



EUROGRADUATE Pilot Survey

Design and implementation of a pilot European graduate survey

Overview of the project

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1 What is the EUROGRADUATE Pilot Survey?

1.1 Introduction and Consortium

This document intends to provide interested readers with more detailed technical information on the EUROGRADUATE Pilot Survey Project funded by the European Commission.¹

The pilot project, as follow-up of the earlier EUROGRADUATE Feasibility Study,² aims to provide the European Commission and the countries with sound evidence allowing a well-informed decision if a Europe-wide graduate survey should be conducted periodically. In this sense, the pilot project intends to supply clear and concrete guidelines for how such a full study can provide data of the highest attainable quality that is comparable across all EU countries, and that answers the most urgent policy questions posed by stakeholders at national and European level. At the same time, it is of importance that the pilot survey itself produces high quality data for the participating countries, within the limits set by the pilot study, which has a policy value in its own right.

The pilot project is carried out by the EUROGRADUATE consortium assembled to bring together very specific knowledge, experience and expertise that is essential to the success of the project (for more detailed information, see appendix in chapter 3):

- **Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (Maastricht)**
- **German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (Hanover)**
- **Institute for Advanced Studies (Vienna)**
- **DESAN Research Solutions (Amsterdam)**
- **cApStAn (Brussels and Philadelphia)**
- **GESIS Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences (Cologne and Mannheim)**

Throughout the whole project, the Consortium will be in close contact with the **Advisory Board** (European Commission, representatives of participating countries and stakeholder organizations). In addition, the consortium has set-up an in-project **Scientific Advisory Board** which will advise us on a more technical level (organization, statistics) and give internal feedback before any recommendations regarding the future developments of EUROGRADUATE are being made. In addition, the consortium is in close contact with research partners in a large number of European countries, which are involved in graduate studies on national level, thus e.g. providing the consortium with an overview of existing surveys and research topics.

1.2 Target group of the survey

The Pilot survey, taking place in autumn 2018, will cover graduates **one and five years after graduation** to cover the short-term and the mid-term development of graduates. That means, the target group are **all graduates of the academic years 2012/13 and 2016/17**.

¹ For more detailed background information on the original call for tender, please consult: <https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=2644>.

² See www.eurograduate.eu.

Included are **all graduates on ISCED-2011 levels 6 (Bachelor) and 7 (Master or long degree programmes)**. ISCED 5 programmes (short courses) are very heterogeneous between countries. Thus, we will only include ISCED 5 programmes that are regarded higher education on national level, if they are offered by institutions also offering at least Bachelor programmes (ISCED 6) and if short courses play a significant role in the higher education system of a country (i.e. have a minimum number of graduates per year).

All graduates means graduates of all nationalities who graduated in the respective country, regardless of their current place of residence (in- or outside of the country), regardless of their location of prior education (school or first degree) and regardless of their previous enrolment status (e.g. full-time, part-time, correspondence). *All graduates* means also graduates of all ages³, graduates from international joint degree programmes as long as part of their degree was issued from a higher education institute within the country participating in the pilot and graduates from online or long-distance programmes.

In principle, **all institutions of a country offering programmes on ISCED 6 or 7** will be included in the survey (public and private institutions). However, it makes sense to exclude institutions at which students are employed *and* that are run by the employer. That might be the case with “corporate universities” but also with military or police universities. The reason for excluding them is that the transition to the labour market, which will be a core topic of the survey, is part of the admission to those institutions, and therefore very different questions would be needed in the questionnaire.

1.3 Topics

The pilot study covers the following key topics: Labour market relevance, skills, (international) mobility, democratic values and further studies. For further information on the topics, see the document ‘EUROGRADUATE survey topics’ on the website.

1.4 Survey method

The pilot survey will be an online-survey. The consortium provides the central programming of the master questionnaire (including national adaptations) and will host the data collection centrally in the Netherlands. Only where required by local law in relation to privacy, hosting of the survey will take place in the country itself. In this case the local hosting party will have to comply with all standards and requirements as they have been decided on for the central hosting (for instance ISO 27001, EU-guidelines, etc.).

1.5 Sample size, return rate

The precise sampling strategy will be determined by the consortium in close collaboration with the country (taking the characteristics of the specific country into account) to strive for a minimum number of respondents providing reliable outcomes for different gender, age, socio-economic background and broad field of study groups.

³ The questionnaire will contain a question if graduates were looking for a job after graduation to identify e.g. senior students.

2 Outcomes

There will be several outcomes of the project:

2.1 Comparative synthesis report: European Graduate Employment

Key results of the surveys in the pilot countries will be compared across countries and the differences discussed and interpreted. The report will also include an extended statistical annex providing tables with results of the pilot study as well as a technical appendix with a concise description of the setup of the pilot study and an assessment of the reliability and limitations of the results presented – written in a style readily understandable for non-specialists.

2.2 National Reports

The consortium will develop templates for the national reports (around 10 pages each). These templates will contain key indicators and illustrative figures of the topics that are also covered in the comparative synthesis report. Specifics of the country, e.g. results differing strongly from the other countries, will be discussed as well. Key characteristics of the national graduates and their situation on the labour market will be given in the form of an overview in a concise annex. Wherever possible (i.e. EUROSTAT data is available), the report will be enriched with contextual data, on the one hand about the higher education system and on the other hand on the economic situation, like e.g. share of young graduates among the working population, unemployment rates by educational level, GDP/capita and most of all, the national economic cycle during the last years, when the cohorts observed left the education system.

The report will also contain a technical summary of the data collection, challenges observed and how they were overcome. Information in this technical part will follow a standardised structure to ease comparison across countries. This section will be summarised in the (international) technical report.

All data analysis needed for the reports will be done centrally by the consortium to ensure common standards and a comprehensive approach to data analysis across the six national reports and the comparative report. The local research teams will contribute the textual interpretation of the results from a national perspective (which will also be used as background information for the comparative report) and fills-in the details for the technical part.

These reports will be published in English first and upon approval of the Commission also in the national language(s).

2.3 Technical Report

The EUROGRADUATE pilot study is designed to provide valuable and unique insights into the possibilities and limitations occurring in an international graduate survey. These topics will be addressed in the technical report. It will focus strongly on the different situations across countries regarding the collection of data. In the technical report, the consortium will critically discuss the effectiveness of the measures taken in each individual country to increase response

rates and to lower the bias in sample composition, keeping in mind the entire process of data collection from start to finish. Focussing on different quality indicators (response rate, sample composition, break-offs/partials, measurement error etc.) we will work out recommendations addressing different characteristics of national contexts, discussing how they affect sampling and response quality and how they can be dealt with most effectively in the future, including recommendations aiming at specific countries and reflections as to what extent our insights can be transferred to other countries with similar contexts and conditions.

The report will end with a recommendation to the European Commission and the Advisory Board as to whether a further rollout is feasible and should be undertaken.

2.4 Dataset

Scientific Use Files, in line with data protection laws, together with documentaries to use these data will be made available. After the completion of the international study, countries receive the microdata of their national survey to enable further analysis on national level beyond the EUROGRADUATE pilot study.

2.5 Project Website

All public reports of the project will be made available for download on the project's website www.eurograduate.eu.

3 Consortium

The pilot project is carried out by the EUROGRADUATE consortium assembled to bring together very specific knowledge, experience and expertise that is essential to the success of the project.

- **Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA, Maastricht University)** is the lead partner in the EUROGRADUATE pilot survey consortium. ROA had the leading role in the REFLEX and HEGESCO Projects, based on decades of prior experience both in the annual Dutch School-leaver surveys, as well as being a major partner in the CHEERS project, which was the predecessor to REFLEX. ROA is also responsible for the development, adaptation and implementation of the background questionnaire in PIAAC.
- **German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW, Hanover)** has coordinated the EUROGRADUATE feasibility study, and thus, jointly with its partners, laid the groundwork for the pilot European graduate study. DZHW coordinates EUROSTUDENT since its inception in 1996 and has contributed to a number of international projects initiated by the European Commission, including HEREL on the relevance of higher education, TRACKIT on tracking of students and graduates, and MOWIN on student mobility.
- **Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS, Vienna)**, was the lead partner for exploring the interests of stakeholders in the EUROGRADUATE feasibility study and is a long-time member of the EUROSTUDENT consortium. Since the current round of EUROSTUDENT, IHS is responsible for questionnaire development and implementation, data collection, sampling, weighting and data treatment in all 28 participating countries.
- **DESAN Research Solutions (Amsterdam)** is specialized in the collection, processing and automated reporting of quantitative socio-economic data for governmental, non-profit and not for profit organizations. It is experienced in many areas of research, including education and education to labour market transition. DESAN was a key partner in, and coordinated data collection for, many large scale projects, such as CHEERS, REFLEX, QualicopC, etc.
- **cApStAn (Brussels and Philadelphia)** is the respected linguistic quality assurance partner in many large-scale international surveys such as OECD/PISA⁴, OECD/PIAAC⁵, the Feasibility Study for AHELO⁶, Education & Skills Online and a number of European studies such as the European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS).
- **GESIS Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS, Cologne and Mannheim)** has been involved extensively in initiatives to develop models and protocols of good practice at national, European, and international levels — for example for survey design, implementation, and documentation, including survey translation and adaptation, and question development.

⁴ PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

⁵ PIAAC: Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies

⁶ AHELO: Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes