heart of the project is the considerable body of data in the ESS Archives, the extensive protocols already produced by the ESS together with the well-structured organisation of scholars and practitioners closely engaged in the enterprise. The ESSi project seeks to: provide wider access



to ESS data and protocols; improve quality through common survey protocols; increase the range and spread of ESS data usage alongside other pan-European datasets; and build up a network of specialists to refine methods of event-reporting across nations as a necessary backdrop to measuring attitude change among people in different EU countries.

### ● ASKING THE PEOPLE

During the five-year period of EU support, the ESSi project's key aim is to spread good practice in social measurement and analysis not only by providing access to top-quality data but also by instigating and integrating a combination of top-down and bottom-up practical measures.

ESSi project participants will also be organising face-to-face and web-based training courses in comparative survey methodology and convening workshops to discuss and disseminate best practice in quantitative social measurement. Almost half of the budget will be spent on joint research into developing and testing more cost-

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effective methods enabling the use of country-specific (or mixed) modes of data collection; improving representativeness, validity of questions and reliability of answers in cross-cultural surveys; and ultimately putting together appropriate attitudinal social indicators to use as benchmarks - alongside other socio-economic indicators - for judging the changing quality of life across the EU.

Better access to and knowledge of ESS data and methodology can help fuel intellectual and policy debates and influence socioeconomic research practice. Within two years of the public release of the datasets, nearly 10 000 registered users had begun quarrying the data, thus generating many articles, dissertations and books. Under the transnational access part of the ESSi project,

€400 000 is devoted to upgrading, expanding and improving on-line access to the dataset and to the many ESS protocols which accompany it. The ESS website itself will be upgraded with the help of EU funds for networking.

A broad range of Joint Research Activities (JRAs) will help refine the tools of quantitative social science in relation to fieldwork practices, question construction, translation, archiving, analysis methods and sampling. These separate JRAs, tackling different but related fields, will be channelled into a programme of mutually-reinforcing work, improving the environment for cross-cultural research in which the EU is uniquely well-equipped to lead the world.

### ● EUROPEAN SOCIAL SURVEY INFRASTRUCTURE, IMPROVING SOCIAL MEASUREMENT IN EUROPE IN SUMMARY

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**Project acronym:** ESSi

**Funding scheme (FP6):** Integrated Infrastructure Initiative (I3)

**EU financial contribution:** €6 million

**EU project officer:** Maria Theofilatou

**Duration:** 60 months

**Start date:** 1 May 2006

**Completion date:** 30 April 2011

**Project webpage:** [www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)

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