

## **Pre-notification of a forthcoming call for members of the Core Scientific Team of the European Social Survey**

The European Social Survey is a biennial cross-national general social survey which has been in operation since 2002. The survey is implemented under the auspices of the European Social Survey, European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ESS ERIC), which is comprised of 28 European countries. The survey uses the highest standards in cross-national research, in order to provide high quality data to the research community about the attitudes, values and social conditions of those living in Europe and how these change over time.

### ***The ESS Core Scientific Team***

The Core Scientific Team of the ESS is a committee of the Director and meets three times per year. The CST advises and works with the Director on all aspects of the design, scientific direction, methods, implementation, quality control, delivery and dissemination of the ESS. The CST comprises institutions (institutional members), each of which leads a work package or packages (and may also contribute to other work packages which they do not lead). In addition to the work package tasks, the CST works with the Director to oversee the biennial survey rounds, ensuring effective operations are informed by the best available academic evidence.

### ***The ESS Strategic Plan ‘the road to a sustainable self-completion future’***

The ESS is implementing its 2024-2029 [strategic plan](#). The survey is undergoing a major methodological transformation, moving to self-completion data collection (web and paper) and ending the use of face-to-face interviews. Its 12<sup>th</sup> round (fieldwork from September 2025) will combine the two methods, to allow the impact on the time series to be determined, before a self-completion only ESS Round 13 (fieldwork from September 2027). The plan also emphasises a strategic approach in areas such as training of ESS users and greater efforts aimed at policy impact.

### ***Call for CST institutions***

Against this background, the ESS ERIC Director will be launching a call for CST institutions in the latter part of 2024, with each institution appointed represented by a senior scholar or scholars with a track record of excellence in the relevant area. The appointees will play a leading role in one of three key areas with each leading a work package:

- 1) Analysis guidance and training

To date ESS ERIC has only provided limited analysis guidance and occasional training. The ESS ERIC Director will therefore appoint a CST institution to lead on providing analysis guidance and training for current and potential data users.

The mode switch presents additional challenges for ESS data users – both in navigating the mixed-mode Round 12 data (fieldwork in 2025), and in assessing the impact of the mode switch on the time series, once the full transition to self-completion is made in Round 13 (fieldwork in 2027). The CST work package on analysis and training will focus on these areas – to analyse and better understand mode effects in the ESS data and to produce guidance and training for users around this and other areas. The appointed CST institution or institutions (collaborative applications would be accepted for this area with one institution being the CST lead) will work closely with members of the ESS HQ team.

In addition, the 2024-29 ESS Strategic Plan states, in relation to training for ESS data users, that “ESS ERIC will take a more strategic and user-centred approach in this area in the next period” and that

“The ESS will develop and implement a funded plan to produce training materials as part of the 2025-29 work programme”. This CST work package will lead on providing this analytical guidance and training support for ESS users. Some commissioning of external training is foreseen.

### **Non-response**

In the early years of the ESS, significant resources were used to examine unit non-response in an input harmonised cross-national social survey. With the switch to self-completion this area once again becomes central to the quality of the ESS. The Director will therefore appoint a CST institution to lead in this area.

Unit non-response is potentially a major source of error in surveys, which can undermine the ability to represent the target population. In cross-national surveys there are additional complexities, where national priorities must be balanced against the need for cross-national comparability. It is likely that many ESS countries will achieve lower response rates with a self-completion approach compared with face-to-face. There may also be certain subgroups who are less likely to participate this way such as those with lower education. In addition, some ESS countries will use a ‘postal first’ approach to communicating with potential respondents whereas other will rely on fieldworkers visiting addresses from the start. It is crucial to understand the non-response associated with the two different ESS self-completion approaches and to target ways to reduce this in future. The CST work package will use process data collected about the contact and response process in the ESS to analyse the existing situation, make recommendations for the data collection in forthcoming rounds and scope future research priorities. Other CST members will support the lead institution in delivering in this key area.

### **Academic impact monitoring and impact case studies**

The 2024-29 ESS Strategic Plan includes as one of its aims that the ESS: “... ensure the visibility, accessibility and reach of ESS data among researchers in the social sciences and beyond, policy makers and the wider public, at both the national and international level”. This includes better equipping national teams to promote their data and better connecting policy makers to ESS data.

This work package will build on existing work which is not automatically being continued in its current form, to monitor ESS publications and other impact based on ESS data (eg policy impact). Existing work includes bibliographic monitoring, impact case studies (overall and policy) and media monitoring. The CST institution will also seek to work with the ESS Head of Media and Communications and ESS national teams to promote ESS data effectively at the national level and with the Scientific Advisory Board to promote greater academic use of the data.

### **Experience and application information**

The named lead for each work package is expected to have a strong track record in the area they are applying for. This includes having good academic publications in the relevant area as well as experience of practical implementation in the field.

Full details of the application process and criteria for appointment will be available in the call expected in the autumn / winter of 2024.