
Cedefop employer survey on skill needs in Europe

**Pre-test concept and aims, field reporting and overview
of general results**

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Pre-test concept

Two pre-test variants (both as telephone interviews):

- **Conventional pre-test:** 1:1 test of the concept and questionnaire drafted for the pilot, with the exception of the mechanism for selecting an occupational group (automated in pre-test, up to respondent in pilot)
Debriefing questions for interviewers
Estimated with up to 25 minutes
- **Cognitive pre-test:** Conventional pre-test Modules 2 & 3 and reduced version of Modules 1 & 4;
Additional questions on the understanding of questions and the clarity of the survey
Debriefing questions for interviewers
Estimated with around 30 minutes

Main issues tested with conventional pre-test:

- Measurement of the **duration**/length of questionnaire
- Assessment of the **acceptance** of the survey under real circumstances (no explicit test situation)
- Identification of potential **problems with the survey or parts of it** (e.g. by analysing item non-response & interviewer feedback)
- Testing of the **answer scales** (distribution of interviews, DK/NA)
- **Technical test** of the programmed questionnaires, especially choice of occupational groups & reference to groups

Main issues tested with cognitive questions:

- **Clarity of occupational titles** used in the selection process
- Collecting hints on the most **appropriate respondent type** and **unit of enquiry** (enterprise vs. establishment/local unit) for the interview
- Workability of the **selection of occupational groups by respondent** (group most affected by changes)
- Assessment of the **feasibility of the concept to refer answers to a particular occupational group** only
- Test of the **face validity** (do questions measure what they are supposed to measure?) of selected questions
- **Reliability** of questions, in particular task questions (examples)

Cognitive questions in detail:

- Q108 (2): Clarity of occupational titles; identification of problematic titles
- Q109: Workability of the selection of occupational groups by respondent (criteria for “group most affected”)
- Q209/223/: Understanding/interpretation of particular task/skill
227 questions
- Q241_1: Time horizon for questions on changes in importance
- Q241_2: Base for answers (employees on average?)
- Q241_3/4: Degree & kind of difficulties of answering generic questions
- Q243: Criterion used for not well prepared
- Q301_1: Adequateness of questions on generic tasks (detailedness)
- Q301_2: Difficulties with questions on change in importance
- Q406: Function of respondent
- Q407: Actual respondent = most adequate respondent?
- Q408: Function of other respondent
- Q409: Comments to improve the interview

Issues tested with both pre-test versions by way of interviewer debriefing questions:

- Collection of hints for an improvement of the interview introduction
- Collecting of hints for the identification of the target person
- Overall assessment of the feasibility of the interview (“How did respondent come to terms with the interview?”)
- Difficulties with answering any particular questions
- Acceptability of the interview duration
- Further comments

Summary: Sources of information for assessment & discussion of pre-test results:

- Analysis of data of conventional pre-test (for Module 2 and 3: data of both pre-test variants)
- Analysis of time measurements (both pre-test types)
- Answers from the interviewer debriefing completed after each successful interview (both pre-test variants)
- Analysis of results from the cognitive questions
- Impressions from interview recordings of cognitive interviews
- Feedback from the fieldwork institutes in the countries

Translation process:

- Translations from English master questionnaire into target languages by professional translation office
- National versions checked by members of research group and/or fieldwork managers
- Additional checks of (revised) national versions by native speakers of Cedefop
- No translation errors detected, but some expressions that turned out to require clarifications (e.g. in ES)
- Back-translation into English as additional control step for pilot

Fieldwork organisation:

- De-centralized fieldwork done by 5 partner institutes
- Fieldwork coordinated by project team in Munich
- De-centralized programming of centrally provided national questionnaire; CATI tests done by local project manager
- Fieldwork between mid July and mid August, with 5 to 18 working days
- 50:50 split for conventional and cognitive version
- Soft quota set for size and sector

Field results I:

- 126 conventional & 128 cognitive pre-test interviews = 254 interviews
- 27 incomplete interviews (not counted)
- Approximately 25 conventional and 25 cognitive interviews per country (DE, ES, IE, PL, FI)
- Hereof 193 int. with and 61 int. without occupation-specific task questions of module 3
- Establishments from 5 employees onwards:

Size class	Germany	in %	Spain	in %	Finland	in %	Ireland	in %	Poland	in %	All	in %
5 - 49	19	38	20	38	23	46	18	35	18	36	98	39
50 - 249	18	36	18	35	19	38	20	38	19	38	94	37
250 +	13	26	14	27	8	16	14	27	13	26	62	24
Total	50	100	52	100	50	100	52	100	50	100	254	100

Field results II:

- Between 30 (financial services) and 46 (human health activities) interviews per sector:

Sector	Germany	Spain	Finland	Ireland	Poland	Total
28 Manufact. machinery/equipment	5	6	3	9	8	31
29 Manufact. motor vehicles/trailers	1	4	3	0	0	8
30 Manufact. transport equipment	0	1	0	0	1	2
41 Construction of buildings	5	8	7	7	5	32
47 Retail trade	9	7	8	7	4	35
62 Computer programming, consult.	7	5	9	5	5	31
64 Financial service activities	8	5	5	7	5	30
84 Public admin., social security	7	7	8	9	8	39
86 Human health activities	8	9	7	8	14	46
Total	50	52	50	52	50	254

Field results III:

- Many complaints of interviewers and respondents about the **duration and monotony** of the interview:
“Interview should be shorter, because they were getting impatient”
“the interview is quite monotonous, too long”
 - About 1/4 of respondents considered the interview unacceptably long
 - **Average duration of conventional interviews: 22,1 minutes** (18,9 min. in IE to 24,8 min. in FI)
 - Average duration of cognitive interviews: 21,5 minutes (17,8 min. in IE to 24,2 min. in FI)
- ➔ though shorter than expected, the conventional pre-test interview (= basis for the pilot) turned out to be **too long** and was **therefore shortened for the pilot**

Field results IV:

- Cooperation rates for the survey rather low
- But:
 - Maximisation of response rates not among aims of the pretest
 - Considerably **shorter fieldwork period** for pre-test than for pilot
 - Fieldwork during **summer holidays**
 - **Announced interview duration** (20-25 min) longer than for pilot (15-20 min)
- In spite of these explanatory factors, the low cooperation rates raise some **doubts about achievability of targeted sample distribution**
Measures:
 - Field institutes **forecast** feasible number & distribution of interviews
 - **Softening of size and sector quota** if necessary
 - Check of **related sectors of activity** for sector clustering (LFS data)

Possible additional sectors:

41 Construction of buildings

42 Civil engineering (construction of streets, railways, bridges, tunnels etc.)

43 Specialised construction activities (demolition, electrical installations, plumbing, roofing etc.)

47 Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles

[45 Wholesale trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles]

46 Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motor cycles

62 Information technology service activities

63 Information service activities (data processing, web portals, news agency activities etc.)

64 Financial intermediation, except insurance and pension funding

[[65 Insurance, reinsurance and pension funding, except compulsory social security]]

86 Human health activities

87 Residential care activities (nursing care facilities, care for elderly or disabled etc.)

General conclusions:

- **The general survey concept proved to be feasible in practice**, with some difficulties in detail (e.g. identification of some occup. groups) and with some differences by country (more problems in ES and IE than in DE and FI)
→ No general conceptual revisions necessary
- The survey was considered as **too long and monotonous**
→ Some **questions** were **deleted for the pilot** and an often repeated **scale** was radically **shortened** to reduce monotony
- Measures will be taken to ensure higher response rates & achievability of the targeted net sample sizes