European Company Survey 2012 Quality Management
A sustainable alliance of ESS and Comparative Survey Methodology Approaches

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Overview

• Eurofound (The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions)
• Eurofound surveys and observatories
• Methodological Challenges
• Quality Assurance Plan
• Examples
• Current state of affaires
• Outlook
Eurofound monitoring activities:
Our surveys and observatories (NEO)

- European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO)
- European Restructuring Monitor (ERM)/EMCC
- European Company Survey (ECS) 2004/05 / 2009 / 2012
- European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO)

Monitoring living and working conditions in EU

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European Company Survey (ECS)

- Target population in each country:
  - establishments 10+ employees without agriculture or fishing no private households no extraterritorial activity
  - establishment = “local business of a company”
- Topic: workplace practices, workplace innovation and how they are negotiated in European establishments
- Sampling: Full probability
- Respondents: HR manager and Employee representative in selected establishment
- Mode of interview: CATI
- Length of interview:
  - HR manager 20 minutes
  - Employee representative 15 minutes
- Number of languages: ~38
- Number of countries: up to 32

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Focus: working time and work life balance

Questions around a number of WTA:

- Flexible working time arrangements and working time accounts
- Part-time work
- Overtime and non-standard working hours
- Parental and other long-term leave
- Phased and early retirement
- Specific policies to support work-life balance
- Social dialogue concerning these topics
- Outcomes (performance, HR bottlenecks)
2009 ECS

- Focus: flexibility practices and social dialogue in European companies
  - some issues deepened, others more shallow
- Complemented with a wider range of flexibility practices
  - Working time flexibility practices
    - From flexi-time to working time accounts
    - Overtime
    - Working at unusual hours
    - Part time work
  - Organisational practices (autonomous team work, training)
  - Contractual flexibility & recruitment strategies
  - Variable pay and financial participation (profit sharing and share ownership schemes)
  - Social dialogue at work-place level in-depth
  - Outcomes (performance, HR bottlenecks)
• New topic (shifting) :
  ▸ Work organisation : structures, and practices
  ▸ Employee participation
  ▸ in decision making, in organisational innovation
  ▸ ‘workplace innovation’ or organisational innovation
  ▸ Social dialogue at workplace level

• Revised design and new framework for quality management
  ▸ Push for organisational learning : new business unit team responsible for all 3 eurofound surveys, new project team.
  ▸ Internal audit service
  ▸ Strategy : transparency, access to the dataset to researchers, (EU) policy use
  ▸ Development of a system for quality management of all surveys
  ▸ ... External contract to assist in the development of an integrated framework
1. Representative survey of businesses (establishments of companies).
   - Target population different from household surveys in its structure, regional distribution and accessibility.

2. Identifying, contacting and interviewing the appropriate informants (2 respondents: management and employee representative)
   - is quite different from randomly selecting a respondent in a selected household.

3. Comparative reporting on European business policies and human resources facts.
   - Requires careful balancing local appropriate measurement (instruments) with requirements of comparability.
Quality Assurance Plan: Development 1

- Literature screening
  - Taking stock: reports from 2004 and 2009
  - Combing through
    - European Statistical System (ESS) quality framework
    - US OMB Standards (Office of Management and Budget)
    - ISO Standards
    - Cross-cultural Survey Guidelines (CCSG)
    - Survey process quality literature
Merging:

- ESS quality criteria
  - Static six-fold classification system
    - relevance, coherence, comparability, accuracy, timeliness/punctuality, and accessibility

Survey Methodology

- Dynamic process focus (total survey error – TSE)
  - Errors on all stages of the survey production process (survey life cycle)

Comparative Survey Methodology

- Focus on comparability
  - Incomparability can result in 100% error
Adapting quality assurance models to ECS needs:

- ESS quality criteria
  - Reorder the original sequence (cf. LEG)
- Re-group survey production stages
  - From 13 in CCSG to 8
  - Thus accommodating procurement requirements and delineation of Eurofound’s and contractor’s responsibilities
- Observing population specifics
  - Focus on sample design issues (public administration, establishments versus companies, national differences etc)
  - Focus on respondent cooperation (2 respondents)
System of quality indicators
- Measurable quality indicators for ECS.
- Each indicator is linked to a specific production process outcome.
- System allows to map ESS quality criteria into the survey production scheme.

A new tender perspective
- Maieutic perspective
  - Eurofound formulates its quality standards
  - Asks tenderers to propose appropriate procedures that allow to achieve those standards (cf. OMB 2006)
Delineating tasks and responsibilities for different actors

- “Sharing responsibilities” is delineated by clearly defining sub-stages where responsibilities are not-shared
- Focusing on contractor’s strengths and Eurofound competency

Systemizing quality monitoring

- Mapping ESS 6 quality criteria across 8 ECS production stages
- Each quality indicator is linked to a specific cell in the quality map.
Mapping quality criteria across production stages

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<th>Lead Actors</th>
<th>1 Relevance</th>
<th>2 Coherence</th>
<th>3 Comparability</th>
<th>4 Accuracy</th>
<th>5 Timelines &amp; Punctuality</th>
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Delineating

Shared responsibility
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Example Cell E4 General Fieldwork – Accuracy: Quality Paradata & Metadata

- **Paradata:**
  - Dates: start – end; dates of interventions
  - Geo Data – mapping of location for: raw sample, contacted sample, out of range sample, non-response, response.
  - Timing: for each contact day and time of contact attempt, for each interview key stroke timing per item
  - Checks – number of supervised contacts, classification of supervisor of such contacts. Minimum number of checks 5% of all contacts
  - Number of interviewers and interviews by gender (per shift and general)

- **Metadata**
  - Documentation of interventions
  - Documentation of field work in general
Example of Specific Quality Indicators
Instrument Design
Within and Across Countries

• Qualitative:
  – No typical item mis-constructions such as double barrelled, double negatives, inconsistency between question and response scale, etc.
  – Qualitative interview outcomes checking for salience or respondents item interpretation
  – Translatability/Adaptability of items across countries (eiro network)

• Quantitative indicators are:
  – variance of response time between respondents in a test,
  – violation of the law of positive association of attitudinal items,
  – unintended skewness of responses
Current State of Affaires

- Instrument/questionnaire under way
- Tender
  - Published Dec. 21\textsuperscript{st} 2011
  - Tender opened March 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2012
  - Selection of contractor: ongoing
- First impression from the bids
  - Some bidders offer more than one (= their) preferred solutions
  - Some bidders have populated all the cells
  - Some bidders have expanded back the survey production stage
  - On quality, different terminology is used
Outlook

• ECS 2012 quality assurance plan
  ▸ Measurable quality
  ▸ Measures relevant indicators only
  ▸ requires discipline from us and contractors

• Expected benefits
  ▸ Increased efficiency
  ▸ Increased quality
  ▸ Information on quality assurance will be published on our website … we hope that the paradata and the methodological information collected will be used by the research community
Merci,

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http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/index.htm