

Project description sheet issued by a federal administration

This description sheet is issued by a federal administration. It describes the nature of the project it wants to implement, the tasks that should be attributed to a scientific team yet to be selected, the budget and timing devoted to the scientific team. It also describes the way the public institution will implement the end result of the scientific team both in terms of integration in its own functioning as in terms of dissemination of valuable information for researchers and the public at large.

Practical information

Name of the public institution who has issued the project: Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism – Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion (http://www.antiracisme.be/fr/cadre_fr.htm)

Name of the project: insights into poverty by supplementing the existing EU-SILC survey with complementary research, and additional research material and information to be obtained with respect to the groups who are either not represented or are under-represented in EU-SILC.

Timing of the scientific tasks to be accomplished: 30 months

Deliverables and valorisation activities by the scientific team (not foreseen in the project description below):

- *International seminar (beginning of the project, state of the art concerning the data/work to perform) ;*
- *brief report exposing the way the data concerned by the project could make international/European comparisons or harmonisation possible by the public authority;*
- *Valorisation activity by the end of the project: the team will make a proposal in this respect in its submission form.*
- *Deliverables from the research contract with federal Science Policy Office: **project description** (max. 25 lines in French, Dutch, English and German for the Web site of the Science Policy Office), **summary of the project in max. 10 pages in F/D/EN/G for the web site of the Federal Science Policy Office**, **a document in max. 40 lines destined to the AGORA Newsletter at the end of the project in F/D/EN**, **interims reports** (max. 2 pages, issued every 6 months destined to the financing of the project), **reports for the users' committee** (see below) ;*

All these activities are to be financed within the allocated budget.

Working of the project:

The public authority steers and manages the project and collaborates closely with the team and the federal Science Policy Office (which form the technical committee of the project). The project is followed up by a users' committee who comes together at least three times in the course of the project (at the beginning, in the middle and at the end). Its role is to give a positive input to the team and the public authority in the management of the project. The scientific team is in charge of preparing the documents for this committee, the public institution is responsible of the agenda and the minutes of the meetings.

Date of the information session with a delegate of the public institution (inscription at least a week in advance by e-mail – naji@belspo.be . without mark of interest, the meeting will be cancelled): 13 January, room 7 of the Federal Science Policy Office, 10 a.m.

The project

1. Name of the organisation

Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism – Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion.

This project will be executed in close cooperation with the General Statistics and Economic Information Service of the Federal Public Service Economic Affairs (<http://www.statbel.fgov.be/>)

2. Name of the project

The aim of the AGORA project to obtain better insights into the issue of poverty by supplementing the existing EU-SILC survey with complementary research, and additional research material and information to be obtained with respect to the groups who are either not represented or are under-represented in EU-SILC.

3. Acronym

Silc-cut

4. Description of the project and its position in the context of the organisation.

a) Position of the organisation

As a consequence of the question raised in the General Report on Poverty (1994) into a structural instrument concerning consultation about poverty and social exclusion the Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion was established and placed under the auspices of the Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism following the **Cooperative agreement between the federal State, the Communities and the Regions concerning the continuation of the policy on poverty'** in 1998. The Service organised various thematic consultative groups, in which both associations of people in poverty as well as other actors concerned with the fight against poverty (trade unions, health care associations, organisations working in that field, academics, etc.) take part. On the basis of the insights and recommendations that arise from these consultations a biennial Report is then drawn up, which is handed over to the chairman of the Interministerial Conference 'Integration in society' and thereafter to all governments in the country. The biennial reports thus function as an aid in the implementation of policy concerning poverty and social exclusion.

In the Cooperative Agreement specific attention is also given to **the importance of indicators as a instrument in the fight against poverty and social exclusion**: *"After consulting people in the academic world, the competent administrations and institutions, the social partners and the organisations in which the poor take the floor, the signatory parties shall investigate which quantitative and qualitative indicators and instruments can be used and/or developed in order to analyse the evolution of all domains as intended in Article 2, so that the competent governments can intervene in the most appropriate manner."* (Art. 3 of the Cooperative Agreement) The Service - in collaboration with its partners and in particular with the associations of poor people - has also already been active for several years examining the question of how poverty and social exclusion can be measured.

In 2002 the **project 'Investigation – action – education: a different approach to indicators of poverty'** was started, in which a group of people who live in poverty, academics, and representatives of administrations and institutions have spent a year and a half examining the issue of measuring poverty and social exclusion. The final report with insights and recommendations relating to the themes of the financial aspects, work and employment, the exercise of rights, and human feelings was presented in March 2004 (www.armoedebestrijding.be). In 2004 a **consultative group related to the theme 'knowledge and indicators'** was started as well, again involving representatives from the various actors.

The consultative group – in a more extended format – has also examined the problem of under-representation of poor groups in databanks, and has considered the content of the present AGORA¹ project proposal.

b) Description of the project

It is especially the case in surveys, because they are based on a sample, that the chance exists that **people living in poverty are underrepresented**. Two phenomena can lead to this:

1. The sample composition does not accord with that of all of the populations (or in other words the sample is not representative): people and groups who live in poverty have more chance of not being included in the sample. Samples from the PSBH (Panel Study of Belgian Households) and now also EU-SILC base themselves on the State Register of natural persons, resulting in a number of groups not being asked: people who are in the country illegally, people with no fixed abode,... People who live in a collective household (e.g. an institution, home, etc) are included in the State Register, but are not asked in EU-SILC,... The health survey does include for example people who live in a retirement home in its sample.
2. Non-response: if the persons selected in the initial sample do not participate in the survey. This is especially a problem if the non-response occurs more frequently in some categories than in others.

The current project proposal relates especially to the first point and more particularly to the **EU-SILC instrument** ('Statistics on Income and Living Conditions'). This questionnaire is set in the context of the 'Community action programme for the promotion of collaboration between member states for the combating of social exclusion' (2000). The aim of this programme is to promote 'the collection and dissemination of comparable statistical data in the member states and at Community level'. It sets out the necessary conditions relating to the financing of collection techniques and the dissemination of comparable statistics. This is particularly concerned with the improvement of the surveys and the research into poverty and social exclusion. 'EU-SILC' has as a general goal the production of transversal and longitudinal data, both at national and European level. These statistics will be used for the development of useful indicators, in particular the structural indicators defined by the Commission during the Summit of Laken subsequent to the European Council meetings in Lisbon (23-24 March 2000) and Nice (7-9 December 2000). These indicators have to make measurement and follow-up possible in the member states with respect to the progress made in the direction of eradicating poverty.

The EU-SILC project was launched in Belgium in 2003 and replaces ECHP (European Community Household Panel), which was in place for the period 1994-2002. EU-SILC is coordinated at federal level by the General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information.

The problem that arises is that a number of groups of people living in poverty are not accessed and surveyed in the context of this EU-SILC instrument. **The aim of the AGORA**

¹ AGORA Mission offering scientific support to the administrative databases

project to obtain better insights into the issue of poverty by supplementing the existing EU-SILC survey with complementary research, and additional research material and information to be obtained with respect to the groups who are either not represented or are under-represented in EU-SILC.

During the consultations related to this AGORA research proposal the fact that these groups are missing from the databanks of many administrations was also raised. Representatives of administrations indicated that there was growing awareness in respect of this failure to access these groups, and emphasised the fact that a research into this could also be very useful for their administrations.

The research results could also be used to stimulate reflection in other European countries about under-representation of poor groups in their databanks.

In the spirit of the methods as used by the Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion in its various consultative initiatives, the development of this project should be **done in consultation and dialogue with the various actors**, associations for the poor, administrations and institutions and academics.

5. Tasks to be accomplished

a. By the research team

- Investigation of the possibilities of identification, and of the possibilities with regard to estimating the groups who are currently not included in the EU-SILC sample;
- Exploring the data/the model in a European/international perspective in order to allow for harmonisation or comparability. The team will produce a report in this respect;
- Development of a sample design with regard to surveying these groups.
- Revision and translation of the EU-SILC instrument as a function of a survey of one or more of these groups, modified to their living conditions (a decision on this will be taken in consultation with the government institutions making the submission and the supervisory committee).
- Develop a proposal with regard to a number of supplementary questions with the aim of obtaining better insight into the living conditions of these groups².
- Preparation of a pilot survey, carried out in the context of the cooperative link between the Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion and the General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information. To clarify: the organisation and execution of the pilot survey (30 interviews) is not one of the tasks of the research team, but is one of the tasks of the Service.
- Drawing up the conclusions from the pilot survey as a function of a survey of the required size.
- Exploitation of the material collected from the survey, and interpretation of the results.

During the research process it is expected of the research team that they will make maximum use of the possibilities for participation of the various actors in the execution and follow-up of this research (associations where poor people can express their opinions, academics, administrations, ...).

b. By the public institution:

1. *Prior to the research*

Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion will take the necessary initiatives to guarantee the financing of a survey at regular intervals on

² This material can also prove useful in the future, at the time when there is space within the existing EU-SILC survey for additional questions.

the basis of the results of the AGORA research project. The scientific team will make a proposal during the research project in relation to the groups that have to be posed extra questions, the necessary number of additional surveys and the frequency thereof.

2. in the course of the project

- Support and overseeing of the research activities in close collaboration with the General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information. The Service will strongly involve the various actors, with whom it will consult in the context of its tasks, in the scientific research.
- The organisation and execution of the pilot survey is the responsibility of the Service, making use of the expertise of the General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information.

6. Expected Final product

a. By the research team

- Report relating to the possibilities of identification and the possibilities of estimating the non-accessed groups.
- Design of sample as a function of a survey of these groups.
- Proposals relating to the translation of the EU-SILC survey in terms of these groups and with relation to the design of the survey (taking account of the living conditions of these groups).
- Report in relation to the results and conclusions regarding the pilot survey.
- Recommendations with regard to a definitive survey.
- Report on the basis of the exploitation and interpretation of the results of a first survey. Drafting of a final report, including the processed data.

b. For the public institution

With these additional surveys, the Service will have a better insight into the issue of poverty as a function of its tasks.

7. Valorisation of the end product

a. For the public institution: integration of the end product into its own way of working

The Service will with these additional surveys have available to it a better insight in relation to the issue of poverty as a function of its tasks. The results of the survey will be systematically used:

- in the various thematic consultative groups of the Service;
- within the consultative group 'knowledge and indicators' in which various actors (associations of the poor, services and institutions, academics) will work on the interpretation and communication of poverty figures;
- in the biennial Report of the Service, which is handed over every two years to the various governments in the country.

The General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information will have new data available which constitute a significant addition to the data from the EU-SILC survey.

b. for the 'public': access conditions and modalities for scientific users and for the general public

- The methodological research, in respect of the possibilities of accessing these groups, could act as the basis for further development within various governmental administrations that wish to take initiatives relating to reaching out to these groups.
- The research material will offer academics the possibilities of obtaining a better insight into the poverty situation experience by the groups concerned and supporting them in further focussed research.
- The general public will have secondary information available from the various institutions that use EU-SILC in the context of their tasks (FOD Social Security³, Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion). Access to the raw data will follow the procedure provided at the General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information.
- A final report, with the processed data, will be made available.

8. Timing, planning of the scientific tasks

a. Timing of activities

1 September 2006 – 28 februari 2009

b. planning of activities, phases in tasks

1. for the research team

- initial period of familiarisation with the issue: 1 month
- research related to identification and estimation of groups : 3 months
- translation of EU-SILC instrument : 6 months
- development of pilot survey: 3 months
- execution of pilot survey: 1 month
- interpretation of pilot survey: 2 months
- development and execution of survey: 7 months
- exploitation of survey: 4 months
- report and translation: 3 months

Comment: with this plan schedule we have attempted to take into account of the possibilities in respect of the access to the target groups, and with the aim of achieving maximum participation of the various actors in the research process.

2. For the public institution

Same timing: the Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion will be highly involved in these research activities, and will in particular support the participation of the various actors in this research process.

³ The Federal Public Service Social Security coordinates a work group 'indicators' in the context of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPIncl). The research results from the current AGORA project could make an interesting contribution to the indicator appendix of the NAPIncl.

9. Special conditions

a. suggestions for the composition of the users committee

Associations where poor people can voice their opinions; services and institutions that are active with respect to combating poverty (OCMWs⁴, health care associations,...); research institutes; POD Scientific Policy; FOD Social Security and Public Social Security Institutions; POD Social Integration; FOD Economy; SME, Self-employed and Energy (General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information) ; FOD Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue; Crossroadsbank for Social Security; Statistical Services of the Regions; Centre for equal opportunities and the Fight against Racism (Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion).

b. Clause about confidentiality of data

Not applicable

c. Presence of the research team in the institution (if applicable)

In any case there will be close cooperation with the Service (in the case of knowledge about the groups involved and the involvement of the various actors), and with the General Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information (in relation to the content and possibilities of translating the EU-SILC instrument, and harmonization of the results of the survey with the current output of EU-SILC).

d. Other

- Special attention from within the scientific team for the possibilities of participation in the development and follow-up of the research (with the support of the Service).
- Collaboration between different research institutions from the various regions of the country is strongly recommended.

⁴ Public Centres for Social Welfare