

Working Group Position Paper

on mixed-mode data collection in household surveys

Minutes of the first meeting

January 25th, 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)

Excused: Katalin Janák (Hungary), Ferenc Mújdricza (Hungary), Zoltán Vereczkei (Hungary)

Agenda of the 1st meeting:

1. Mandate, functioning of the group
2. Preliminary work on a questionnaire to Member States

A framework documents was sent to participants in order to introduce the discussion about the two previous points. It is reproduced below in *blue-talic*.

1. Mandate, functioning of the group

Reflections on the mandate

Beyond the mandate to prepare a "position paper" to be discussed at the DIME-ITDG and DSS meetings next summer, it may be useful to delineate the work to be done.

In terms of output, the main goal of the position paper is to define the main orientations for further developments within the ESS, in the continuity of the Mimod project. These new developments should be operationally oriented so as to produce practical results useful to Member States in order to make progress in the use of mixed-mode data collection.

It would therefore be interesting to ask the countries about the additional experience acquired during the Covid crisis, in particular in order to identify the concrete problems they encountered but also the solutions implemented to cope with them.

And then to analyze this questionnaire in order to update the findings made in Mimod, which had already produced a very detailed review of country practices on the basis of an extensive questionnaire. The interest of carrying out such a questionnaire is rather clear and it is proposed, in the second part of this meeting, to start working on this subject.

An obvious cornerstone and starting point is the Mimod material. Therefore, it is necessary to review in detail the work done and the suggestions made in Mimod for further developments. This last item should be an important basis for the proposed lines of work that the position paper should define. A brief summary of Mimod results might be useful. Anyway, it would therefore be necessary to take up the axes for further work raised by Mimod and to select, in the position paper, those

that are still relevant or even new ones that would have emerged in the light of the Covid-19 crisis.

Beyond that, Mimod provides numerous references, without necessarily recommending one approach when there are several possibilities. Research has also progressed, for example, on issues of selection bias in household surveys, without these elements being included in the Mimod material. It is therefore useful to take up these references again, supplementing them if necessary, in order to identify the questions that still need to be explored in greater depth to arrive at a methodological corpus that can be applied in practice. For example, an axis for further development that the position paper could propose could be the development of a handbook on mixed-mode surveys, under the umbrella of Eurostat.

The position paper may also suggest setting up an appropriate organization for further work within the ESS. For example, some sets of experiments could be organized and coordinated by some ad hoc ESS coordination level in order to better understand, for some of the main European household surveys, the consequences of switching from one mode to another.

→ Exchange of views

T. Burg considers that there has already been surveys on Covid-related initiatives, so the target is to define the priority when dealing with mixed_mode surveys. The development of multimode is now the general trend. A small survey may be useful. The goal is to now the concrete questions that countries encounter when dealing with multimode surveys.

F. O'Callaghan considers that the Mimod material is the basis of our work. It is a good idea to develop a questionnaire in order to learn from each other. What problems do countries have with multimode in terms of methodology, practical issues such as finding phone or e-mail coordinates of people, designing a mixed-mode questionnaire, etc.

A. Smukavec underlines that the paper should propose a list of challenges which appeared during the Covid crisis. There are also issues related to statistical regulations which -explicitely or implicitly- are based on a preferred way for data collection that should also be examined in a multimode perspective.

C. Romano explained that some adaptations have been made necessary because of the crisis and that only some of them are relevant to imagine the future of mixed_mode surveys. We must identify the durable choices. It will therefore be necessary to distinguish between what countries have been forced to do and the general problems linked to the gradual switchover of surveys to multimode.

C. Devitiss underlines the very tight deadline of the operation. The elaboration of a questionnaire could be useful but it should not be too general. In such a short period of time, it is difficult to develop a useful questionnaire and to analyse it. We definitely should focus on a kind of "follow-up" after the Mimod questionnaire. And of course, it is a good idea to review the Mimod material.

F. O'Riordan wondered whether we only need, in the questionnaire, to collect the experience acquired by the countries during the covid crisis or rather to draw out axes of innovations and thus to identify the problems encountered.

F. Beck agrees that generic questions are not very interesting for our purpose. He stresses that the Mimod questionnaire is a background work that should not be redone. He thinks that one way of asking questions could be to focus on 2 or 3 European surveys (HBS, LFS...) that have been

collected in 2020. General comments and other precisions would be considered in an open ended question.

T. Burg thinks that the goal of the Position Paper is to provide recommendations for future work: what are the fields of collaboration for future work? What are expectations of countries for future work? The position paper must provide ways of working but not necessarily solutions at this stage.

Functioning

Priority in time must be given to the gathering of useful material: questionnaire and review of the Mimod material. The next step will be to draft the position paper, based on the collected material. The following provisional program can be outlined:

- **February:**
 1. *design of the Member States questionnaire*
 2. *Review of the Mimod material in order to extract open questions and suggested axes for further work. Review of Mimod references and additional useful papers. This work may be split according to the 5 Mimod work packages.*
- **March:**
 - *IT development and Collection of the questionnaire (1)*
 - *Continuation of work on point (2)*
- **April**
 - *Analysis of questionnaire*
 - *Synthesis of (2)*
- **May**
 - *1st Draft of position paper*
- **June**
 - *Finalization of the position paper*

The group could meet once a month, between this 1st meeting in January, till June.

→ *Exchange of views*

General agreement on the proposed functioning.

C. Devitiis and F. Beck think that it is necessary to share the work and to work in parallel on the review of Mimod material and the questionnaire.

C. Devitiss, who has had the experience of Mimod, doubts whether the schedule is realistic.

P. Sillard thinks that we should not be too ambitious: the aim is only to write an article on the relevant lines of thought at the European level. We must therefore limit the work to what is strictly necessary for this objective. For example, we should not produce a complete summary of Mimod but only extract the issues that have been identified in Mimod as needing to be studied in greater depth. For the questionnaire, we should not refer to the experience of countries during the Covid crisis, but only to the difficulties encountered in the transition to mixed_mode surveys.

A. Smukavec abounds in this sense by saying that countries should be asked if they intend to return to the previous mode.

2. Preliminary work on a questionnaire to Member States

The questionnaire to Member States would concern those of the European social surveys (ESS) that had to be led in the period of the Covid-19 crisis. Among them, the LFS (first and subsequent waves), SILC (first and subsequent waves), HBS and ICT would be relevant candidates.

One aim would be to describe how each Member State did react to the crisis for those ESS surveys on the one hand and, on the other hand, for other household surveys, including in particular those set up to respond to the need for information specifically related to the health and social crisis.

Main topics

For each survey, it would be useful to identify how far the survey design or the data collection strategy was adapted (postponed or canceled, adapted or kept identical) and, when applicable, how the main indicators (i. e. global response rate and subgroups response rates) have evolved compared to the situation before the Covid crisis.

This context was tricky, but it was also an opportunity to innovate on organizational or methodological issues (i. e. strategies to reduce total non response, to collect phone numbers, use of SMS, of e-mails or of interactive voice response IVR...). Such innovations could be reported in a more or less open-ended question.

In a second part of this questionnaire, a “perspective” section could be proposed, dealing with issues less directly related to the crisis, with for example:

- In the last two years, what work has been carried out on mode effect assessment and adjustment? For which findings?*
- Advances in mixed-mode questionnaire designs, especially for mobile phones and responsive CSS¹*
- In mixed-mode protocol involving CAWI, are there some new experiences that could lead to specific recommendations on the management of questionnaires. For example, concerning those which have not been validated by the respondent, too incomplete or completed too quickly (according to paradata)? Many protocols are possible to manage these situations, including switching to a mode that relies on an interviewer to complete (or completely rework) the questionnaire. This point raises complex organizational issues, it would be very relevant to investigate how the different NSIs have resolved them.*

It would be necessary to choose between a global national perspective or a “survey by survey” approach, which would therefore require a greater number of questions.

It would be advisable, if agreed, to organize the work on the design of the questionnaire and its IT development during this 1st meeting, in order to be consistent with the provisional program.

→ Exchange of views

T. Burg mainly agrees with what is proposed and suggests that we should start from the problems encountered by countries. And we should ask them about future challenges they consider on mixed-mode issues. Maybe we could concentrate only on the LFS.

F. Beck asks for participation to the IT development and for the future analysis of the questionnaire. He evokes the Hungarian consultation on Covid related initiative in household surveys (in which several participants participated) and will ask our Hungarian colleagues if they can disseminate

1 cascading style sheet

their results within the group. He asks whether we should focus on the crisis or on the mixed mode. T. Burg gives a clear answer on the mixed mode. The participants agree with this point of view.

C. Romano things we should concentrated on LFS and HBS as examples of surveys undertaken during the Covid crisis. How NSIs did react, what were the changes and innovation and what are their intentions for next years. Some reactions were related to the emergency context and are not intended to be perpetuated.

N. Lamei indicates that a questionnaire has already been circulated on the SILC Survey. It would be a good idea to retrieve the results and focus on more general questions than survey by survey. N. Lamei will send to the group the corresponding material.

C. Devitiis stresses the importance of targeting the relevant person to fill in the questionnaire.

In conclusion, it is decided that the work to be done in February is split into two sets:

- Review of the Mimod material, and especially inventory of the areas for further study identified in Mimod. Mimod WP1: F. Beck; Mimod WP2: C. Devitiis, P. Sillard. Mimod WP5: F. Mújdricza. Other participants and those who were not attending this meeting are very welcome to participate, especially on WP 3 to 5.
- Questionnaire: T. Burg will work on methodological issues, quality aspects and future plans; A. Smukavec and C. Romano will collaborate on that as well. Concerning the IT development, F. Beck will continue to study whether INSEE can take over the questionnaire. T. Burg mentions as well the online survey tool made available by Eurostat. F. O’Riordan will send the link to the group. And she also mentioned that Ireland can help to correct the English language of the questionnaire. N. Lamei will send to the group the questionnaire and the collected material related to European SILC surveys.

The goal is for the next meeting of the group (end of February):

- to have a draft questionnaire
- to have a draft inventory of Mimod identified axes for further study

3. Additional resources

In addition, the following resources were highlighted by group members:

- Mimod web site (do to the link, then develop MIMOD menu within the page):

<https://www.istat.it/en/research-activity/international-research-activity/essnet-and-grants>

- EUSurvey (Online application for questionnaire development and administration) – link provided by F. O’Riordan:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/auth/login>

- UN papers on multimode surveys – link provided by N. Lamei

<https://unstats.un.org/iswghs/task-forces/covid-19-and-household-surveys/>

- Material on the data collection in EU-SILC 2020- 3 documents were provided by N. Lamei:
 - document LC281 summarizes the findings
 - The relating excel is the raw output of the survey.
 - The second pdf shows the questionnaire with Nadia's entries for Austria.

Nadia mentioned that it could be of use either to develop our own questionnaire or also to see how countries reacted to the crisis. Furthermore, we should try not to overburden NSIs and ask things we can get from other sources like this.

- Material on the data collection for LFS in 2020- 1 document was provided by M. Stare:
 - The excel file shows the raw output of the survey LFS for all EU countries.
 - The pdf file shows the questionnaire with Slovenia answers.
- Two links to UN and UNECE recent workshops on data collection – provided by F. Beck:
 - to the 2020 data collection workshop, organized by Unece in october 2020

<https://statswiki.unece.org/display/Collection/2020+Data+Collection+Workshop>

- And a orientation paper which is presented to the 52nd session of the UN Statistical Commission: "Positioning Household Surveys for the next decades" (Paper in pdf also provide by François). The side events will take place on February 19th, 2021 :

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/side-events/20210219-1M-positioning-household-surveys-for-the-next-decade>

- Two additional papers by UN Statistical commission – sent in pdf by F. Mujdricza: (1) "Report on intersecretarit working group on houselhod surveys" for the 52nd session of the UN Statistical Commission; (2) "Technical Guidance Note – Planning and Implementing Household Surveys Under COVID-19"- also available under the link:

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/documents/>