

European Social Survey

A MODEL FOR CROSS- NATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND PRETESTING

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- State of the art in cross-national questionnaire design and pretesting
- Aims of this paper
- Analysing the Cross-national Questionnaire Design and Pretesting process in the ESS using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA)
- ✓ Overall goals, purpose & outputs
- ✓ Measurable indicators
- ✓ Means of verification
- ✓ Important assumptions
- Conclusions and Q&A

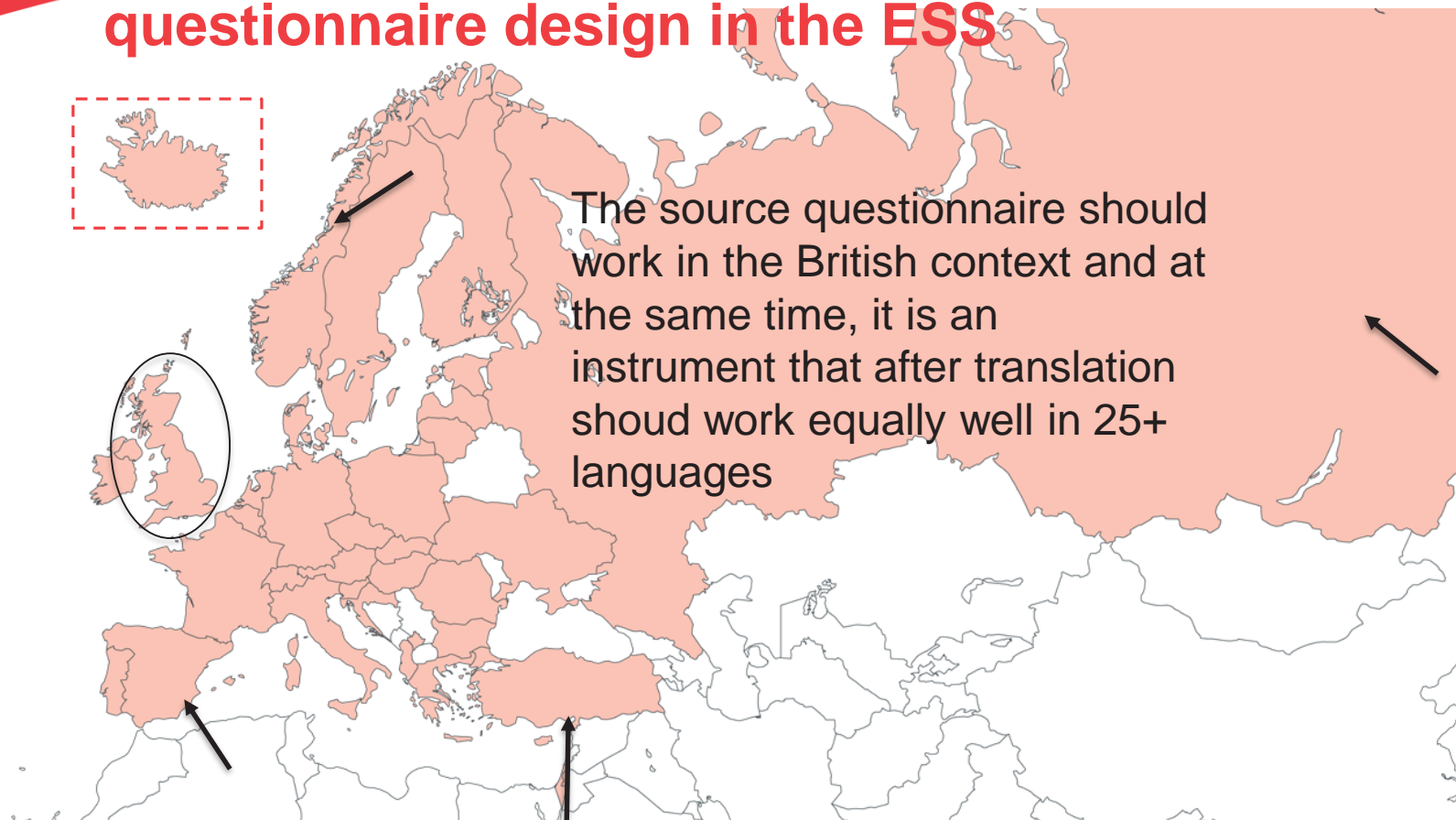
• Goals

- Minimizing *instrument* and *respondent* components of total survey error (Smith 2011)
- Producing questions that result in equivalent measures.

• Know-how

- Ask the Same Question (ASQ) and Translate approach vs. adaptation
- Sequential, parallel or simultaneous design of source and target versions
- Questionnaire design as an iterative process
- Conceptual and measurement validity (Billiet 2016)

The challenges of cross national questionnaire design in the ESS



• Where we are?

- State-of-the-art literature includes comprehensive inventory of options and current practices to design comparative survey questions.
- Guidelines describe approaches used in a variety of social, political, health and psychological survey research
- Useful as an inventory for potential strategies

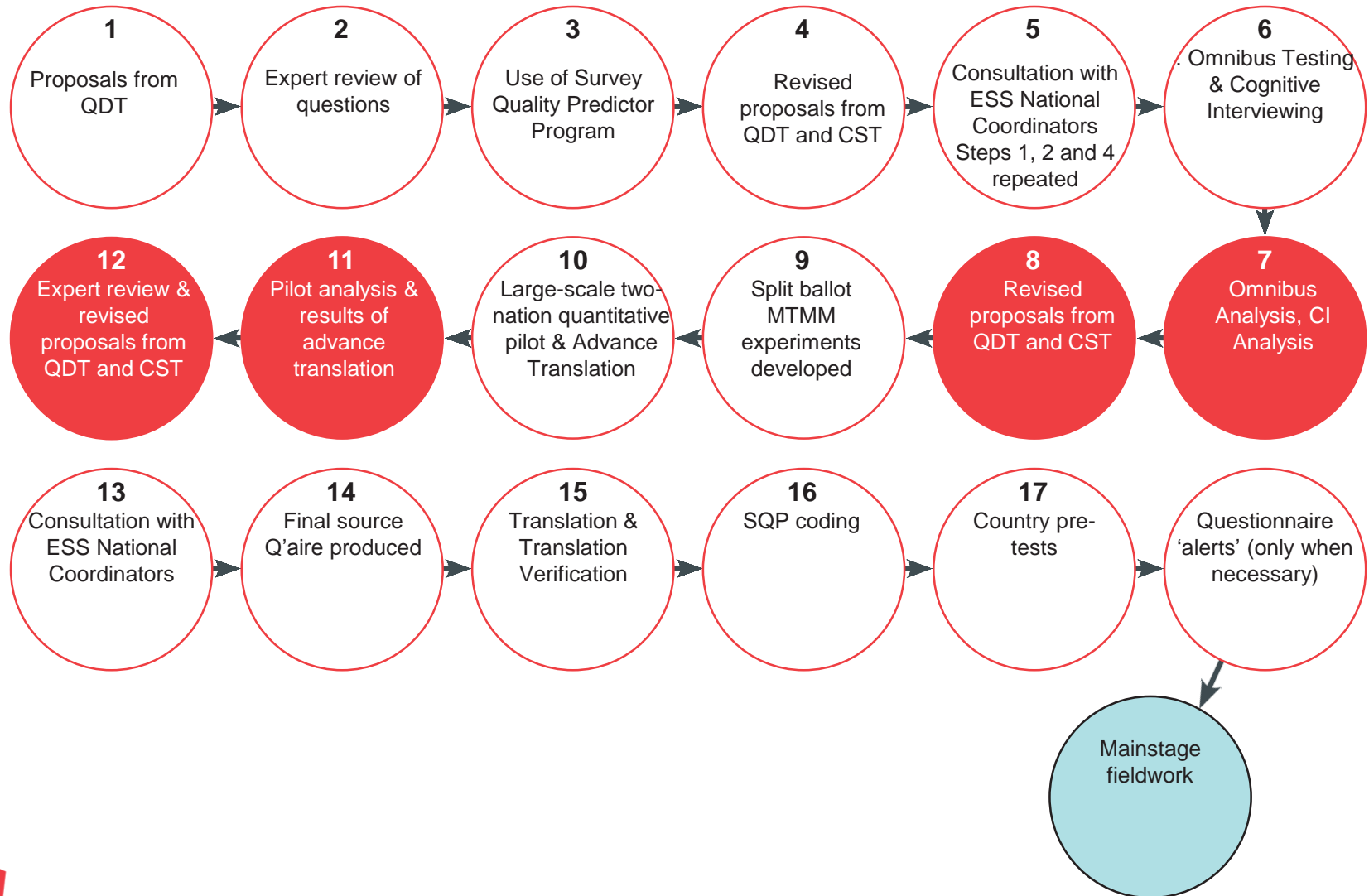
• What is missing?

- An analytical evaluation of the approaches listed
- A blueprint of how to best organise the process of questionnaire design and pre-testing overall, considering its iterative nature

In this invited paper we....

- Introduce the European Social Survey (ESS) Questionnaire Design and pretesting model
- Evaluate the extent to which the 17 stage model ensures the effective design of the source instrument
- Use the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) methodology to analyse the components of the process in a clear, concise, logical and systematic way.

ESS Model for Cross-national Questionnaire Design and Pretesting



How to evaluate the questionnaire design and pretesting in the ESS using the LFA?

• Goals

- Minimizing *instrument* and *respondent* components of total survey error
- Producing questions that result in equivalent measures.

• Purpose

- Producing an effective questionnaire allowing comparable measurement across countries

• Outputs

- Theoretical, conceptual and items specification finalised in template and updated when necessary
- Questions finalised for cognitive interviewing, omnibus survey(s), pilot study
- Optimal source questionnaire released

Overall goals of questionnaire design: Measurable indicators and means of verification

- The overall goals can be verified after questionnaire design, once data is collected

Goals	Measurable indicators	Means of verification
Minimizing <i>instrument</i> and <i>respondent</i> components of total survey error	Questions with high measurement quality	Assessment of the measurement quality of questions using SQP and MTMM experiments
Producing questions that result in equivalent measures	Concepts found to be measurement equivalent	Assessment of the quality and equivalence of complex concepts.

Producing an effective questionnaire: Measurable indicators and means of verification

- Specific purpose and outputs are assessed to the extent they contribute to design better questions

Purpose and outputs	Measurable indicators	Means of verification
Producing an effective questionnaire allowing comparable measurement	Use of an array of pretesting methods	Pretesting methods and findings used in combination to improve questions. Methods developed in the process are accepted by the academic community
Theoretical and items specification	Documentation of the process, published for end users	Concepts are clearly defined and tapped by questions intended to measure them
Final questions for each pretesting stage	Questionnaires finalised, sent to NCs, translated and sent to fieldwork agencies	QD Template documents that questions were changed based on evidence from triangulating pretesting findings
Source questionnaire released	Optimal question formulation chosen based on evidence collected during the process	Academic community, policy makers and governments accept the questionnaire as state-of-the-art for that topic

- The success of the questionnaire design process relies upon important assumptions
 - ✓ Assessment methods are correct tools for assessing measurement quality and equivalence
 - ✓ Resources are available for pretesting and scientists participating in the process
 - ✓ National teams engage fully in the process
 - ✓ Triangulation of findings is performed rigorously
 - ✓ QDT and CST seek changes and improvements derived from evidence

- “How difficult or easy do you think it is for immigrants to get the right to vote in national elections in [country]? (0 = far too difficult; 10 = far too easy)”
- Decision after quantitative and qualitative evidence suggested that there was a ‘source question problem’ (CNEST) (Fitzgerald et al, 2011).
- **Expert review** pointed out this was an issue which respondents in general simply did not know about.
- **Pilot study** showed a substantial proportion of ‘don’t know’ or mid-point response in both the UK and Russia.
- **Cognitive interviewing**. Some respondents interpreted this as a ‘**knowledge**’ question: lack of knowledge about the relevant legal situation for immigrants or lack of relevant experience, they were not immigrants, they could not judge the difficulty of getting the ‘right to vote.

Conclusions

- The ESS Cross-national Questionnaire Design and Pretesting provides a structured, multi-layered and culturally sensitive framework for cross-national projects
- It produces a questionnaire that minimises instrument and respondent components of TSE and yields equivalent measures
- Core elements are specification, documentation, multi-disciplinary input, qualitative and quantitative testing, advance translation and detailed data analysis
- Questions are developed by triangulating findings from an array of qualitative and quantitative methods
- Rigorous environment for developing a source questionnaire translatable into target languages across Europe

- Current challenges include:
 - The long time period for development (24 months)
 - Limited pretesting of the target questionnaires
 - Large resources required to fund the work

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