Informing Public Policy: a Case of the European Social Survey

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  - government must produce policies that really deal with problems; that are forward looking and shaped by the evidence rather than a response to short-term pressures; that **tackle causes not symptoms**

  - the integration of experience, judgement and expertise with the best available external evidence from **systematic research**
European Surveys Aiming to Inform Public Policy

- EU-SILC – data is being used for monitoring the poverty and social inclusion in the EU
- EU-LFS – indicator sets for policy monitoring on employment
- Eurobarometer – since 1973 the EC has been monitoring the evolution of public opinion in the MS, thus helping the preparation of texts, decision-making and the evaluation of its work
- EQLS – indicators … are easily integrated into the decision-making process and taken up by public debate at EU and national levels in the EU
Aims of the ESS ERIC Relevant to Policy Making

- To chart stability and change in social structure, conditions and attitudes in Europe and to interpret how Europe’s social, political and moral fabric is changing.

- To introduce soundly-based indicators of national progress, based on citizens’ perceptions and judgements of key aspects of their societies.

- To improve the visibility and outreach of data on social change among academics, policy makers and the wider public.
So how Social Surveys can Inform Public Governance?

- Information source for public policy analysis?
  - Monitoring social conditions, behaviors, attitudes and perceptions:
    - Indicators
      - Objective (conditions, behaviors → official statistics)
      - Subjective (opinions, judgments → opinion surveys)
    - Data
      - Provides required evidence for policy making?
      - Basis of effective policy interventions/actions?
  - Understanding causal processes → causal mechanisms
    - Necessary for effective policy interventions/actions?
  - Monitoring, evaluating, forecasting and recommending public policy?
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- **Biennial** survey of European public opinion → subjective data
- **Rigorous** comparative methodology
  - Cross-national questionnaire development
  - Strictly probability sampling, large effective sample size
  - Detailed supervision and guidance on fieldwork (contact data)
  - Thorough data processing and publication
- **Multilevel data** on individuals/regions/countries
- Why not 'yet another Eurobarometer'?
  - Scientifically driven → more **systematic approaches**?
  - Biennial → better suited for more **general/broad trends**?
  - Rigorous → better suited for exploring **causal mechanisms**?
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- Charting **general/broad trends** of social structure, conditions and attitudes in Europe
  - **Core questionnaire** (also suitable for exploring causal mechanisms)
    - Media (TV) use and social **trust**
    - **Politics**
      - Political interest, trust, electoral and other forms of participation, party allegiance, socio-political orientations, regime performance evaluations
    - **Subjective well-being**
      - Health, life satisfaction, crime, social relations, social exclusion, religion, perceived discrimination, national and ethnic identity, immigration
    - **Socio-demographic characteristics** (very extensive set of indicators)
      - Person/partner/mother/father/household
    - **Human values** (Schwartz)
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- Exploring causal mechanisms
  - Rotating modules (also suitable for charting trends)
    - ROUND 1 (2002/03):
      - Citizen involvement
      - Immigration (repeat)
    - ROUND 2 (2004/05):
      - Health care seeking
      - Economic morality
      - Family, work and well-being (repeat)
    - ROUND 3 (2006/07):
      - Personal and social well-being (repeat)
      - The timing of life
    - ROUND 4 (2008/09):
      - Attitudes to age and ageism
      - Welfare attitudes (repeat)
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- Exploring causal mechanisms
  - Rotating modules (also suitable for charting trends)
    - ROUND 5 (2010/11)
      - Work, family and well-being in recession (repeat)
      - Trust in criminal justice
    - ROUND 6 (2012/13):
      - Personal and social well-being (repeat)
      - Understanding and evaluations of democracy
    - ROUND 7 (2014/15):
      - Health inequalities
      - Immigration (repeat)
    - ROUND 8 (2016/17):
      - Attitudes to Climate Change and Energy
      - Welfare Attitudes in a Changing Europe (repeat)
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- Charting **general/broad trends** of social conditions and attitudes in Europe
  - **Attitudinal indicators** (under development)
    - Developing **social indicators** (robust and validated measures) reflecting the **changing quality of life** in different European countries
      - Set of attitudinal indicators, which **could in principle be adopted by European and national governments** as official measures of societal progress (1)
        - Focus on the **cognitive judgements people make about the quality of their societies → long term trends**
          - whether society is judged as fair or unfair
          - how much major national institutions are trusted or not
          - whether system of criminal justice is perceived as even-handed or biased
          - whether neighbourhoods feel safe or dangerous
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- Charting general/broad trends of social conditions and attitudes in Europe
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    - Developing social indicators (robust and validated measures) reflecting the changing quality of life in different European countries
      - Set of attitudinal indicators, which could in principle be adopted by European and national governments as official measures of societal progress (2)
        - Targets the ‘overall’ quality of life in a society not the individual wellbeing (in the tradition of 'science of happiness' defined as ‘life satisfaction + meaningful life + positive affect - negative affect’ → OECD/ONS)
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- Charting **general/broad trends** of social conditions and attitudes in Europe
  - **Attitudinal indicators** (under development)

**A typology of approaches to well-being indicators** (Harrison, Stoop 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perception (attitude)</th>
<th>‘Reality’ (behavioral/ outcomes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Level</strong></td>
<td>Happiness, life satisfaction, positive/negative effect, opinion about domains of life experience (ONS, OECD)</td>
<td>Living conditions, educational attainment, job quality, income, access to resources etc. (Micro-data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Societal Level</strong></td>
<td>Perception of the quality of society or societal wellbeing</td>
<td>Features of society: crime rate, income distribution, quality of education/health/etc. (Macro-data)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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- Charting **general/broad trends** of social conditions and attitudes in Europe
  - **Attitudinal indicators** (under development)
    - Developing **social indicators** (robust and validated measures) reflecting the **changing quality of life** in different European countries
      - Set of attitudinal indicators, which **could in principle be adopted by European and national governments** as official measures of societal progress (3)
        - **Multi-dimensional approach** rather than making use of a single summary notion of wellbeing → **systematic approach**
          - **Overall perception** of society
          - **Social integration** brought about by agreement on key values (what is legitimate) during the socialization process
          - **System integration** involves the formation of ‘institutions’ and can be summarized as the ability of the state and the market to ‘deliver the goods’
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1. Overall Perceptions of Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short name of domain</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Satisfaction with society</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eurobarometer 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Intention to emigrate/remain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gallup World Poll since 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Situation of society relative to time and place</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eurobarometer 72.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Perception of Social Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short name of domain</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D. Trust within society</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ESS since 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Perception of societal tolerance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gallup World Poll (diversity index)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Absence/presence of social conflict</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EQLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Perception of distributive justice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ISSP, ESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Anomie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eurobarometer 47.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. System Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short name of domain</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Trust/Confidence in institutions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ESS or EVS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Evaluation of national performance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ESS since 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Provision of public services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>ESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Quality of public services</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>EQLS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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- Exploring **causal mechanisms** and charting trends – some examples
  - Trust in justice/police
  - Welfare attitudes
  - Impact of economic Crisis
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- **Trust in justice**
  - Why do people break the law? vs. Why people obey the law?
    → important considerations for policy making
    - Self-interest (individuals weigh up the risks and costs of detection and punishment)
    - Normative or ethical considerations (people are motivated to behave in line with moral principles and to respect other people’s rights)
  - When citizens see criminal justice institutions as legitimate, they recognize the system’s authority to determine the law, to govern through the use of coercive force, to punish those who act illegally, and to expect cooperation and obedience
    - legality (acting according to the law);
    - shared values (values that are shared by those with authority and those subject to that authority);
    - consent (the sense amongst the policed of a moral obligation to obey the authority)
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- Trust in justice

Figure 1: Percentage stopped, approached or contacted by police in last two years: by country

Source: European Social Survey Round Five, 2010
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- Trust in justice

Figure 2: Views on how often police make fair and impartial decisions: by country

- Russian Federation
- Israel
- Bulgaria
- Czech Republic
- Hungary
- France
- Poland
- Portugal
- Slovenia
- Estonia
- Netherlands
- Belgium
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Norway
- Finland
- Spain
- Denmark

Source: European Social Survey Round Five, 2010
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- Trust in justice

**Figure 6: Consent to police authority and perceptions of shared moral values (% agree)**

Source: European Social Survey Round Five, 2010
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- Trust in justice

**Figure 1: Why do people comply with the law?**

Source: European Social Survey Round 5 (2010) UK data
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- Welfare attitudes

Figure 1: A conceptual framework for analysing attitudes to welfare policies

**Predispositions**
- Trust (institutions, political actors, fellow citizens)
- Risk perception
- Beliefs
- Social values

**Attitudes to**
- Welfare state scope and responsibilities
- Taxation and financing
- Alternative welfare state models
- Service delivery (privatisation, choice, etc.)
- Target groups / receivers
- Europeanisation of welfare policies

**Risks and resources**

**Institutional Framework**

**Evaluations of**
- Task performance (personal + general)
- Economic consequences
- Moral/Social consequences

Source: European Social Survey Round 4, 2008
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- Welfare attitudes

Figure 2: Public support for government intervention (0-10 summary index): by country

Source: European Social Survey Round 4, 2008
Welfare attitudes

Figure 5: Perceived quality of government and attitudes to social spending

Source: European Social Survey Round 4, 2008
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- Impact of economic crisis

**Figure 3** Work Intensity Scores (0-5) 2004-2010

![Bar chart showing work intensity scores for different regions (Liberal, Nordic, Continental, France, Southern, East European) in 2004 and 2010.](image-url)
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- Impact of economic crisis

Figure 5 Change in Work Family Conflict and Change in the Unemployment Rate 2004-2010*

* Note: Figures are based on those who are married/cohabiting and aged 20-64.
Figure 7 Life Satisfaction of the Employed and Unemployed (0-10), with and without controls for financial stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No control for financial stress</th>
<th>Control for financial stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scores estimated from models controlling for a range of personal and social characteristics. All differences between the employed and unemployed are statistically significant (p < 0.001) with the exception of the Southern regime in the model which controls for financial stress.
• Impact of economic crisis

Figure 8 Economic Contraction and Change in Satisfaction with Democracy 2004 - 2010: Results from Two-Step Regression
Conclusions

- ESS and other social survey data should be relevant for evidence-based public governance
  - Charting general/broad trends of social structure, conditions and attitudes
    - Public policy monitoring and evaluation
      - Subjective well-being indicators
    - Exploring causal mechanisms
      - Public policy forecasting and recommendation
        - Systematic approaches