

Working Group Position Paper

on mixed-mode data collection in household surveys

Minutes of the 2nd meeting

February 22nd, 2021

Presents: Fiona O’Riordan (Ireland), Fiona.O’Callaghan (Ireland), Andreja Smukavec (Slovenia), Martina Stare (Slovenia), Clelia Romano (Italy), Claudia Devitiis (Italy), Nadja Lamei (Austria), Thomas Burg (Austria), François Beck (France), Patrick Sillard (France), Ferenc Mújdricza (Hungary), Zoltán Vereczkei (Hungary)

The Minutes of the first session are adopted.

P. Sillard recalls that the group decided at the first meeting to divide the work into two sets:

- Review of the Mimod material, and especially inventory of the areas for further study identified in Mimod. Draft papers for inventory WP1 and 2 were sent for this 2nd meeting.
- Questionnaire: **T. Burg** sent a set of questions we could begin with. Concerning the IT development, the online survey tool made available by the European Commission seems to work well and **F. O’Riordan** already has experience in using this tool.

Point 1: identification of the remaining questions raised by Mimod

F. Beck presents the paper sent before the meeting about the WP 1 which aims at showing the main conclusions of Mimod’s WP1 and what are further issues? The WP is on the design of the survey. One of the questions raised is the choice between the sequential approach and the concurrent approach. Most of European surveys are based on a concurrent approach. We need some criteria to choose, and it may depend on the duration of the fieldwork.

The CAWI mode is the most natural mode as it is less expensive. We could ask a question on that in the questionnaire for example.

At the conclusion of the WP report, there is checklist for choosing the right design (with respect to the previous points). Maybe we could discuss this checklist.

There is also a section on the transition from face to face to mixed mode.

Another part of the report is devoted to adaptive mixed mode surveys. A very few countries have tested the adaptive design. **F. Beck** wonders if we could ask question on that: was the Covid19 crisis an occasion for some countries to go deeper into that, since adaptive design might be useful to reach some specific sub-population and might have been tested during the crisis?

F. Beck thinks it might be useful to ask NSIs how they deal with partially incomplete questionnaires. This has not been explored in Mimod.

In the Mimod's WP1 report, there is a section on communication with respondents. For example, SMS may have been used during the crisis so it could be interesting to know if countries used that during the crisis.

And finally, there is an interesting section in the report on incentives. It could be interesting to ask countries if they have tested new forms of incentives during the crisis.

N. Lamei restated the point about incentives, indicating that it might also be interesting to look at incentives associated with a specific mode, an incentive that might fix people on a given mode. She had never heard of any country using such incentives, but it would be good to know if any have been used. We should keep the point in the questionnaire we are going to prepare to countries. **F. Beck** confirmed that there are plans to include some: the first would be to know what are the appropriate incentives associated with a specific mode and the second would be to know what incentives could be used for a specific sub-population.

In reaction, **F. Mújdricza** says that there are examples of incentives associated to a given mode: using online vouchers for online surveys for example. It would be an idea to review also the types of incentives associated to a specific population. There are at least some theoretic view on that in the literature and we could look for examples. **F. Mújdricza** and **Z. Vereczkei** propose to work on it.

F. O'Riordan mentions the recent experience of the Irish NSI tried to offered conditional incentives in the LFS. They found very difficult to measure the impact. And they made additional research to understand the impact, in particular a focus group. Some people said they where suspicious, quite surprised that the government was willing to pay them. The conclusion was that incentives were not that appropriate to reach people who are difficult to reach. The English ONS have made a lot of research on conditional and unconditional incentives: unconditional incentives were more successful. The most successful was a shopping bag gift. In Ireland we offered 15€ per household. And in Northern Ireland, they offer 25 pounds in the LFS as well. It definitely had an impact but that's a lot of money. We stopped incentives in LFS in Ireland because it was expensive and we had no metrics to evaluate the impact. We'd like to see more research on that.

F. Mújdricza says that to measure the impact you need to have an experimental design but it is not always possible and it is not easy to observe significant impact. He is quite interested by the fact that some populations may be suspicious to incentives. It is quite in line with what is thought for Hungary. It might be interested to study this issue further. But we should not spend too much questions of the questionnaire on this issue of incentives otherwise the questionnaire will be too long.

F. Beck asks if the communication issue is it important for the group? **F. O'Riordan** says that it should be mentioned but again we should not spend too much questions on that.

Concerning the adaptation of survey mode to some specific population, the experience of France deserves to be mentioned with the survey that was conducted, in May 2020, on Covid prevalence where some partially completed questionnaire online were completed by phone afterwards. **A. Smukavec** says that in Slovenia, there is no possibility to call people because we don't have the phone numbers for the whole population.

In conclusion at this stage, group participants are invited to send to **F. Beck** written comments. The goal is to finish the survey of the Mimod work package by the end of March. It would be great if an other member of the group could join **F. Beck** to work on this WP (see last part).

P. Sillard then presents the second review paper on Mimod WP2. The main conclusion of the WP is the mode effect should be split into selection effect and measurement effect. Mode effect should be split because the correction of associated biases (if any) should not be undertaken through the same way for the two components. In order to disentangle the two components, some methods were studied (re-interview of the respondents through another mode) in the work package but it is still a work in progress, which learns from countries' experiences and that should be somehow coordinated at the European level. The main recommendation is to carry on the work by setting a network of countries interested in the methodological issues of multimode.

T. Burg would like to light on the fact that there are reductions of errors associated to multimode, especially coverage errors, and not only problems.

T. Burg wonders if there should be an impact of the multimode on calibration, editing and weighting. **C. De Vitiis** says that these questions are relevant. But she does not know if they should be asked as such in the questionnaire to countries. Maybe, written like that, the subject is too large.

P. Sillard thinks that we should concentrate the questionnaire on the last months experience acquired by countries, in relation to the main themes that were already identified in Mimod. We should ask open questions in order to let countries express themselves on points they have in mind.

Z. Vereczkei was at the meeting of the directors of methodology when the idea of preparing a position paper emerged. We started to discuss what the countries were doing. And it was clear that the spirit of the countries was changing rapidly with regard to multimode because of Covid. And the general feeling was that countries were going to end up with a different use of multi-mode surveys after the crisis. For me, the position paper should describe this phenomenon and summarize the common issues and challenges we face. So I agree that the position paper should not give some answers but rather formulate a position. And if we have a common position, we can help Eurostat and the ESS to identify areas where further work is needed, for example in the form of ESS networks, task-forces or grants.

F. O'Riordan agrees with this. **P. Sillard** too, as well as **A. Smukavec**. She thinks that, for example on mode effects, we may suggest in the Position paper to develop a research network or to write some guidelines, but the Position paper will not go too much into the technical aspects.

Point 2: Questionnaire

T. Burg introduces the subject with the paper he has prepared with some colleagues of him and sent to the group before the meeting. We have divided questions into three parts: 1) quality, 2) methods, 3) organization and management.

For 1), if somebody is conducting a mixed mode survey, we would like know if there is assessment of mode effect. It would be interesting to know if there is documentation of this question, and especially in a quality report (internal or external). For 2) when moving to MM survey, is it observable for managers to see any difference/effect on response rate or general behavior of some specific response group. For 3) if there is any break in time series that may be related to the change

of survey design, is it considered as such in the statistical analysis and is it subject to a specific communication within the survey results?

Concerning the quality bloc, in Statistic Austria, some efforts are made in these 3 domains, especially regarding the adaptation of metadata and paradata. There is also the idea of testing the questionnaire. In Statistic Austria, we have a specific laboratory for that.

Concerning the method, the question is how far data analysis is modified (or not) by the introduction of mixed mode. Calibration, weighting: are they modified by the different mode? How is the mode assigned to a statistical unit: is it a random process or a systematic assignment? If the mode is assign a priori, is it possible for respondent to switch anyway?

On organization and management, the first point is on the use of the well-establish survey infrastructure. And the second issue is how do you come to decide to introduce various modes in the survey?

N. Lamei adds that we should define soon the target population of the questionnaire: who is going to answer questions within the INS? **T. Burg** suggests that we go through the directors of methodology and social statistics since the group has been launched under the umbrella of these two groups of directors. But normally, according to **T. Burg**, there should be more than one person concerned by this questionnaire in each country.

F. Beck considers that **T. Burg's** proposal is a good starting point. He has some reservations about the last section since Mimod has brought some important material on the assignation between concurrential and sequential issues in mixed mode surveys. He is wondering if there was anything at stake in asking countries questions on this subject, i.e. to go further than Mimod on this point.

C. De Vitiis also considers this to be a rather delicate issue and she doubts that the countries have found new points on this during the covid. We should ask what actions were taken during the covid crisis and for some specific points, which is new. She suggests not to ask too general questions.

C. De Vitiis stresses that we need to distinguish between what NSIs have had to do because of the crisis and will not continue to do and the new experience gained during the crisis that may be useful generally for mixed-mode surveys. We also need to know whether some countries have undertaken to measure the impact of the mixed mode.

C. Romano says that it would be useful to know if some countries have investigated (or plan to investigate) new modes of collection going beyond the traditional modes used in mixed-mode, such as web-assisted interviews (wapi). New sensor data as well. In Italy, we are planing to experiment wapi as soon as possible.

A. Smukavec thinks that we should ask questions on what NSI's are planning to do in the future (for example phone numbers are not available everywhere). There is also an issue with the European survey questionnaires which may be too complex to be collected with all the modes. Then we should ask countries how they see this issue and if during the Covid crisis, some of them have realized that and maybe simplified or select some subset of questions in order to reduce the questionnaire duration.

N. Lamei underlines that the situation of countries might be quite different whether or not they have a population register.

P. Sillard says that organizing the work around Mimod review according to already existing work packages is clear to him, but for the questionnaire, it is different and we must talk about it and organize it now.

F. Beck and **T. Burg** could carry on on the questionnaire. **T. Burg** asks if we will have closed or open questions; and do we have a platform? **F. Beck** thinks that we will have a majority of open questions. It therefore may be administered even in a text file if we do not have enough time to develop the questionnaire. **P. Sillard** agrees. Concerning the platform, if the questionnaire is to be developed, it could be done on the European Commission platform and some colleagues of **F. O’Riordan** have the experience of developing a questionnaire on this platform. She confirms that it is easy to use (like Survey Monkey) and is an efficient platform for survey administration. **F. O’Riordan** asks if we could agree on the audience of the questionnaire. As mentioned previously, we may think that there will be probably two profiles of people able to reply: methodology and social statistician, at the image of our group. **T. Burg** agrees on that. And we should go through the DIME and DSS representative who are normally aware of this work. We should cc to the international departments.

T. Burg and **F. Beck** are going to work on a new draft by the end of March, with **N. Lamei**, and send it to the group ideally a few days before the next meeting.

Conclusion

(1) For the questionnaire:

- addressed to some representatives of methodology and social statistics representative, through DIME and DSS representatives; copy to international relation departments
- **F. Beck**, **T. Burg** and **N. Lamei** work for a new draft for the next meeting and send it a few days before the meeting
- will be developed on the EC platform (or in a text document if time is too short) with the help of **F. O’Riordan**
- mainly open questions

(2) We have checked draft papers on Mimod report reviews for WP1 and WP2. We must finalize the papers by the end of March. So **P. Sillard** proposes to finalize the draft papers (as was done for WP2) with people concerned. If others wish to participate in these revisions, please complete the following list:

- Mimod WP1: **F. Beck** + **F. O’Riordan**
- Mimod WP2: **C. De Vitiis** + **P. Sillard**.
- Mimod WP3: **A. Smukavec** + **M. Stare**
- Mimod WP4: **F. Beck** + other candidate?
- Mimod WP5: **F. Mújdricza** + **Z. Vereczkei**

Written comments are welcome in the meantime!