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Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences

SERISS aims to equip Europe's social science data infrastructures to play a major role in addressing the key societal challenges facing Europe today and ensure that national and European policymaking is built on a solid base of the highest quality socio-economic evidence. The cluster project is intended to overcome fragmentation among research infrastructures (RIs) and foster interoperability, harmonisation and innovation.



SERISS is a collaboration between Europe's leading social science infrastructures – the **European Social Survey** (ESS ERIC), the **Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe** (SHARE ERIC) and the **Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives** (CESSDA AS) – together with three developing research infrastructures – the **Generations and Gender Programme** (GGP); the **European Values Study** (EVS) and the **WageIndicator Survey**.

SERISS will foster the strengths and address the weaknesses of social science RIs in three key ways:

- Addressing key challenges for cross-national data collection: SERISS provides a platform for collaboration in tackling two key challenges facing cross-national data collection – generating comparable, representative samples of the target population and achieving equivalence of meaning across countries via high-quality translation;
- Breaking down barriers between infrastructures: By developing common technological platforms and creating shared online tools and resources, SERISS aims to facilitate greater harmonisation of data collection, analysis and curation across social science infrastructures;
- Embracing the future of the social sciences: SERISS addresses challenges and opportunities associated with new forms of data; investigates options for moving survey data collection online; and seeks to harness the increasing power of automated text mining for improved data processing.

Overview

Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences (SERISS) is a four-year collaboration (2015-2019) between six of Europe's leading data research infrastructures.

The SERISS Consortium involves a wide range of project partners located throughout Europe:

Czech Republic
Czech Social Science Data Archive (CESSDA AS)

Germany
GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (ESS ERIC & CESSDA AS)

Munich Center for the Economics of Aging (SHARE ERIC)

Israel
Hebrew University of Jerusalem (SHARE ERIC)

Italy
University of Padua (SHARE ERIC)

University of Venice "Ca' Foscari" (SHARE ERIC)

Netherlands
CentERdata, University of Tilburg (SHARE ERIC)

Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute – NiDi (GGP)

University of Tilburg (EVS)

University of Amsterdam (WageIndicator)

Norway
NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data (ESS ERIC and CESSDA AS)

Slovenia
Arhiv Družboslovnih Podatkov (CESSDA AS)

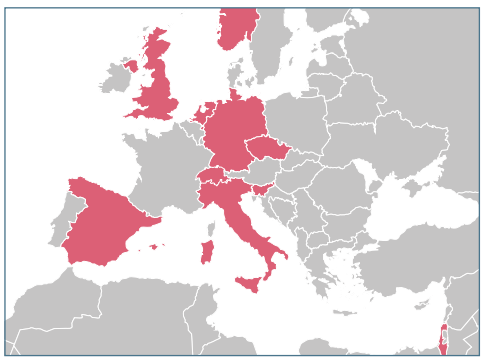
University of Ljubljana (ESS ERIC)

Spain
Universitat Pompeu Fabra (ESS ERIC)

Switzerland
Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences (CESSDA AS)

United Kingdom
City, University of London (ESS ERIC)

UK Data Archive (CESSDA AS)



SERISS is also forging links with other social science survey and data infrastructures. The following organisations serve on the project's Board of Strategic Advice: CODATA: The Committee on Data for Science and Technology, European Election Studies (EES), EUDAT European Data Infrastructure, Eurofound, International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), World Values Survey (WVS).

SERISS is organised into seven substantive workpackages, each addressing a key issue faced by cross-national social science research infrastructures.



WP2 Representing the population

A social survey must give a reliable portrait of the population it investigates. Probability samples are the proper basis for that.

In the ideal case, a probability-based sample is drawn from an official person register covering the population of interest. The availability of such registers varies across Europe as do regulations about access and the information they contain. Under-coverage and over-coverage errors in available sampling frames, variance in sampling designs, and differences in response rates between countries may also introduce errors in comparative analyses.

SERISS combines the sampling expertise of SHARE and ESS with that of EVS and GGP, leading to outcomes that benefit not only these studies but also other cross-national social surveys in Europe.

Key activities include:

- Pooling knowledge on available sample frames across Europe obtained from the SHARE, ESS, GGP and EVS national sampling experts;
- Exploring the cross-national availability and use of auxiliary data to tackle nonresponse bias;
- Improvements to weighting procedures to correct unit and item nonresponse in panel surveys;
- An inventory of how the institutional population can be better represented in general population surveys.

WP3 Maximising equivalence through translation

The production of high quality, comparable data in cross-national surveys depends on the production of equivalent language versions in each country.

This WP addresses central aspects of the survey translation process including how adaptation affects translation quality and how to best apply new technological advances in translation studies to improve quality and reduce costs. SERISS aims to generate quantitative empirical evidence on the implementation and efficacy of different translation processes in major cross-national and multi-lingual surveys.

Key activities include:

- Experimental testing of close vs more adaptive approaches to questionnaire translation;
- An exploration of the feasibility of applying computational linguistic methods to survey translation;
- An evaluation of translation procedures employed by the European Language Social Science Thesaurus (ELSST);
- Extensions to SHARE's Translation Management Tool to allow all stages of the Translation, Review, Adjudication, Pretesting and Documentation (TRAPD) approach to translation to be documented fully, including for shared languages.

WP4 Interactive tools for cross-national surveys

Online tools are the corner stone of modern research infrastructures in the social sciences.

Currently, even the most sophisticated research infrastructures rely on basic tools to carry out key stages in the survey lifecyle leading to a loss of efficiency as well as reduced transparency. The suite of tools being developed under SERISS aims to take cross-national survey research to a new level by automating key processes, allowing a better flow and handling of information across the survey life cycle and, ultimately, a more efficient use of resources.

Tools being developed include:

- A DDI-compliant online Question Design and Development Tool (QDDT) and Questionnaire Variable Database (QVDB);
- An improved Sample Distributor and Sample Management System for use on SHARE;
- A new Fieldwork Management and Monitoring System (FMMS) built around a mobile app to provide ESS with timely and consistent monitoring data during fieldwork;
- A Survey Project Management Portal (SMaP) to support multiple stakeholders involved in the production of large-scale cross-national surveys to manage and coordinate activities across different stages of the survey lifecycle;
- A Data Harmonisation Platform which will allow survey users to deposit and retrieve information on how key survey variables have been recoded for analysis.

WP5 Training and dissemination

SERISS aims to bring together researchers, field agencies and data archives across the social sciences to improve the process of data collection, preparation and (re-)use.

A range of training activities will ensure the effective dissemination of skills, tools and knowledge acquired during the project.

SERISS training activities include:

- Webinars to promote the use of the interactive survey tools being developed in other workpackages;
- Online and face-to-face training in data preparation, archiving and dissemination to encourage the research community to adopt common standards in data management;
- Guidance for data users on how to better handle and harmonise survey data;
- Four face-to-face workshops for secondary data users to equip them with skills and knowledge to analyse already existing survey data. Workshops cover: questionnaire design, sampling and weighting, assessment of data quality, analysis of cross-national survey data.

SERISS is building a Survey Experts Network, bringing SERISS partners together with commercial survey organisations, European agencies and national statistical institutes to discuss common challenges facing cross-national surveys.

WP6 New forms of data

The emergence of new forms of data to complement traditional survey data provides many opportunities for the social sciences. This also presents major legal, ethical and practical challenges.

SERISS explores the opportunities and challenges associated with three new types of data: social media data, administrative data and biomarkers. Researchers are investigating how these forms of data can and have been used in social research to date through mapping exercises, practical case studies, close study of the new General Data Protection Regulation, and stakeholder workshops.

Key outputs include:

- Guidelines for the use, reuse and dissemination of social media data and administrative data in social research;
- Strategies to encourage the use of social media data and administrative data in social research;
- A framework equipping data repositories to deal with new forms of data and make them sharable and reusable;
- Guidance on the collection of biomarkers in cross-national population surveys based on SHARE's experience with Dried Blood Spots (DBS) – a synopsis of policy rules for collecting biomarkers in social surveys across 19 European countries and Israel and an exploration of issues around obtaining informed consent.

Activities

WP7 A survey future online

The internet offers increased opportunities for quick, innovative, and more cost-effective data collection leading many to see the web as the future mode of data collection for survey research.

However, there remain serious challenges to obtaining accurate data using the internet, especially for cross-national studies of the general population.

SERISS is piloting the first ever cross-national probability-based web panel, known as the CROss-National Online Survey (CRONOS). Respondents to Round 8 of the European Social Survey in three countries – UK, Slovenia and Estonia – have been recruited to take part in a 12-month, 6-wave web panel in 2017.

The project serves as a 'proof of concept' from which to produce a blueprint that a range of cross-sectional survey infrastructures could consider adopting in the future.

Data from the panel will be available for secondary analysis via the ESS Data Archive alongside ESS Round 8 data.

WP8 Coding socio-economic questions

Occupation, industry, employment status, educational attainment and field of education are core variables in many socio-economic and health surveys. However, their measurement, especially in a cross-cultural, cross-national and longitudinal context, is cumbersome, not sufficiently standardised and often expensive.

Building on WageIndicator's expertise in this area and harnessing recent scientific and technological developments, SERISS aims to provide a tool for cross-country harmonised, fast, high-quality and cost-effective coding of the five core socio-economic measures required by many social surveys.

Key developments include:

- An online survey module with Q&A to measure occupation, industry, employment status, educational attainment and field of education, available for 99 countries and translated into 47 languages;
- A cross-national database of 4,000 occupations coded to ISCO08;
- A cross-national database of educational attainment coded to ISCED-2011;
- An industry database coded to NACE 2.0;
- Syntax to produce a harmonised measure of socio-economic status based on ESEG-2014.

SHARE is working on a survey module to collect detailed, harmonised data on people's social networks and develop a standard classification of network types taking into account the number, type and intensity of contact.

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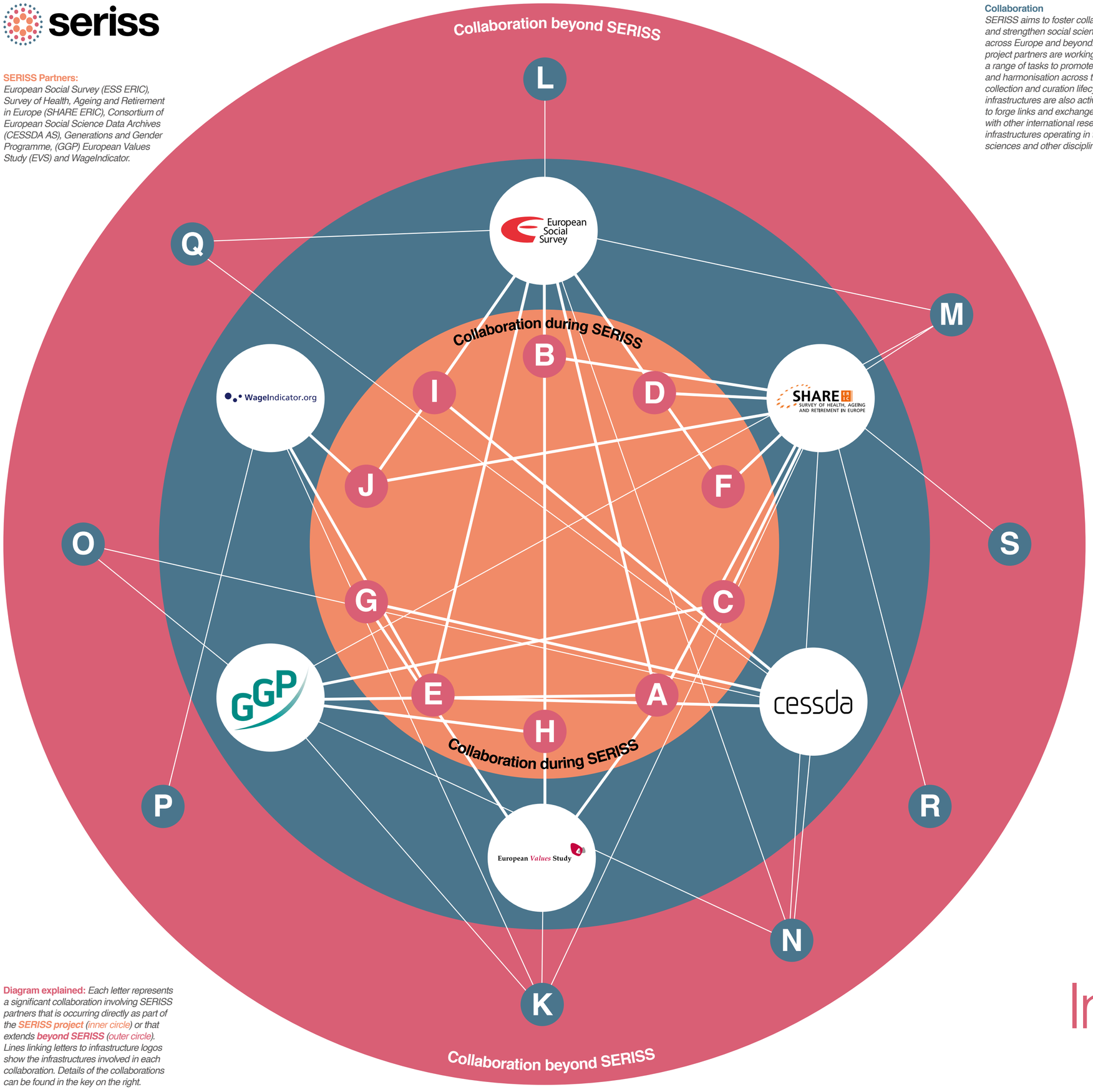


Diagram explained: *Each letter represents a significant collaboration involving SERISS partners that is occurring directly as part of the **SERISS project** (inner circle) or that extends **beyond SERISS** (outer circle). Lines linking letters to infrastructure logos show the infrastructures involved in each collaboration. Details of the collaborations can be found in the key on the right.*

Collaboration
SERISS aims to foster collaboration and strengthen social science research across Europe and beyond. The six project partners are working together on a range of tasks to promote interoperability and harmonisation across the data collection and curation lifecycle. SERISS infrastructures are also actively seeking to forge links and exchange knowledge with other international research infrastructures operating in the social sciences and other disciplines.

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Collaboration during SERISS

A **SHARE**, **ESS**, **EVS** and **GGP** are pooling information on available sampling frames and evaluating access conditions and quality

B **SHARE** country teams and **ESS** National Coordinators will participate in a joint workshop to discuss the use of auxiliary data to tackle survey nonresponse

C **GGP** will be testing a new method of weighting longitudinal surveys for non-response developed by **SHARE**

D **ESS** is adapting **SHARE**'s Translation Management Tool (TMT) for its own use. The ESS version of the TMT incorporates all stages of translations required for the Translation, Review, Adjudication, Pretesting and Documentation (TRAPD) approach

E **CESSDA Training** is developing shared training resources for interactive survey tools being developed by **ESS** and **WageIndicator**

F **ESS** is working with **SHARE** partner, CentERdata, to develop a new electronic Fieldwork Management and Monitoring System (FMMS), building on experience of SHARE's Sample Management System

G **CESSDA** is developing a Survey Management Portal which will be tested by **EVS** during its 2017 data collection

H SERISS' CROss-National Online Survey (CRONOS) Panel led by **ESS** is being used by **EVS** and **GGP** to pre-test survey questions

I Survey experts from **ESS** and **GGP** are collaborating with **CESSDA** to develop guidelines for the ethical use and storage of new forms of data (social media data, administrative data) in combination with traditional survey data

J **WageIndicator** is working with developers at **SHARE** partner, CentERdata, and education experts from **ESS** partner, GESIS, to provide an online coding module for survey-based measures of key socio-economic indicators including occupation, employment status and education. The work on education indicators builds on previous work conducted under the GESIS-led CAMCES project to measure and code education cross-nationally.

Collaboration beyond SERISS

K Further take up of SERISS tools is planned. **EVS** and **GGP** are exploring options for using **SHARE**'s Translation Management Tool in their next round of data collection. **GGP** will use **WageIndicator**'s tool for coding socio-economic variables

L **ESS** is sharing knowledge about cross-national web panels with other infrastructures and will field questions from surveys like the European Quality of Life Survey on CRONOS

M *The Open Data Infrastructure for Social Sciences and Economics Innovation* (ODISSEI), a research cluster named as part of the Dutch National Roadmap for Large-Scale Scientific Infrastructure, will increase collaboration between **ESS**, **GGP** and **SHARE** in the Netherlands

N The PROGEDO infrastructure aims to ensure the implementation of a public policy for social sciences and humanities in France. It coordinates the national implementation of **ESS**, **GGP**, **SHARE** and **CESSDA** activities

O **GGP** and **CESSDA AS** have applied for an EC Starting Community Grant for PopLife. PopLife aims to develop an integrated community with access to the best and most innovative resources to study causes and consequences of population change

P **WageIndicator** is involved in the H2020 InGRID2 project, part of the Inclusive Growth Research Infrastructure, contributing to the data-management of its global Minimum Wages Database covering 76 countries

Q **ESS ERIC** and **CESSDA AS** are involved in the H2020 RISCAPE project which will report on the position of the major European research infrastructures, including those in the social sciences, in an international context

R **SHARE ERIC** is involved in RITrain, working with BBMRI ERIC to develop a masters programme for research infrastructure managers

S **SHARE ERIC** has signed a memorandum of understanding with CERIC ERIC, which focuses on the fields of materials, biomaterials and nanotechnology, to promote research collaboration between the social sciences and analytical sciences.

Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences

Find out more

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Outputs from the project are available here:
http://seriss.eu/resources/deliverables/

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