

Ineke Stoop (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP)

Looking across the border: Why cross-national comparability is so important for statistics and surveys

Topic 7 – Better statistics for a globalised world

Keywords: comparability, surveys, quality

Introduction

At present European surveys and statistics provide information to measure the economy, quality of life, and societal and attitudinal climates, to compare countries, and to follow trends. To do this properly the joint aims of high quality and optimal comparability should be pursued. This is not easy, given cross-national differences in the availability of administrative data and sampling frames, diverging response rates, varying fieldwork traditions, the limited relevance of specific concepts within some cultures, and the challenge to field translations that are functionally equivalent in every language and country. The presentation will focus on ways to make statistics and surveys more comparable, present pitfalls when making cross-national comparisons, and emphasize the need of complete (and comparable) documentation. It will also show why and how “looking across the border” can improve national surveys and statistics.