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The Questionnaire Design and Documentation Tool (QDDT)

The QDDT is an interactive and dynamic web-based tool that can be used to document, retrieve and reuse information on the complex process of designing a cross-national survey questionnaire.

Why do social researchers need the QDDT?

A challenge facing survey researchers is how to capture complex questionnaire design processes, a process which often involves multiple actors (subject specialists, country teams, translation and questionnaire design experts) and different stages of development (cognitive interviewing, piloting) in a way that is both comprehensive and easy to navigate.

Often the questionnaire design process is either not documented in full detail or involves working with word or PDF documents which can be hard to manage.

How does the QDDT solve the problem?

The use case for the SERISS project is the questionnaire design process of the European Social Survey (ESS). Two rotating modules of questions are developed over the course of two years via an iterative process involving multiple stages of testing and discussion.

The QDDT helps researchers to develop conceptually -grounded questionnaires; track the development and history of questions over time; reuse metadata components such as questions or response options and publish and share content at project-specific milestones.

The QDDT is based on DDI 3.2 and so interoperable with other DDI-based tools.

How can researchers use the QDDT?

This tool was developed primarily with the European Social Survey in mind. However, the tool is also expected to be useful to other national and cross-national surveys.

The tool is publicly available under the GNU General Public License v3.0. If you are interested in using the tool please contact surveytools@nsd.no.

Where to find out more about the QDDT

QDDT wiki:
https://github.com/DASISH/qddt-client/wiki

Info about the QDDT at the DDI Alliance web-site:
https://www.ddialliance.org/tool/the-questionnaire-design-and-development-tool-%E2%80%93-qddt-v10

www.SERISS.eu

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Translation Management Tool (TMT)

The Translation Management Tool is a central hub where information on questionnaire translations is generated, stored, and can be reviewed and shared between individuals before being exported back into survey software.

Why do social researchers need the TMT?

High-quality translation is essential for any cross-cultural survey, ensuring that concepts and questions are understood in a comparable way by respondents from different language groups.

Successful translation often involves multiple stages and several different experts working together. Careful management and documentation of this complex process is essential to ensure that the desired consistency and comparability across languages is achieved.

How does the TMT solve the problem?

The Translation Management Tool can help researchers to keep track of the translation process. In earlier versions of the TMT, the process assumed only on instance of the translation per language which needed to be translated, viewed, reviewed and checked. The innovation in the SERISS project has been to make the tool modular and to accommodate the TRAPD approach to translation.

How can researchers use the TMT?

The advantage of modularization is that separate versions of the translations can be used next to each other. One researcher can interact with a questionnaire module that someone else has worked on, or two researchers can work on the same translation at the same time; in both cases the system will produce two versions of the same translation. Later the two versions can undergo review and adjudication and be merged into one.

Modularization gives researchers a more flexible workflow and allows them to better divide the translation tasks between different individuals and experts.

Where to find out more about the TMT

If you are fielding a survey in multiple languages and you want to translate it in a comparable way, contact: centerdata@uvt.nl

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Questionnaire Variable Database (QVDB)

The QVDB, based on Colectica as its technical platform, documents the relationships between questionnaires, survey questions, the resulting variables and changes to these over time.

The DDI Lifecycle is the conceptual framework used to structure and document the relationship between questions, variables and questionnaires.

Why do social researchers need the QVDB?

The ESS is a cross-national survey that has been conducted every two years since 2001. A challenge for researchers is that not only have questions and variables changed over time, but it can also be hard to find the detailed information about those changes in the survey documentation using current software solutions.

How does the QVDB solve the problem?

The QVDB is a system for storage and retrieval of metadata components. Such components can be questions, variables, data files and also information about the survey and the single studies, data collections, that is to say, the information that is connected to the survey. Interoperability is facilitated as the tool is based on recognised metadata standards.

How can researchers use the QVDB?

Researchers can study ESS metadata components in the tool. Documentation about the relationships between the components and changes over time is available to users at **https://colectica.nsd.no/***

The QVDB database is also highly configurable to meet the needs of other surveys and their related metadata. As an administrator** you can decide which elements you would like to show to users as well as relationships and changes over time.

Administrators of the QVDB can add data files, show variable distributions as well as variable code lists and other information important to understand the concordance.

Where to find out more about the QVDB

Visit **https://colectica.nsd.no/** or contact surveytools@nsd.no

*Access for end users under NSD's Colectica license

**Access for administrators subject to Colectica licensing agreements

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Fieldwork Management System (FMS)

Building on the success of SHARE's existing sample management system, the FMS provides survey researchers with access to accurate, comprehensive and standardized information on fieldwork progress in real time.

Under SERISS, the FMS has been developed as a mobile app (CASE CTRL) for interviewers to use in the field to manage their case load and record information on contact attempts.

Why do social researchers need an FMS?

Monitoring fieldwork is essential for any survey. The problem for cross-national surveys is that researchers are often quite far removed from the fieldwork process and trying to monitor fieldwork across multiple countries, often with very different fieldwork contact and different local technology set-ups for fieldwork monitoring. All too often, researchers rely on fieldwork updates that are incomplete, out-of-date, and inconsistent across countries.

How does the FMS solve the problem?

CASE CTRL syncs automatically with a centralized case management system www.SERISS.eu which is available both to the survey agency for day-to-day fieldwork management and to the central survey team. This gives study teams access to data and summary progress statistics about all countries in the field at the same time.

How can researchers use the FMS?

CASE CTRL is currently in use by SHARE and ESS. It can run on multiple devices and was designed to work for contact registration with phones or small tablets, or laptops for longer interviews. Interviewers can record the outcome of contact attempts, conduct interviews and update respondent contact information (e.g. phone numbers and e-mails).

National fieldwork agencies can allocate sample units to interviewers, track interviewer performance, view data from complete interviews, and track the progress and current status of individual sample units.

At the cross-national-level this tool helps researchers to monitor and compare how countries are progressing with their fieldwork using input-harmonized data and a common set of fieldwork indicators.

Where to find out more about the FMS

If you are interested in using the FMS to manage your survey's fieldwork, contact: centerdata@uvt.nl.

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Survey Project Management Portal

SMaP was developed to address two ongoing and routine challenges of large data collection projects 1) communication (managing daily communication with teams all over Europe) and 2) information management (exchange of data, files and documentation among central and national teams).

Why do social researchers need SMaP?

Researchers in comparative surveys face a special challenge: managing international collaboration e.g. in questionnaire design, fieldwork steering, data integration, and analysis, when the multiple actors involved work in many different locations and countries. The traditional vehicles to communicate and share documents are e-mail and file sharing services. However, these are inherently messy, suffer from security concerns, and do little to help with monitoring processes and for preserving all important materials for later re-use and documentation.

How does SMaP solve the problem?

The solution was a digital platform to enable and manage the communications and collaboration needs of international survey teams. SMaP allows to more easily manage the challenges of communication and file transfer between the countries and the central teams.

On SMaP, teams follow standardized workflows supporting the exchange of data and documentation during fieldwork and data processing and communicate with other teams in an efficient way. It offers workspaces for every team that share several features. Two important communication features are:

1) the 'Activity Stream' that can be used for communication between central and national teams and organize workflows, exchange documents and discuss the daily work; and

2) the bespoke folder structure that helps organize and exchange files with other countries, including uploading a file in one folder once to make it accessible to all other teams and providing a structured repository at the end of the project.

How can researchers use SMaP?

The pilot myEVS was developed in collaboration with the European Values Study (EVS). However, it is anticipated that the tool will also be usable by other survey projects, for example the European Social Survey (ESS), or the Generations and Gender Programme.

Where to find out more about SMaP

If you are interested in learning more about SMaP and how it was customized for the EVS, please get in touch via e-mail to myevs.support@gesis.org.

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Surveycodings.org

A number of socio-economic survey questions are difficult to code cross-nationally to achieve comparable data. For example, the level of education needs to be measured with country-specific items which are then harmonized. Further, it is not always clear how answers to the open occupation question are coded across countries.

Why do social researchers need Surveycodings.org?

A challenge facing survey researchers is how to capture complex questionnaire design processes with multiple actors involved? These can include attempts to capture structural differences between countries like the differences in the education system, or categorical questions with a very large number of response options, such as occupation. They include multiple actors from across the world such as substantive experts, questionnaire designers, national coordinators, translation team members and experts, and methodology experts .

How does Surveycodings.org solve the problem?

On the website surveycodings.org, a demo questionnaire shows how country qualifications can be measured via a context-sensitive questionnaire. The innovative questionnaire design, showcased in a live database search, upgrades `long list` questions that better reflect the increasing differentiation of educational systems for a transparent, consistent and effortless harmonization of national education categories into international categories.

Surveycodings.org also contains a database with pre-coded industry names that are available for more than 300 industry names and in more than 40 languages. It includes an occupational industry prediction: the most likely industries are shown in the survey, so the respondent can better choose whether those industries apply to him or her and, if not, then the full list of industries shows up.

How can researchers use Surveycodings.org?

Researchers can access the databases directly by visiting the website surveycodings.org. They can download the databases, use the online API for CAWI, or download and install it for their CAPI survey.

Where to find out more about Surveycodings.org

Visit the surveycodings.org website, which has extensive information about the database and supporting documentation.

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Variable Harmonization Hub

The Variable Harmonization Hub is an online repository for the extensive and detailed variable harmonization work that survey researchers must carry out in the course of routine data preparation. The website allows researchers to easily find and deposit detailed digital documentation on variable harmonization.

Why do social researchers need a Variable Harmonization Hub?

Social researchers routinely record variables in surveys, including recoding national classifications with international classification standards, such as education or occupation. The challenge that researchers who want to understand or replicate prior variable recodings face is that the documentation may exist in several different places or may not contain many details on why certain decisions were taken.

How does the Variable Harmonization Hub solve the problem?

Building a digital location where researchers can deposit their detailed documentation for storage and online public retrieval increases both the transparency of the work and facilitates the precise replication of measures in other contexts. The Hub allows for more extensive documentation to be deposited alongside a study's codebook, including uploading the original recoding instructions in a proprietary statistical package (i.e. uploading the original .do or .sav file), and other supporting documentation including spreadsheet documents such as Excel files.

How can researchers use the Variable Harmonization Hub?

The Hub is for public use and anyone can search its holdings without registration. Users can search by the name of the study, by concept, or by variable name.

Researchers can deposit their harmonization documentation by registering with the website and submitting their documentation, which goes through a peer-review process before acceptance.

Where to find out more about the Variable Harmonization Hub

Visit https://harmonization.gesis.org/ and search 'EVS' to see documentation for the European Values Survey European Values Study 2017 (EVS 2017).

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Project Summary

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. SERISS involves the three leading European Research Infrastructures in the social sciences – 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 ERIC) – together with organizations representing the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), European Values Study (EVS) and WageIndicator.

Undertaking collaborative research and creating tools to assist future data collection, SERISS has exploited potential synergies among these infrastructures and fostered inter-operability, harmonization and innovation in three key ways:

- Addressing key challenges for cross-national data collection including how best to represent the views and behavior of the population and how to achieve 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
- Embracing the future of the social sciences by exploring new forms of data and new modes of data collection

SERISS Tools

SERISS has developed a suite of online tools to support different stages of the data lifecycle from design to collection to analysis. The tools are designed to support higher quality and cost effective data collection and ensure that data are Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR). They are available to be used by national and international research infrastructures.

Find out more about SERISS Tools

- Questionnaire Design and Documentation Tool (QDDT) https://github.com/DASISH/qddt-client/wiki or contact surveytools@nsd.no
- Translation Management Tool (TMT) https://seriss.centerdata.nl/ or contact centerdata@uvt.nl
- Question Variable Database (QVDB) https://colectica.nsd.no/ or contact surveytools@nsd.no
- Fieldwork Management System (FMS) https://seriss.centerdata.nl/page2.php or contact centerdata@uvt.nl
- SMaP/myEVS https://www.gesis.org/en/research/applied-computer-science/labs/#c78056 or contact myevs.support@gesis.org.
- Surveycodings.org www.surveycodings.org
- Variable Harmonization HUB (VHH) https://harmonization.gesis.org/#!Home

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