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University Graduates and Labor Market

The field phase

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

Investing in
PEOPLE



**University Graduates
and Labor Market**

Romanian Tracer Study



Strategic projects
for Romanian Higher Education

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University Graduates and Labor Market Survey. Overview

Intricate process, consisting in several stages:

1. Declared pretest

✓ *Role: testing both the questionnaire's content and form*

2. Undeclared pretest

✓ *Role: testing and checking the online questionnaire; identifying the appropriate means of sending the invitations; testing ways of monitoring the process*

3. Field phase (four rounds of invitations' sending: one (first) invitation and three reminders)

✓ *Role:*

- *gathering information regarding the professional path of bachelor's degree graduates;*
- *providing all the universities involved in the project with the methodology and the instruments needed for tracking their own graduates*



Declared Pretest (1)

- The paper questionnaire was filled in by 17 bachelor's degree graduates coming from cohorts close to the ones targeted by the tracer study (2005 and 2009)
- The graduates had different academic backgrounds (higher representation of social science and psychology)
- The graduates were told that they would participate in a questionnaire pretest
- The pretest was organized as a focus group moderated by four members of the central team



Declared Pretest (2)

After the declared pretest:

- 23 questions were changed
- 5 questions were rearranged
- 7 evaluation questions were included in the questionnaire (for the undeclared pretest)

Considering its objectives and configuration, the declared pretest (and the further related activities) stood for the final stage in the questionnaire's content development.



Undeclared Pretest (1)

11 universities participated voluntarily:

The Military Technical Academy of Bucharest

“Politehnica” University of Timișoara

“Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava

“Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați

“Babeș-Bolyai” University from Cluj – Napoca

“Danubius” University of Galați

“Gheorghe Cristea” Romanian University of Science and Arts from Bucharest

University of Petroșani

University of Pitești

“Petre Andrei” University of Iași

National University of Music Bucharest



Undeclared Pretest (2)

The invitation to participate in the survey was sent to a sample of approximately **4000 graduates from the 2005 and 2009 cohorts**.

Several approaches were tested, using three different methods of contact for different groups of graduates:

- e-mail invitation
- mail invitation
- invitation handed out directly, in a closed envelope.



Undeclared Pretest (3)

The main objectives of the undeclared pretest aimed at:

- validating the electronic format of the questionnaire
- identifying the most appropriate methods of inviting the graduates to participate in the survey and gathering enough data in order to test the analysis instruments
- testing the procedures and the process monitoring instruments and the means of communication with the universities.

The undeclared pretest, including the previous and the next activities regarding the pretest, represented a first stage of the field phase.



Field Phase (1)

Cooperation

Common procedures (recommended by the central team after taking into consideration suggestions from the university teams)

Common implementation timeline

Unitary messages

Online discussion group



Field Phase (2)

General framework for conducting the survey (1)

- the questionnaire was available mainly online and, at request, on paper
- based on the cohort (2005 or 2009), the questionnaire had four different forms, both in Romanian and English (being slightly different)
- the questionnaire had the same content and format for all the universities involved



Field Phase (3)

General framework for conducting the survey (2)

- the paper questionnaire had the same content as the online one and a similar format
- there were added selection lists, in order to make the filling in of the questionnaire easier
- the baseline questionnaire was tested before the field phase, during the pretests; the elements that were tested were its structure and content (the paper questionnaire), as well as the electronic application (the online questionnaire)



Field Phase (4)

Conducting the survey (1)

- the management of the questionnaire was centralized with the help of an application and a database on the central team's server (except for the undeclared pretest during which the application was installed on a server of INCHER Kassel)
- the questionnaire could be accessed on the project's website and on the participating universities' websites

The questionnaire was tested by the central team and the teams from universities.



Field Phase (5)

Conducting the survey (2)

- the graduates could fill in the questionnaire using a personal access code, the application generating an associated secret code afterwards
- the access codes were generated and assigned to each university by the central team and the German partner
- before each contact stage the universities received the lists of access codes (generated automatically by the application) that were used by the graduates (in order to be removed from the lists with the graduates that were going to be sent reminders)



Field Phase (6)

Conducting the survey (3)

- the paper questionnaires were sent during the last contact stage, based on the requests that came along the whole invitation process
- the paper questionnaires were collected by the central team and, then, transposed in the online application
- the questionnaire was available until 31st March 2011



Field Phase (7)

Elaborating and sending the invitations (1)

- the invitations were sent by the universities to their own graduates
- the invitations were sent simultaneously by all the universities involved (according to a preset timeline and to a set of recommendations made by the central team)
- the invitations were sent by mail (to all the graduates with addresses) and by e-mail (to all the graduates with e-mails, even if they received invitation letters)
- the mail and e-mail invitations were sent with a delay of two days, in order to ensure that the graduates would receive them simultaneously (the e-mails were sent two days later)



Field Phase (8)

Elaborating and sending the invitations (2)

- the letters and e-mails that haven't reached their recipients because the addresses were wrong or weren't updated were monitored by the universities' representatives (in order to be removed from the database) and reported (statistically) to the central team through an online form
- the information regarding the refusal of the graduates to fill in the questionnaire was also monitored by the universities' representatives (in order to be removed from the database) and reported (statistically) to the central team through an online form
- the graduates were invited to participate in the survey within 4 contact stages (with a timespan of at least 3 weeks); they received one invitation and three reminders



Field Phase (9)

Elaborating and sending the invitations (3)

- the central team developed examples of invitations and reminders, giving the universities the possibility to adapt them, but without altering the main information
- the invitations were customized and contained the personal access code
- the central team developed procedures for the printing of the letters and labels and also for sending personalized e-mail messages automatically; they were sent to the universities' representatives for support
- also, the invitation letters had an additional section concerning the most important details regarding the project; in the last contact stage they were sent together with a bookmark that aimed at encouraging the graduates to fill in the questionnaire



Field Phase (10)

Survey monitoring (1)

- each stage of contact the university teams sent a letter and an e-mail of invitation, respectively reminders to the central team
- the university teams sent briefings regarding their activity during the stages of contact, using an e-mail address specially created for the discussion group
- the central team gathered the information and the documents received from the universities' representatives during the contact process
- the central team developed an electronic application for the online reporting of the most important information concerning the contact process



Field Phase (11)

Survey monitoring (2)

- during the field phase and, particularly, at the end of each stage, the universities' representatives reported their activities through the online form
- the central team developed an application for the daily automatic metering of the responses given to the questionnaire
- the application for response metering automatically sent the university teams:
 - ✓ briefings regarding response situation and lists of the access codes used (daily)
 - ✓ graphics showing response evolution (weekly)