

# eass

European Association for  
Sociology of Sport

European Commission  
Unite E3 (Sport)  
For the attention of Susanne Hollmann  
MADO 20/21  
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Utrecht, 18 June 2013

Subject: Suggestions for a future Eurobarometer

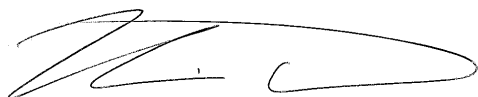
Dear Susanne Hollmann,

The European Association for the Sociology of Sport (eass) is a non-profit organisation with the purpose of promoting social research in sport and physical activity at the European level. Furthermore the eass has the objective to offer scientific advice to policy-makers on issues related to sport and physical activity. In this regard it is a pleasure for the eass to offer suggestions for improvement to the European Commission on the upcoming Eurobarometer, that is scheduled for the fall of 2013.

For this, the eass engaged the MEASURE group to discuss and optimize the Eurobarometer questionnaire and to provide their expertise. The MEASURE group, which was founded in 2010, consists of experts in the field of sport participation research (see [www.measuresport.eu](http://www.measuresport.eu)). Over 25 European countries are represented in the MEASURE group. During the last EASS congress in Cordoba (May 2013) the MEASURE group has dedicated its annual meeting to discuss the questionnaire of the Eurobarometer. Attached you will find the recommendations formulated by MEASURE in cooperation with eass in order to enhance the quality, relevance and applicability of the Eurobarometer on sport and physical activity.

In case you need further explanation or have any remaining questions, please do contact Remco Hoekman and Jeroen Scheerder, both board members of eass and initiators of the MEASURE group, on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Kim Wickman  
eass Secretary-General

- Attachment: suggestions MEASURE and eass on future Eurobarometer

## **Suggestions of MEASURE and eas for improvements on the Eurobarometer questionnaire**

Before presenting the suggestions for modifications of the questionnaire, we would like to stress the dilemma that we faced when discussing the questionnaire. On the one hand, the message from the *Feasibility study on a sport monitoring function* is that there is a general interest in comparable data over time and in building trend data, which requires similar questions and similar methods. On the other hand the Eurobarometer in its current form has its limitations and a thorough revision of the questionnaire would be most suited from a scientific perspective. Therefore we decided to provide suggestions for different scenarios depending on the objective of the survey; comparable with the last survey or attuned to the international research guidelines and standards on sport participation and physical activity.

Based on the objective to have comparable outcomes over time and herewith develop trend data on sport and physical activity, our first suggestion would be to use the exact similar questionnaire as is used for the Eurobarometer in 2009. The questions should all be identical with the questionnaire used in 2009, as research shows time and time again that even the smallest changes in the questionnaire will compromise the possibilities to compare the outcomes of the new Eurobarometer with the previous study.

A second objective could be to have trend data on the first questions in the questionnaire, which are the key questions on sport participation and physical activity, and in addition obtain information on current policy issues. This would call for replacing some questions, especially questions 4 and 5 as studies indicate that these outcomes are very stable over time. These questions could then be replaced by questions on policy topics such as match fixing, doping, a more extended questioning on the economic value of voluntary work (blind spot in current work on sport satellite accounts), or by questions to obtain more information on the sport behaviour, such as types of sport and participation in competition or training (currently lacking). As the questions on sport participation and physical activity stay the same these outcomes are still comparable over time. In addition new European wide information on current policy topics will be collected.

A third objective could be to develop a completely revamped mechanism for the survey that is conform the standards and guidelines of sport participation and physical activity research. This will lead to new outcomes that are not comparable with the previous Eurobarometer. In this case the upcoming Eurobarometer should be considered the baseline for future Eurobarometer surveys on sport and physical activity.

In the following we first describe the additional questions that could replace some of the current questions as is outlined in the second objective. Then we turn to suggestions for the revamped survey and present a possible new questionnaire for the Eurobarometer survey.

Additional questions to replace QF4 and QF5

*Insights in aspects of sport behavior:*

Which types of sport have you practiced in the past twelve months?

1. Aerobics, steps, spinning (group lessons on music)
2. Athletics
3. Cycling, mountain biking
4. Fitness
5. Football
6. Running, jogging
7. Swimming
8. Tennis
9. Other sport, which is.....

Did you for one or more of the mentioned sports participate in:

<multiple response>

- Lessons/courses
- Training
- Competition
- Tournaments/sport events
- None of the above

Additional questions on current policy issues:

*Voluntary work*

The current question QF9 on voluntary work does not allow to calculate the economic value of voluntary work, while there is a general interest to obtain this information (see study on a possible future sport monitoring function in the EU). We would suggest to change the current question into a question that addresses the specific number of hours voluntary work in a certain period and to add a question on the type of voluntary work that is performed.

Which type of voluntary work did you undertake in the past twelve months?

- Board member
- Trainer/coach
- Organising or helping to run an event
- Maintenance of sport facility
- Bartender in the canteen / club house
- Other

### Suggestions for improvements in case of a completely revised Eurobarometer

The current questionnaire of the Eurobarometer can be improved on the following points:

- Clearer explanation what should be understood as sport and what not  
An introduction on what should be understood as sport will reduce the differences in interpretation of the concept of sport between the Member States.
- Consistent use of the concepts of sport, exercise and physical activity  
Sometimes sport and exercise are mentioned together and sometimes it is just about sport. It is unclear why this inconsistency in question wording exist.
- Better link with EU guidelines on physical activities  
The international guidelines for physical activities include sport activities and take frequency, duration and intensity of the activities into account. In the current questionnaire sport activities are not included and no attention is paid to the duration and intensity of physical activity. This should be changed to make the outcomes better attuned to international standards and more useful in current debates on physical activity and health.
- Clear distinction between questions on physical activity and sport  
Some questions are aimed to get insights in the sport participation, however the question text also includes physical activity. This is confusing as physical activity was questioned, excluding sport activities.
- Reference period for the questions on sport and physical activity and voluntary work  
There is no reference period mentioned, which leaves it up to the interpretation of the respondent whether they take the last week, last month or last year as a reference period for the sport participation, physical activity or voluntary work. In order to obtain a general picture of sport participation or voluntary work a twelve month reference period is commonly used. For physical activity a normal week in the last month is usually the applicable reference period.
- Use of mutual exclusive answer categories and simple questions  
Some questions have overlapping answer categories where just one answer is allowed and some statements address multiple issues. This makes it difficult to fill in the question as well as to interpret the outcomes of the question.
- Clear distinction between questions on the used facilities for sport and the context in which sport participation takes place  
The questions on where people participate in sport (QF3) does not only refer to the location but as well to the context in which sport participation takes place. These two concepts of sport behaviour can better be separated. The context in which sport participation takes place can better be questioned in QF7, which is now only about membership and can be improved by paying attention to other contexts of sport participation as well.
- Link with current policy issues  
The Eurobarometer should be an instrument which offers room for questions related to current policy issues. This would mean that some questions change from survey to survey depending on policy issues that deserve attention.