

The European Social Survey Round 13

Call Specification for Question Module Design Teams

The Director of the European Social Survey (ESS), Rory Fitzgerald, is inviting proposals from multinational teams to design modules for the questionnaire for Round 13 of the ESS, to be fielded in 2027-28.

1. Summary

At each round of the European Social Survey (ESS), rotating modules are included in the questionnaire. Modules are selected via an open call for academic teams, as described in this document. There is a two-stage application process, with teams submitting short proposals on potential modules at stage 1, and more detailed proposals setting out planned modules at stage 2 (for modules that are selected to proceed to this stage).

Important information on the application process for Round 13 is included in the following points, with further information later in this document.

- Teams can apply for either a new module (i.e. not fielded on ESS before) or a repeat module (i.e. fielded at a previous ESS round).
- In the case of repeat modules, at least two thirds of the questions need to be repeated from (one of) the previous time(s) it was fielded, with up to one third new items included.
- Teams can apply to include 30 or 15 questions in their module.
- Teams must include between 3 and 5 members, with cross-European coverage (see further information on eligibility criteria later in this document).
- Proposed modules should address a key academic or policy concern within the European arena, which will add significantly to the European knowledge base, and will have wide appeal within academia and beyond.
- Round 13 of the ESS will be carried out in around 30 countries using self-completion data collection (web and paper). Modules therefore need to be suitable to be asked across a diverse set of European countries and to be asked in self-administered interviews.
- Successful modules are developed over around a 20-month period, between the start of 2025 and Autumn 2026 for Round 13. This will include multiple stages of questionnaire pre-testing. Module teams will work closely with members of the ESS team throughout this process. The ESS team will arrange meetings, organise pre-testing, process data and lead on administrative tasks. The module design team will contribute to questionnaire development throughout the process, including analysis of pre-testing data and updating a module design document.
- There are several benefits for teams that have modules fielded on ESS. Most notably, there is the opportunity to have your questions fielded free of charge on a 29+ country cross-national survey using the highest quality sampling and data collection

practices. Data from modules will be combined with over 100 ESS core questionnaire variables and detailed socio-demographic data, allowing extensive analysis opportunities for module teams and other ESS users.

- Travel costs to meetings during the development phase will be covered by ESS ERIC (no further funding will be provided to successful teams).

2. About the European Social Survey

The ESS is a biennial, academically-driven social survey that charts and explains the interactions between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. Over ten rounds of the survey have been conducted covering over 30 nations and employing the most rigorous survey methodology. A fully-documented multinational dataset is publicly available from the ESS [Data Portal](#). Further information about the ESS is available at www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

Following an application to the European Commission, the ESS was awarded European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) status in 2013. ESS ERIC is funded by participating countries - its Members, Observers and Guests.

ESS ERIC, directed by Rory Fitzgerald, has its Headquarters (HQ) at City, University of London. ESS HQ is supported in the design and implementation of the survey by six other institutions that collectively comprise the ESS ERIC Core Scientific Team (CST): Sikt, Norway; GESIS, Germany; The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP, Netherlands; Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain; University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; University of Essex, UK; and Centerdata, The Netherlands.

ESS ERIC is advised by a Methods Advisory Board (MAB) and a [Scientific Advisory Board](#) (SAB). The SAB is responsible for selecting the rotating modules in each round.

The questionnaire for each round consists of two elements: a **core module** of substantive and socio-demographic items; and **rotating modules**. Each rotating module covers a single academic and/or policy concern within Europe and is drafted by a competitively selected team. Each Question Module Design Team (QDT) works closely with, and is guided by, the CST in developing its module.

A list of the topics covered by the rotating modules in Rounds 1-12 and applications from the successful QDTs can be found on the [ESS website](#) (see also Appendix 1).

3. Types of QDT applications in ESS Round 13

We wish to attract social scientists across Europe who are interested in comparative survey data to apply for the opportunity to design a module of either 15 or 30 items. Applications are invited from multinational teams of a minimum of three and up to five subject specialists. Team members should be based in at least three different ESS countries with **at least one team member from an ESS ERIC Member or Observer country** (see Appendix 2).

Applications are invited for both 'new' rotating modules and for 'repeats' of prior modules.

New modules may either cover a wholly new topic to the ESS or cover a topic or module that has previously been included but using a different approach. New topics should be timely and of relevance for both European populations and for scientists and stakeholders across policies and disciplines.

Repeat modules provide an opportunity to explore how attitudes and behaviour towards a given topic may have changed over time. At least two-thirds of the items in the repeat module must be administered in an identical format to those in the earlier module¹. Applications for repeat modules are invited both from teams who designed the original ESS module on the topic and from new teams.

At least two modules will be selected for Round 13.

4. ESS module requirements

The SAB is looking to select modules which will address a key academic or policy concern within the European arena, which will add significantly to the European knowledge base, and will have wide appeal within academia and beyond. Modules should be underpinned by a coherent conceptual and theoretical framework.

Each ESS rotating module is based on closed survey questions² and must be suitable to be fielded as part of a general social survey alongside questions on other political and social topics. Modules must be suitable to be fielded as part of a repeated cross-sectional survey, rather than requiring a panel design. Typically, modules have included 30 questions but for Round 13 we welcome applications for shorter modules (based on 15 items)³.

ESS is currently preparing for a transition to a self-completion (web and paper) data collection approach. All countries will deliver this self-completion approach at ESS Round 13. Academic teams will therefore need to give consideration to how their module can be implemented across web and paper self-completion instruments.

The ESS is a representative general population survey of individuals and particularly lends itself to topics that can be asked of everyone rather than specific sub-samples of the population. **Therefore, the majority of questions in proposed modules should be relevant to all ESS respondents (adults aged 15+).** Any routing that targets particular sub-groups should be kept to a minimum. It must be possible to develop equivalent questions to be fielded in a range of cultural and institutional settings across Europe, including countries outside of the EU.

Simple split-ballot experiments that are of relevant for a wide range of data users may be considered for modules; however, more complex experiments are unlikely to be feasible.

Where a repeat module is proposed, there should be clear evidence that the previous

¹ Some changes to question wording/presentation may be needed due to Round 13 using self-completion data collection.

² Complex questions that take longer to administer may be counted as more than one item in the final module.

³ It is expected that in most cases 15 item option will only be suitable for new modules rather than repeat modules. However, there may be cases where a QDT proposes to repeat a part of a previous module and sees other parts as less relevant to repeat at this time.

module achieved its intended measurement objectives and that the data have been widely used. There should be a convincing case for repetition in 2027.

Further information on module requirements can be found in Section 8 of this specification and the relevant guidance document on the [ESS website: Call for Round 13 Rotating Module Design Teams](#).

5. The module design process

The two teams selected will work closely with the CST and others on the design of their module. The head of each team will be expected to coordinate internal discussion within their team and to communicate with the CST (although they may delegate this role to another member of their team).

The CST will lead on a range of tasks as part of the design process. This includes organising and documenting meetings with the QDT, arranging the various stages of pre-testing, preparing data sets, assisting with analysis, and leading on documentation during the development phase. The main role of the QDT will be to prepare and update the module design guide, contribute to discussions and decisions on concepts and question design during and between meetings, carry out analysis on pre-testing, and provide a final module design document.

The module development process includes several stages of expert review and both qualitative and quantitative pre-testing of items. A system of documentation of questionnaire design will be used to make the process transparent throughout. In the first instance, teams will be asked to complete a template provided by the CST, which outlines the aims of the module and its proposed framework. The template will be divided in two sections. The first will contain the proposed framework and theoretical background of the module, specifying its aims, the concepts to be measured and their anticipated relationships. The second section will outline the dimensions that form part of each concept and how each of these is likely to be measured by specific questions. Ultimately the rationale for selecting each chosen item will be described so that it is transparent to users. The final version of the module will be accompanied by the above documentation and will be published on the ESS website. A copy of the templates produced for Rounds 4 to 10, including narrative between the two QDTs and the CST, are available from the [ESS website](#).

All proposals, documents and meetings will be in English, the ESS's working language. Successful teams are expected to sign up in full to the questionnaire design timetable set out by the CST (see Appendix 3 for details of the provisional Round 13 timetable) and to be fully involved at each stage of the process.

Final decisions on the form and content of the modules are the responsibility of the CST, taking into account the views of the QDTs, results from pre-testing, comments from National Coordinators and the Scientific Advisory Board, as well as translation considerations.

The ESS is committed to free, open and non-preferential access to all data collected as part of the survey. Round 13 data will be released via the ESS website in 2028. QDTs will have early access to data around a month before the final data release in order to check and 'prove' the

provisional dataset. This will provide them with the opportunity to consider (but not publish) articles prior to the dataset's official release.

6. QDT obligations

Successful question module design teams will have free access to methodologically rigorous data on their chosen topic collected from a random sample of around 1,500 adults in around 30 European countries. To ensure the success of the rotating modules the QDTs are expected to fulfil the following obligations with regard to design and dissemination:

Design:

- Members of each QDT are expected to attend up to six meetings with the CST to discuss questionnaire development (most meetings will be held virtually, usually lasting 2-3 hours). They will also be expected to attend at least two meetings with National Coordinators (NCs), the individuals responsible for the survey in participating countries. These are held in one of the participating countries or virtually. Further discussions will take place between meetings electronically as appropriate.
- Each QDT is expected to attend at least one meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board to discuss the operationalisation of the module.
- Each QDT is expected to respond to comments on the questionnaire received from the CST and NCs as specified in the timetable set out in Appendix 3.
- Each QDT is expected to work with the CST to document the questionnaire design process fully using the template referred to in Section 5 above.
- Each QDT is expected to feed into decisions about pre-testing and piloting and to contribute to analysis of survey data collected during pre-testing/piloting as appropriate.
- The head of the QDT (or delegated individual) will be responsible for coordinating internal discussions within the team and communicating with the CST.

Dissemination:

Within one year of the release of the Round 13 data:

- Each QDT is expected to produce analysis based on the module for the ESS Topline Findings series. ESS Topline Findings are concise cross-national summaries of particular topics covered in the questionnaire. Examples based on rotating modules from previous rounds can be found [here](#). QDTs are expected to include data from all countries where the CST has made this available. The ESS ERIC will cover publication costs but cannot cover analysis and writing time.
- Where the topic is appropriate, the QDT will be expected to present findings from the module at a policy seminar organised by the CST. This seminar will bring together ESS scientists, other academics and policy makers from across Europe with a shared interest in the module topic. Previous QDTs have participated in seminars held at the European Parliament, European Commission, OECD, and the European Policy Centre among others. ESS ERIC will cover travel and subsistence costs but cannot cover staff attendance.

Within two years of the release of the Round 13 data:

- It is anticipated that each QDT will make a substantive presentation to a SAB meeting, at which key findings will be presented and further dissemination plans outlined.

Within three years of the release of the Round 13 data:

- Each QDT is expected to have had at least one article accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal based largely on the ESS data from their module.

QDTs may also be asked to contribute to other ESS dissemination activities, for example writing for the ESS blog, as appropriate.

No budgetary provision exists to cover salary or associated costs for the team. However, it is anticipated that travel and accommodation costs will be met for up to two QDT members to attend the meetings with the CST and NCs described above. Once appointed, QDTs are encouraged to apply for additional funding as appropriate to facilitate analysis and dissemination of the module.

7. How to apply

For Round 13 there is a two-stage application process for rotating modules. The application process is the same regardless of whether a new or repeat module is proposed, although the information required for each type of proposal differs slightly.

At Stage 1 eligible teams interested in applying for either a new or a repeat module are invited to submit a short proposal outlining: the relevance and timeliness of their proposed module for cross-national research, its suitability to be fielded as part of the ESS, and their credentials as a potential Question Module Design Team (QDT).

THE DEADLINE FOR STAGE 1 APPLICATIONS IS 26 APRIL 2024.

The [Scientific Advisory Board](#) (SAB) to the ESS ERIC will decide which Stage 1 proposals meet the criteria to be shortlisted. Their decision is final. Shortlisted teams will be invited to submit a full proposal at **Stage 2**, which will contain more details including the theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning the module, how it will be operationalised cross-nationally in a 15 or 30-item module, and plans for analysis and dissemination. Shortlisted teams may also be asked to make a short in-person presentation on their proposed module to the SAB prior to final module selection. The head of each applying team or a named substitute should be available to reply to questions of the SAB within five working days. The SAB will select two rotating modules from the proposals submitted at Stage 2.

Please refer to the appropriate the relevant guidance documents on the [ESS website – Call for Round 13 Rotating Module Design Teams](#) – when preparing your application. There are separate guidance documents covering Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications and for applications for new and repeat modules.

- Applications must be made in English and in the format specified in the guidance documents.

- Applications should be emailed to ess@city.ac.uk with “Round 13 module application” as the subject. Only applications submitted by email will be accepted.
- All applications must be received by **17.00 UK time on the day of the submission deadline**. Any applications received after this time will not be considered.
- All applications will be acknowledged within a few days of receipt.

8. Eligibility

- Applications must be made by teams of between 3 and 5 members, located in at least three different ESS countries. At least one applicant must be from an ESS ERIC Member or Observer country (See Appendix 2 for a list of ESS countries).
- No SAB member may apply (or be part of an extended team that applies) for a question module.
- If a member of the SAB wants to participate in any way in an ESS question module application, he or she should indicate this in due time and resign from the SAB.

9. Selection criteria and procedures

The Round 13 rotating modules will be selected by the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to the ESS. Applications will be judged according to the following criteria:

Stage 1

- **Relevance**
 - Is the proposed topic relevant and timely to academic and policy debates in Europe?
 - How will the module add to our understanding of the topic theoretically and/or empirically?
 - Will the module have wide appeal to academic and non-academic audiences?
- **Suitability for the ESS:**
 - What is the value of fielding the module as part of the ESS i.e. a cross-national general social survey of the general population rather than a more specialist survey?
 - Is the design of the ESS (a cross-sectional general population survey fielded in diverse institutional and cultural settings) appropriate for the module? Is the topic relevant to all respondents?
 - Will the module be suitable for self-completion administration (covering both web and paper)?
- **Research team:**
 - Does the proposed QDT have the necessary substantive and survey experience and expertise to make the module a success?
 - Does the team contain representatives from at least three different ESS

countries, including an ESS ERIC member or observer country?

The SAB will judge whether an application is considered to meet each of the three requirements outlined above on a simple pass/fail basis. Applications which fail to meet one or more of the three requirements will be rejected.

Applications which are judged to meet each of the three criteria outlined above will be shortlisted and invited to submit a more detailed proposal for consideration at Stage 2.

Stage 2

Stage 2 proposals will be evaluated according to the three criteria used at Stage 1 (with more detail expected at Stage 2) plus the following additional criteria:

- **Theoretical coherence:**
 - Is the module underpinned by a well-defined conceptual theoretical framework?
- **Feasibility of implementation:**
 - Is it viable to operationalise the proposed concepts cross-nationally using 15 or 30 items in the time available (c. 18 months)?
 - Are there any anticipated methodological or practical difficulties in developing the module and, if so, suggestions for how these might be overcome?
- **Dissemination plans:**
 - Does the team have a well thought out and credible plan for the timely dissemination of findings from the module to different academic and non-academic audiences?

The SAB will select the Round 13 rotating modules from among the Stage 2 applications received.

The following procedures govern the selection of modules:

- If a scientist from the research institute of an SAB member is involved in an ESS question module application, the SAB member should take no part in the discussion of that application, and will be excluded from that part of the meeting at the discretion of the chair.
- The SAB may choose to consult external experts to assist it in its decision making.
- One module will normally be on a new topic, i.e. a module not previously included as a rotating module in the ESS although, at the discretion of the SAB, entirely new or two repeat modules may be selected.
- The decision of the SAB is final.
- Applicants will be notified whether their Stage 1 application has been shortlisted for Stage 2. No further feedback on unsuccessful Stage 1 applications will be given.
- Feedback will be given to unsuccessful applicants at Stage 2 where appropriate.

10. Timetable

Deadline for Stage 1 applications	26 April 2024
Applicants informed of Stage 1 outcome; applicants that pass Stage 1 invited to submit Start 2 application	Early-mid June 2024
Deadline for Stage 2 applications	11 October 2024
Successful module teams notified	November 2024
QDTs work with ESS CST to develop R13 Modules	January 2025 to November 2026
Round 13 Fieldwork	From September 2027
QDTs check preliminary ESS Round 13 data	2028 (dates to be confirmed)
First release of ESS Round 13 data	2028 (dates to be confirmed)

11. Further information

Please refer to the relevant guidance documents on the [ESS website: Call for Round 13 Rotating Module Design Teams](#).

If you have any queries regarding the call for ESS rotating modules please email ess@city.ac.uk or contact Rory Fitzgerald on +44 (0) 207 0404901.

A document summarising any queries received (suitably anonymised) together with the response from ESS ERIC HQ will be published on the ESS website. The document will be updated fortnightly. The final date for queries regarding Stage 1 applications is 12 April 2024.

Appendix 1 ESS rotating modules Rounds 1-11

Round	Topic
Round 1 (2002/03)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration • Citizenship, involvement and democracy
Round 2 (2004/05)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family, work and wellbeing • Economic mortality in Europe • Health and care-seeking
Round 3 (2006/07)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and social wellbeing • The timing of life
Round 4 (2008/09)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare attitudes in a changing Europe • Experiences and expressions of ageism
Round 5 (2010/11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust in police and the courts • Work, family and wellbeing (Repeat of R2)
Round 6 (2012/13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europeans' understandings and evaluations of democracy • Personal and social wellbeing (Repeat of R3)
Round 7 (2014/15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social determinants of health inequalities • Attitudes to immigration (Repeat of R1)
Round 8 (2016/17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public attitudes to climate change, energy security and energy preferences • Welfare attitudes in a changing Europe: Solidarities under pressure (Repeat of R4)
Round 9 (2018/19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice and fairness in Europe: Coping with growing inequalities and heterogeneities • The timing of life (Repeat of R3)
Round 10 (2020/21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Social Contacts in Work and Family Life • Europeans' understandings and evaluations of democracy (Repeat of R6)
Round 11 (2023/24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender in contemporary Europe: rethinking equality and the backlash • Social inequalities in health and their determinants (Repeat of R7)
Round 12 (2025/26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and social wellbeing (Repeat of R6) • Attitudes to immigrants and refugees (Repeat of R7)

Appendix 2 ESS Rounds 1-11: Participating countries
(ESS ERIC Members and Observers as of 14th December 2023 are indicated with a ^)

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11
Albania						X			X		
Austria	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Belgium	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Bulgaria			X	X	X	X			X	X	(x) ^
Croatia				X	X				X	X	(x) ^
Cyprus			X	X	X	X			X	X	(x) ^
Czechia	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Denmark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Estonia		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Finland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
France	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Greece	X	X		X	X					X	(x)
Hungary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Iceland		X				X		X	X	X	(x) ^
Ireland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Israel	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	(x) ^
Italy	X	X				X		X	X	X	(x) ^
Kosovo						X					
Latvia			X	X			X		X	X	(x) ^
Lithuania				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Luxembourg	X	X									
Montenegro									X	X	(x) ^
Netherlands	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
North Macedonia										X	
Norway	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Poland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Portugal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Romania			X	X							
Russian Federation			X	X	X	X		X			
Serbia									X	X	(x) ^
Slovakia		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	(x) ^
Slovenia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Spain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Sweden	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Switzerland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Turkey		X		X							
Ukraine		X	X	X	X	X					(x)
United Kingdom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(x) ^
Total	22	26	25	31	28	29	22	23	30	31	31

(x) Data not yet released

Participation for Rounds 12 and 13 has yet to be confirmed but is likely to include all current ESS Members, Observers and guests.

Appendix 3 Provisional questionnaire design timetable for Round 13: Key milestones

Month/Year	Milestone
January 2025	Questionnaire design process starts. First draft of module entered in template
January-February 2025	Meetings with QDTs
March 2025	Initial feedback from National Coordinators (NCs)
April 2025	Meetings with QDTs to update module template
April-May 2025	Agree questions for first phase of pre-testing
June-July 2025	First phase of pre-testing: online pre-test
August-September 2025	Analysis of pre-testing data
September 2025	Meetings with QDTs; agree questions for next phases of testing
October 2025-January 2026	Second phase of pre-testing: cognitive interviewing
February 2026	Analysis of cognitive interviewing findings; meetings with QDTs; agree module for final phase of testing
April-August 2026	Final phase of pre-testing: pilot
September 2026	Analysis of pilot data
September-October 2026	Meetings with QDTs
October-November 2026	Feedback from NCs; Final revisions to modules
November 2026	Round 13 Source Questionnaire issued
February 2027	Translation starts
September 2027	Round 13 fieldwork starts

* Depending on the module and its state of readiness, the exact timing and nature of pre-testing may be subject to change.