

## The Social Study translation guidelines

### General approach

The objective of the translation procedure is to reduce the burden for panelists and, consequently, prevent attrition. This aligns with the fundamental principle of The Social Study (TSS), which is to ensure the sustainability of the panel.

In pursuit of this goal, TSS employs the "**ask-a-different question**" (**ADQ**) strategy. This entails adjusting concepts and/or examples in the questions and answer categories to fit the specifics of each cultural context, when considered necessary ("identity equivalence" method).

- Adaptation of concepts
  - Determine identical (general) indicators (English)
  - If needed, develop respective community-specific indicators (Dutch and French)
- Adaptation of examples
  - Examples might be added or modified to fit the cultural context
  - The English version contains all examples

### Examples

- A list of amusement parks could be adapted to each cultural context: Walibi, Bobbejaanland, Plankendael, Pairi Daiza, Aqualibi,...
- The goal is to reduce question length and incorporate familiar examples that are likely well-known to each type of respondent (French-/Dutch-speakers).
- The naming of secondary school curricula should be adjusted based on the institutional context: Enseignement secondaire technique de transition du 3e degré; 7de jaar TSO of Se-n-Se, Brevet d'enseignement supérieur (BES), Hoger Beroepsonderwijs HBO5,...

### Translation process

To uphold the scientific credibility of the TSS panel, TSS employs a translation process inspired by the **TRAPD approach**. TRAPD, developed by ESS, serves as the international standard for questionnaire translations. Furthermore, TSS adopts a **committee-based approach**, where multiple individuals (native in French or Dutch) collaborate and deliberate on significant translation matters.

- **Translation:** Translation work is conducted independently, utilizing context documentation and guidelines. Ideally, two translators collaborate, translating from the source language into their respective strongest languages. It is important to note that the proficiency of the translator in English is of lesser importance if resources are limited, as English is solely employed for research purposes and not for communication with panelists.

- **Review:** TSS Survey Management with knowledge of the study context and TSS style guide do a superficial check of the translations. These are no translation experts so they rather assess whether it makes sense in their native language and might point to potential issues in concepts' equivalence between the translations.
- **Adjudication:** Final decision on the language versions.
- **Pre-testing:** Pre-testing the questions for all languages involved in the fieldwork (French and Dutch).
- **Documentation:** Basic documentation is maintained throughout the translation process to keep TSS staff informed about significant translation issues. Subsequently, a summary outlining the key critical decisions is compiled. This summary serves the dual purpose of informing data users and contributing to the knowledge base for future translation efforts.

## General guidelines for applicants

- Start from existing translations in Belgian or international surveys.
- Indicate whether the translation is an original creation or if it stems from an existing study.
- Applicants have the responsibility to determine whether they wish to conduct content and wording pretests for the questionnaires. If they choose to do so, it is advisable to conduct the pretests in French and Dutch.
- In the case of a new or previously unused question in one language, TSS recommends utilizing a professional translation service, particularly for French and Dutch translations.
- The applicants hold the final responsibility for the translations in French, Dutch and English

## Procedure

1. Applicants are required to **submit** their questionnaire, ensuring it is presented at least in French, Dutch, and/or English. A designated source language should be identified for each question.
2. In cases where questions are already available in French and/or Dutch, a French-speaker and a Dutch-speaker from the TSS staff conduct **independent reviews** of the translations. Subsequently, they collaborate to identify and evaluate major issues.
3. In case of **minor remarks**, TSS staff suggests the applicants to revise the questions

4. If there is an absence of at least one language version of the questionnaire or if substantial remarks are noted in the submitted translations, applicants are advised to enlist the services of a **professional translation service**.
5. The applicants **submit** their final questionnaires in French, Dutch and/or English.
6. A French-speaking and a Dutch-speaking person from the TSS staff **independently review** the final submitted translations.
7. A member of the TSS Scientific Committee **approves** the final translations.

Table 1: Summary of responsibilities following the TRAPD approach

	RESPONSIBILITY
TRANSLATION	Applicants (with possibly, translators)
REVIEW	TSS Survey Management
ADJUDICATION	Applicants
PRE-TESTING	Applicants ( <i>optional</i> )
DOCUMENTATION	TSS Survey Management with input from applicants

### Other attention points

- Adhere to survey practices customary in the target community, such as the appropriate manner of addressing respondents (e.g., politeness) or handling grammatical gender in survey questions.
- Guarantee consistency within the questionnaire and across all TSS questionnaires, emphasizing the uniform use of similar translations for similar concepts.
  - All individuals are encouraged to verify whether a question with a similar formulation has been previously asked and to initiate the translation process using existing translations when available.

### Useful references

Behr, D., Braun, M., & Dorer, B. (2016). Measurement instruments in international surveys. GESIS Survey Guidelines. Mannheim, Germany: GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences.

[https://doi.org/10.15465/gesis-sg\\_en\\_006](https://doi.org/10.15465/gesis-sg_en_006)

ESS Translation Guidelines

[https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9\\_translation\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9_translation_guidelines.pdf)

### Review and adjudication

ESS translation quality checklist:

[https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9\\_translation\\_quality\\_checklist.pdf](https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9_translation_quality_checklist.pdf)

ESS translation verification:

[https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9\\_verification\\_instructions.pdf](https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9_verification_instructions.pdf)

### **Documentation**

ESS verification form :

[https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9\\_tvff.xlsx](https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/methods/ESS9_tvff.xlsx)

More details on ESS documentation process:

[https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round6/methods/ESS6\\_vademecum\\_tvff.pdf](https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round6/methods/ESS6_vademecum_tvff.pdf)

