Ex-post evaluation of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks

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Executive Summary

Evaluation aims and objectives

This report presents findings from the ex-post evaluation of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER). ESENER was a large, pan-European survey of enterprises with more than 10 employees commissioned by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA, hereafter referred to as the Agency) with the aim of providing cross-nationally comparable information on occupational safety and health (OSH) management practices. ESENER represented a major spend for the Agency and a new type of activity in that it involved the direct collection of information from within the 31 countries surveyed (the EU-27 plus Norway, Switzerland, Croatia and Turkey).

The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the usefulness of ESENER and identify ways in which it could be improved with a view to informing a future wave of the survey scheduled for 2014. More detailed objectives included an assessment of:

- Relevance – to what extent were the objectives of ESENER relevant to key stakeholders? To what extent could the objective of achieving cross-national comparable information on OSH management practice have been achieved using a different approach?
- Effectiveness – to what extent were the objectives for ESENER achieved?
- Efficiency – was the ESENER project managed well and what, if any, improvements could be made in terms of the overall management of the study?
- Impact – how has the information been used? What difference has it made?

Sustainability – to what extent are the (positive) effects of ESENER likely to last?

Key findings and recommendations

Relevance

Agency stakeholders viewed the objective of providing EU-wide cross-nationally comparable information on OSH management practice as relevant to their needs. More detailed findings in relation to this were that:

- Commission officials viewed ESENER as useful for identifying areas of OSH on which to focus and target Commission resources.
- Social partners and Government representatives at national level regarded the comparative perspective of ESENER as valuable, and representatives from national ministries and agencies responsible for OSH as useful for identifying issues or areas of concern.
- OSH research experts viewed ESENER as filling an important information gap, both in terms of the absence of similar information in some countries and in terms of its focus on OSH management practice, drivers and barriers.

Given the Agency objective of obtaining cross-nationally comparable information on OSH management practice, an EU-wide survey of enterprises was the most appropriate approach. Other existing EU-wide surveys of enterprises cover OSH management in a limited way or focus on the working conditions of employees. There are a number of enterprise surveys on OSH at national level but they vary in a number of ways that make comparisons difficult. Equally, there are a number of countries covered in ESENER for which surveys of OSH management practice do not exist at all.

ESENER, then, has added value as an activity that could only be carried out at EU level, and in both its comparative perspective and focus on management practice in OSH.

Effectiveness

Overall, the objective of ESENER of providing statistically valid information on OSH management practice that can be used to make reliable comparisons between countries across the EU was considered to have been met. However, a number of methodological challenges and data limitations were identified by both stakeholders and Agency staff, and these are discussed in turn below and some recommendations suggested.
Review the choice of, and collect more information about, target respondent(s)

The diversity in arrangements for managing health and safety across countries and enterprises makes the choice and operational definition of target respondent for a survey on OSH management practice challenging. ESENER used the formulation ‘the most senior manager who coordinates health and safety activities’ to identify and select a management representative for interview. Such a person did not always exist in contacted enterprises. ESENER also sought the employee voice on OSH by asking the management representative within an establishment to identify a suitable employee representative for interview. In practice, employee representatives did not always exist at establishment level. The Agency may wish to review its choice of target respondent(s). Options would include continuing with the current approach of attempting to interview both a management and employee representative, or alternatively targeting a single respondent, perhaps the person considered to be most involved in, or have most knowledge of, how health and safety is managed in the enterprise. If the latter approach were adopted, the loss of the ‘employee voice’ in the survey may be mitigated by the collection of more extensive information on the arrangements for, and degree of involvement of workers in, occupational health and safety.

The Agency may also wish to include more questions in ESENER aimed at collecting information about respondents’ background, training, and role with regards to OSH. This could provide useful context when analysing responses to the survey as well as making it easier to determine how comparable respondents are.

Explore non-response and seek ways to improve response rates

Relatively low and variable response rates are common for EU-wide surveys of enterprises. Whilst ESENER is considered to have achieved response rates comparable to other, similar surveys, the Agency should consider all potential options for improving fieldwork quality and increasing response rates in a future round of the survey. This could include requiring survey contractors to:

- collect more systematic and detailed information on reasons for non-response. If this is provided in a timely fashion, adjustments could be made during the fieldwork period to increase response rates
- use a smaller, more experienced team of interviewers (under ESENER, the size of interview teams and hence their experience in administering the survey instrument varied considerably across the countries surveyed)
• extend the fieldwork period to maximise the chances of securing interviews

• shorten the duration of interviews and review introductory text to ensure that it makes participation as attractive as possible.

A further option may be to consider asking potential survey contractors to emphasise in their bids for a future ESENER ways in which they may improve response rates.

Non-response may also give rise to bias if the pattern of non-responses is systematic. For example, if only better performing or more OSH-engaged enterprises respond to the survey, estimates from the survey will overstate the prevalence of ‘good’ practice. It is difficult to assess the impact of non-response because, by definition, non-respondents have either been unwilling or unable to participate. However, the Agency may wish to consider ways of assessing the impact, if any, of non-response on survey estimates. One way to do this is to conduct a non-response analysis by re-contacting enterprises who did not take part in the survey and asking a reduced set of questions about characteristics, management practices and reasons for non-response to understand how, if at all, these establishments differ from those that took part in the full survey.

**Explore the options for collecting data on OSH outcomes**

Whilst ESENER collected information on different aspects of OSH management practice, it is not possible from the survey to say which, if any, of the practices identified are associated with positive or negative OSH outcomes. Indeed, there is little empirical evidence in general linking particular OSH management practices with outcomes. Whilst collecting reliable OSH outcome data is challenging for a number of reasons (including the reliability of self-report data), the Agency may wish to review and explore the options for collecting such data.

**Review selected questions and consider extending piloting questionnaire to all countries**

In general, the questions posed in ESENER were felt to be the right ones and to work well. However, there were a few questions where either a word or term used was not felt to translate well and/or to be too vague and open to interpretation, raising questions about what respondents might mean by their answers. The Agency should review the questions concerned, and may do this partly by means of a recently commissioned study (the qualitative post-test of ESENER). In addition, the Agency may wish to consider extending pre-fieldwork testing of a future ESENER questionnaire to all countries surveyed.
Efficiency

On the whole, the ESENER project appears to have been well managed and the process of designing, implementing and reporting the work seems to have worked well. Findings from the survey were made accessible via an overview report and its summary published in all EU languages. In addition, a data mapping tool was made available on the Agency website in all EU languages. Data from the survey was also made available free of charge through the UK Data Archive. Agency staff were generally well regarded for their commitment and expertise by OSH experts and contractors, and relationships with the Agency were viewed positively. There were, however, one or two aspects of the management of the project the Agency may wish to review.

Reviewing the design phase

Firstly, whilst the duration of the design phase for the project was appropriate for a survey of this complexity, if a future round of ESENER retains a significant proportion of existing questions (there is a strong rationale for this as it would aid the monitoring of trends over time), a shorter design phase may be possible. Also, the comprehensive approach taken to stakeholder input into questionnaire design was no doubt of value in helping to ensure the relevance of ESENER to key interest groups. However, it may be more efficient to limit the detailed design of questions and the questionnaire to a smaller group in future, with consultation of a wider group of experts limited to discussions on the topics and themes to be covered.

Consider alternative options for reporting of ESENER data

The period between completion of the fieldwork and publication of the overview report and its summary was longer than anticipated. The Agency may wish to review the arrangements for initial reporting of ESENER data with a view to improving performance against the ‘punctuality’ dimension of the European Statistical System (ESS)².

The Agency commissioned four reports based on secondary analysis of the ESENER data. Two of these related to aspects of psychosocial risk management. The Agency may wish to consider alternative ways, and the associated trade-offs,

² Five quality dimensions are set out under the European Statistical System (ESS). These are: relevance; accuracy; timeliness and punctuality; accessibility and clarity; and comparability and coherence. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the release date of the data and the target date on which they should have been delivered, with reference to dates announced in the official release calendar.
of using the available budget for these secondary analyses in the future. For example, one option may be to commission more smaller-scale analyses covering a wider range of topics or issues.

**Impact and sustainability**

Overall, whilst the impact of ESENER cannot be quantified, it does appear to have added value across the EU, although with greater benefit in some countries than others. It has become established as a credible source of data on health and safety in Europe and a reference point for policymakers and researchers. More specifically, ESENER has been:

- referenced by or provided input into policy papers and reports at EU and national level
- reported as having informed legislative debates, national OSH strategies, and policies on psychosocial risks in selected Member States
- used by independent OSH researchers to conduct analyses outside of work commissioned by EU-OSHA
- reported to have raised awareness of particular OSH issues, in particular psychosocial risks and
- reported as useful in identifying areas of OSH on which to focus efforts and resources at EU and Member State level.

ESENER, then, provides a means of monitoring progress in health and safety management and an input into the development of policy and practice, at both EU and national level. In this way, ESENER adds value to the evaluation of the Community Strategy 2007-2012 on health and safety at work, and the development of a future EU strategy on OSH.

The nature of these impacts suggests that, at least to some degree, ESENER will continue to be used and referenced in the coming years. However, the lasting impact of ESENER may be best secured by conducting more waves of the survey and the benefits this may bring in monitor trends over time.
1 Introduction

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) was commissioned by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (the ‘Agency’) to conduct an ex-post evaluation of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER).

This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

The report is structured around the key objectives set for the evaluation (outlined in Chapter 2) and is as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents background information about ESENER including the main objectives of the project, in addition to an overview of the key objectives for this ex-post evaluation and the evaluation approach adopted to meet them.

- Chapter 3 discusses the key findings from the evaluation for each of its key objectives, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

- Chapter 4 outlines the main conclusions and recommendations from the work.
2 Background and evaluation approach

2.1 About the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)

The European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) was conducted in 2009 with the central aim of providing cross-nationally comparable information on how workplaces across Europe manage health and safety and to give indications as to how policy-makers, practitioners, EU-OSHA and other providers of OSH information can provide them with better support. The survey was conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) across 31 countries (EU-27 plus Norway, Switzerland, Croatia and Turkey). In total 36,000 telephone interviews were conducted with managers and health and safety representatives in establishments with 10 or more employees.

The ESENER project was undertaken in a number of distinct phases. Prior to any survey design work being undertaken, the Agency commissioned a feasibility study in 2005 to assess the options available and methodological challenges in conducting such a survey. This comprised a literature study to obtain an overview of existing surveys and their characteristics, and a technical report with recommendations on methodology and the implementation of an enterprise survey. Following this, work on ESENER proceeded in three distinct phases.

The first phase lasted approximately seven months and involved the design of the methodology and questionnaires for ESENER. In this phase of the project, the Agency drew on the knowledge of experts in the subject of occupational safety and health, survey design experts, the tripartite European Risk Advisory Group

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Institute for Employment Studies

(EROAG)\(^4\) and project staff responsible for the ECS at Eurofound. In addition, the Bureau of the Agency contributed to discussions on the selection of questionnaire topics. The design phase incorporated a qualitative pilot in the UK, Netherlands and Germany followed by a more extensive, quantitative pilot of the questionnaires in eight countries (Germany, Greece, Spain, Italy, France, Poland, Finland, and the UK).

The second phase of the project consisted of the development of national versions of the management and employee representative questionnaires and lasted approximately six months. This phase of the project also involved the design and implementation of a sampling strategy. Development of national versions of the questionnaires attempted to take into account not just national languages, but also different work-related practices requiring different terminology to be used across the countries studied. The key steps in the translation process were as follows:

- translation of an English-master questionnaire into each relevant language by translators who are native speakers of the target language
- checking of translations by national fieldwork institutes
- checking of national language versions by native language occupational safety and health experts
- back-translation of national language versions into English by different translators and independent cross-checking with the English language master version.

The final phase of the project comprised fieldwork and reporting. Fieldwork was completed by the end of June 2009. In June 2010, descriptive findings from ESENER were made available through:

- an overview report and its summary, available in all EU languages
- an online data mapping tool, again available in all EU languages, and accessible on the Agency website.

In addition, the raw survey data was made available free of charge through the UK Data Archive.

Subsequently, data from the survey has been used to conduct a number of in-depth secondary analyses on specific OSH topics by subject experts. These include analyses of:

\(^4\) The European Risk Advisory Group (EROAG) is an Agency working group comprised of representatives from employers, workers and Government selected from the Agency’s Governing Board and Bureau.
Ex-post evaluation of ESENER

- factors associated with effective management of occupational safety and health
- factors associated with the effective involvement of workers in occupational safety and health
- factors associated with the effective management of psychosocial risks
- management of psychosocial risks – drivers, obstacles, needs of and measures taken by enterprises.

This ex-post evaluation considers the whole ESENER project, and as such, includes within its scope these secondary analyses.

ESENER was a significant activity for the Agency, representing one of its largest activities in terms of resources used. It also represented a new type of activity for the Agency. Prior to ESENER, the information collected and disseminated by the Agency was obtained through its network of national representatives, or focal points, in each of the Member States. In contrast, ESENER involved the direct collection of information from within the 31 countries surveyed.

2.2 Evaluation objectives and approach

The main aims of the ex-post evaluation of ESENER were to:

- assess the quality of the ESENER project
- evaluate the usefulness of ESENER
- identify ways in which various aspects of the survey, its development and implementation might be improved and so potentially inform the development of a future round of the survey.

More detailed objectives for the evaluation, and related research questions, are outlined in Table 2.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Objective</th>
<th>Research Questions/issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>To what extent were the objectives of the ESENER project relevant to key stakeholder groups eg policy-makers and shapers, OSH researchers?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To what extent could the objectives of the ESENER project have been achieved in other ways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>To what extent were the project objectives met? This involves a consideration of whether the methodological approach adopted enabled the achievement of key project objectives, ie</td>
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The evaluation objective is to research
issues and questions related to the
provision of statistically valid and reliable,
cross-nationally comparable information on
management practices in respect of OSH.

The efficiency objective is less focused on
the methodological approach and more on the
procurement and management of the study, i.e.,
how well was the project managed? The
objective considers this question largely from
the perspective of the Agency itself, taking
into account the views of stakeholders on how
well the project was managed by the Agency.

The impact objective considers how the
information from ESENER has been used, and
to what extent it has made a difference to
occupational safety and health policy and
practice. Isolating quantifiable impacts is not
possible. It is possible, however, to describe
how information has been used and its impact
as far as key stakeholders are concerned.

The sustainability objective considers
the extent to which the (positive) effects of the
project are likely to last.

In order to address these evaluation objectives and associated research questions,
the evaluation drew on a range of information sources. These included:

- Existing evidence, in particular IES’s mid-term evaluation of EU-OSHA’s 2009-
  2013 strategy. This involved semi-structured interviews with national focal
  points, network partners, policy makers, and OSH experts from across the 27 EU
  Member States. The work also involved semi-structured interviews with
  Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), representatives from the
  European Commission and relevant EU agencies (e.g., the European Foundation
  for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Eurofound). The
  interviews included questions concerning the relevance and effectiveness of
  ESENER.

- Papers and reports including:
  - A feasibility study conducted in 2005 exploring options for the design of an
    enterprise survey on occupational safety and health
  - (Limited) documentation on the project management of ESENER
  - A technical report on the design and implementation of ESENER compiled at
    the end of the project in 2009
reports documenting the results of secondary analyses of the ESENER data (conducted on behalf of EU-OSHA by OSH experts)

an external quality assessment of the 2nd European Company Survey (ECS). This was included for review as the methodology was similar to that employed for ESENER. In addition, documents relating to the tendering exercise for the next round of the ECS were reviewed as these are a possible source of ideas on how the tendering of a future round of ESENER could be handled

documents relating to the dissemination of ESENER, including details of workshops and presentations.

A short email survey of researchers accessing the ESENER data through the UK Data Archive (the questions asked in the email survey are presented in Appendix 2).

Semi-structured telephone interviews with:

OSH experts who conducted secondary analyses of ESENER

focal points from two EFTA (European Free Trade Association)/European Economic Area (EEA) countries not included in the mid-term evaluation of EU-OSHA’s strategy (namely Switzerland and Norway) and one Candidate country (Turkey)

the ESENER project manager at TNS Infratest Sozialforschung GmbH, the survey house contracted by the Agency to conduct ESENER

the Agency project manager and other staff at the Agency involved in ESENER

the ECS project manager at Eurofound. The ECS project manager was interviewed as developments in how the ECS is procured, designed and managed are of possible relevance to how ESENER is developed in future. The two surveys are both EU-wide, focussed on enterprises, and are methodologically similar, the design of ESENER having been based largely on that of the ECS

select researchers accessing the data through the UK Data Archive. Researchers providing interesting responses to the email survey were followed up by telephone where language permitted (IES had agreed with the Agency that interviews would only be conducted in one of three languages, French, English and German).

Topic guides used to shape the discussions with these different types of interviewee are presented in Appendix 1. The exception to this is for researchers
accessing the data through the UK Data Archive. For this group of respondents, questions asked were ad hoc in nature and designed to follow up interesting points raised in the initial email response to our questions.
3 Key findings

3.1 Relevance

The key aim of ESENER was to provide policymakers and other stakeholders with cross-nationally comparable information on management practices in respect of OSH, and to provide information relevant to the design and implementation of new policies aimed at improving OSH. In assessing the relevance of the ESENER project, we have looked at whether this objective was considered relevant by stakeholders, and whether a pan-European survey such as ESENER was the most appropriate way of meeting this objective.

The objective of providing cross-nationally comparable information on occupational safety and health management practice is felt to be relevant to key stakeholders.

Drawing on evidence largely from the mid-term evaluation of EU-OSHA’s 2009-2013 strategy, but also on interviews conducted as part of this ex-post evaluation, national focal points and network partners perceived added value in the EU-wide cross-national comparative information offered by ESENER. The same was also true of policymakers and shapers at EU level.

At EU level, representatives from the Commission regarded ESENER as a means by which the Commission could identify areas of OSH and its management on which to focus resources and efforts. ESENER is also relevant for the evaluation of the 2007-2012 Community Strategy on health and safety at work, and for the development of a future strategy. As reported in the mid-term evaluation of EU-OSHA’s 2009-2013 strategy, the value of ESENER at Member State level varied according to the availability of similar data sources at national level. In cases where other national-level data were available, ESENER was often referred to as confirming existing findings and knowledge. In cases where similar data sources did not exist, ESENER was seen as filling an important information gap and as
valuable in raising awareness of OSH issues, in particular psychosocial risks. In both cases, the comparative perspective of ESENER was viewed as adding value.

‘It is interesting that they give information at the country level, so you can compare. So, you can think we are doing well, or you can think in a certain aspect they are not doing that well. So, it is useful in that respect.’ (Policy-maker, EU-15) 5

‘It is a very good base for development, to realise where the problems are. And then once you know where the real problems are, it is easier to find ways to correct or to improve on the situation. So it was very interesting and very good. And also for comparison between the countries, it was very interesting.’ (Policy-maker, EU-12)

Views on ESENER differed for employer and employee representatives. For employer representatives, who on the whole appeared to be less aware of ESENER than representatives of Government and employees, there was a view that the survey should focus less on psychosocial risks and more on ‘traditional’, physical risks. Similarly, there was a view that the survey should focus more on identifying areas where employers were struggling to implement requirements originating from EU directives. In contrast, employee representatives were both more aware of, and more positive about, ESENER valuing the focus on psychosocial risks. One employee representative referred to the value of ESENER as an independent source of information (surveys on such issues in their country tended to be conducted on behalf of or by trade unions). However, both employer and employee representatives valued the comparative perspective offered by ESENER.

Members of the OSH research community also referred to the benefits of having comparative data from across the EU in one single dataset, and not having to rely on national datasets (where they existed). There was also a view that such comparative data would be of interest, and of value, to those involved in formulating policy on OSH.

‘From my point of view, it’s most useful because it allows you for the first time, in one single data set, to do this type of modelling that actually shows you where the weak parts are in the European Union in terms of health and safety management. There are not that many big surprises in there, but it’s good to have it in one data set. That, for me, is the most important thing.’ (Researcher, EU-15)

‘I think the survey explores not only awareness, and practices, which is very useful of course, but drivers and barriers to practice, and needs. I think this, for me, is the most

important aspect of the survey, because there, we can bring back policy makers very straightforward messages on what has to be done.’ (Researcher, EU-15)

An EU-wide survey of enterprises such as ESENER was the most appropriate means to collect comparative data on how occupational safety and health risks are managed across Europe.

Given the aim of the Agency to obtain cross-nationally comparable information on how occupational health and safety risks, and in particular psychosocial risks, are managed in enterprises across Europe, a key question is whether this aim could have been achieved by means other than ESENER. A literature review of surveys on OSH commissioned by the Agency in 2005 shows that existing EU-wide surveys focus on the experience and views of employees (eg the Working Conditions surveys of Eurofound) or if addressed at the company level, only cover OSH issues in a limited way (eg the 2009 ECS asks whether there is a person or committee in charge of representing employee views in respect of health and safety). The literature review identified a number of company-level surveys on OSH at national level. However, these surveys vary in a multiplicity of ways (eg in terms of the coverage of different sectors and size of employers; the OSH topics covered; the sample size and design; the mode of data collection; the time period covered etc) such that they do not offer comparable information. OSH research experts confirmed that ESENER had filled an important information gap on OSH, given its focus on management practice, drivers, barriers and support needs with respect to occupational safety and health.

‘We have the European working conditions survey, that is repeated every so many years, but that’s focused on the employee level. What Esener does is fill in the gap that existed up until now on what actually managers tell us, but more specifically trying to look at practices at establishment level, and we didn’t have so many, so much data on those before. So, I think in that respect, it fills a significant gap.’
(Researcher, EU-15)

The secondary data analyses of ESENER were essentially aimed at moving beyond a descriptive overview of the data and trying to explain the drivers behind different aspects of the management of occupational safety and health (namely the management of OSH in general; the management of psychosocial risks; and worker representation and consultation on health and safety). OSH research experts who conducted the secondary analyses of ESENER viewed the results as largely confirming existing evidence. They nonetheless saw value in the work as it provided justification for key aspects of health and safety management, for example worker involvement, to receive continued attention from policymakers. The value of the secondary analyses are also implicit in some of the findings ie that differences in the extent of OSH management across countries point to
opportunities for learning through information exchange between countries and further comparative research.

### 3.2 Effectiveness

Having considered whether the objectives of the ESENER project were relevant to key stakeholders such as policymakers and researchers, in assessing effectiveness we looked at whether or not the project objectives were met. In other words, did the ESENER project:

- result in statistically valid and reliable cross-national information on management practices with respect to OSH? To determine this requires an assessment of stakeholder views, in particular OSH research experts, and a closer look at key aspects of the methodology adopted and its implementation
- provide policymakers with information relevant for the design and implementation of new policies on OSH
- help promote and foster further research on OSH, and assist in stimulating and shaping the debate on OSH?

This section deals primarily with the first objective listed above. The latter two objectives are addressed in a later section on the impact of ESENER and its sustainability.

On the whole, ESENER results were felt to be statistically valid and reliable. However, some reservations were expressed with regard to the possibility that some estimates of the prevalence of arrangements for worker representation were higher than might be expected.

Evidence from stakeholders collected as part of the mid-term evaluation of EU-OSHA’s 2009-2013 strategy suggested that, on the whole, the evidence from ESENER was considered valid and credible.

> ‘So, I don’t think anybody has questioned the reliability of the report, and that is not always the case. So, that is good.’ (Policy-maker, EU-15)

> ‘... the excellent data set that ESENER has. I think that shows areas where there needs to be more action.’ (Policy-maker, EU-15)

However, there was some concern expressed by one OSH expert that estimates from ESENER on the prevalence of worker representation arrangements were higher than might be expected. Equally, there was some concern over how representative the findings from ESENER are of EU workplaces with regard to the reported level of involvement in OSH management by worker representatives, and the support available to them at enterprise level. The extent of any
overrepresentation is difficult to gauge accurately and be definitive about due to difficulties in comparing different data sources, but it is likely that in so far as it is present, that it is due to a common difficulty in conducting surveys about employer practice where participation is voluntary – that is, the better performing, more ‘engaged’ companies are more likely to take part. Making additional efforts to encourage participation and boost response rates may be one way of attempting to mitigate any response bias. In addition, conducting studies with non-respondents to understand reasons for refusal and to collect information on their main characteristics can help to correct for any bias in the estimates obtained. The latter is difficult to do, but it may be worthy of consideration by the Agency as a means to improve estimates. It should be noted that whilst the concerns above have been expressed, the OSH expert concerned was also keen to point out that they considered the data collected by ESENER on the operation of workforce representation arrangements, what supports them and what is regarded as good practice as valid and useful for highlighting the importance to policymakers of worker involvement for good health and safety.

There were also a number of limitations to the ESENER data highlighted by stakeholders. The Agency and its stakeholders also identified a number of methodological challenges. Reviewing both limitations to the data and key aspects of the methodology may prove useful in identifying potential improvements prior to any future wave of ESENER.

Whilst overall the ESENER data was considered valid and reliable, OSH research experts identified a number of limitations to the data whilst acknowledging that pan-European surveys such as ESENER are inherently complex in nature and difficult to do well. As part of this ex-post evaluation, representatives from EU-OSHA also acknowledged a number of methodological challenges from having conducted the survey in 2009. These are discussed in turn below. Please note that not all aspects of the survey methodology are discussed as the purpose of the ex-post evaluation was to determine whether the methodology as a whole was appropriate and identify potential areas for improvement rather than to conduct a full quality assessment of the survey.

A minority of stakeholders expressed a desire for ESENER to include employers with less than 10 employees. Whilst this is desirable, the extent to which this is practically feasible is doubtful.

The methodological approach for ESENER mirrored that for the European Company Survey (ECS) commissioned by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). As such, ESENER involved interviews with establishments with 10 or more employees. It covered all sectors of activity with the exception of ‘Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing’, ‘Private Households’, and ‘Extraterritorial Organisations’. These were excluded
given their limited quantitative importance in terms of establishments with more than 10 employees.

Given that the ESENER data display a fairly consistent trend downwards in health and safety provision as employer size decreases, it may be possible to extrapolate findings to establishments with less than 10 employees. However, this is no substitute for collecting actual data and there is no question that collecting information on the health and safety practice of employers with less than 10 employees would be valuable given the policy interest in small, including micro, employers. However, obtaining a representative sample of this population is made difficult by the relatively high failure rates amongst such businesses. It seems that the latest procurement exercise for the ECS has retained its focus on employers with 10 or more employees, as well as maintaining consistency with previous versions of the survey in other aspects of the methodology. This clearly has benefits in terms of monitoring trends over time. However, the Agency may wish to give consideration in collaboration with survey experts as to whether there have been any substantial changes to available address registers or methodological approaches that would open up the possibility of extending the survey to employers with less than 10 employees.

The choice of target respondent for an EU-wide survey on health and safety management practice is made difficult by the diversity of arrangements in place for managing health and safety across countries and establishments. The Agency may wish to review its choice of target respondent as part of planning for the next wave of ESENER. As noted above, the methodological approach taken for ESENER mirrored that established by Eurofound for their ECS survey. As such, ESENER attempted to conduct two interviews in each establishment, one with a management representative and one with an employee representative. For ESENER, the management representative was defined as ‘the most senior manager who coordinates safety and health activities’. A suitable employee representative was identified by the relevant management representative in the surveyed establishment. In theory, this approach would provide both a management and an employee view of health and safety arrangements. In practice, the approach is made difficult due to the lack of harmonisation in health and safety arrangements across the EU, and across establishments. For example, in some establishments contacted through the survey, no respondent fitting the description ‘the most senior manager who coordinates health and safety activities’ could be identified. This contributed to non-response rates for interviews with management representatives. In other establishments the interviewee identified as ‘the most senior manager who coordinates health and safety activities’ also self-identified as the employee representative. According to the technical report on ESENER, ‘well
above average shares of cases where the management representative and employee representative would have been identical were encountered in Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. This had the effect of boosting non-response rates for the employee representative interviews (in these cases, the interviewee was only asked questions from the management representative questionnaire).

Given the diversity in arrangements across the EU for managing health and safety, was the choice of respondent and the way they were defined in ESENER the best approach? An alternative target respondent could be the ‘most senior person who coordinates health and safety activities’ or the ‘person responsible for coordinating health and safety activities’. The Agency may wish to review its choice of target respondent(s) prior to commissioning any future wave of ESENER. In reviewing the choice there are a number of factors the Agency will need to consider. These include: the degree of importance attached to collecting the employee voice on occupational safety and health; the feasibility, cost and methods available for achieving higher response rates for employee representatives; the value in terms of analysis of the data collected (i.e., limited analytical use was made of the data collected from employee representatives due to the variable response rates and small sample sizes achieved); and the greater precision that may be achieved by shifting resources to focus on a single interview and a corresponding larger sample size. If the Agency were to adopt a single interview approach, the loss of the employee voice may be mitigated by extending the question set on worker involvement in health and safety, albeit from a management perspective.

The lack of harmonisation in arrangements for managing health and safety across countries and establishments also means that, whatever the choice of target respondent, there is likely to be variation in the backgrounds, training, role and responsibilities of those surveyed. The Agency should consider collecting more background information on respondents.

A related issue is the extent to which the respondents in any one target respondent group for ESENER are comparable. For example, is the ‘most senior manager who coordinates safety and health’ at the establishment an equivalent person in terms of seniority, background and training across the establishments surveyed? Information such as this is not currently asked in ESENER and may provide useful context to responses and assist in the making of comparisons.

On the whole, stakeholders including OSH experts felt the right questions had been asked in ESENER to understand OSH management practice, drivers, barriers and needs. Stakeholders did suggest additional questions for inclusion but acknowledged the limited interview time available in a telephone-based survey such as ESENER. In preparation for a future ESENER survey, the Agency
may wish to review the extent to which the questions asked proved useful in analytical terms and whether or not some questions may be removed to make space for other, potentially more useful questions. The Agency may also wish to review the options available for widening the scope of the survey and/or exploring more issues in greater depth.

The extent to which ESENER was successful in providing useful information on health and safety management practice within establishments across the EU is dependent on appropriate coverage of topics and the right questions being asked. In general, stakeholders felt the topics covered by the survey were the right ones. On the whole, OSH researchers felt that the right questions had been asked to explore the topics covered. However, they also made some suggestions for additional questions. For example, one OSH research expert felt that there could have been questions about how risks other than psychosocial risks are managed in the establishments, so that the relative effort involved in managing psychosocial risks could be assessed. Another research expert felt that more questions could have been asked regarding the facilitators and barriers to greater worker participation. A further suggestion was the incorporation of more questions about the quality of employer provision for worker involvement. In other words, not just asking whether training was made available to employee representatives, but also the amount of training offered, whether it was any good, and whether they were allowed time off from other duties to attend. Other stakeholders also made suggestions for additional questions, such as on the awareness and knowledge of legislative requirements. This last suggestion is perhaps the most complicated to achieve in practice given variations in legislative provisions across countries. However, all those making suggestions for additional questions recognised the limited available interview time inherent in a telephone-based survey such as ESENER and the impossibility of including everything that one would like to ask. Extending either the scope of the survey or the depth of some of the subjects covered could be achieved if some less useful questions were to be removed from the existing survey instrument. The Agency may wish to review the content of the ESENER questionnaire, and the analytical value of the questions asked, to determine whether there is scope for removing some questions in favour of others. With an increase in sample size, it may also be possible to rotate selected sections of the questionnaire, whereby all respondents answer core sections of the questionnaire, whilst other sections are asked of a smaller group of respondents. This approach has the potential to both widen the scope of the survey and allow more issues to be explored in depth, without increasing interview length and respondent burden.

There was a consistent view from OSH research experts that a future wave of ESENER would add value if data on OSH outcome measures (ie levels of employee absence, number of accidents and injuries etc) could be collected.
They acknowledged, however, that this would be a significant methodological challenge. The Agency may wish to review and explore the options for collecting OSH outcome data as part of a future round of ESENER.

A further issue raised by a number of OSH experts was the desirability of collecting OSH outcome measures (eg number of accidents or accident rates, incidences of injury or ill-health, level of employee absence etc). This suggestion has a strong rationale; whilst ESENER has collected information on OSH management practices there is very little empirical evidence linking particular aspects of OSH management practice with actual OSH performance. It is therefore an open question as to whether the OSH management practices described in ESENER and thought of as good practice ultimately result in positive outcomes. If ESENER could establish that link, and do so with longitudinal data (assuming there are future rounds of ESENER with similar questions), then this would represent a powerful addition to the research literature. That said, OSH experts acknowledged the not insubstantial difficulties in collecting reliable data of this sort, particularly within the context of a telephone-based interview. However, prior to commencing a future round of ESENER, the Agency may benefit from reviewing again the possibilities and feasibility of collecting such data. We are aware that the Agency is already taking steps in this direction by exploring potential outcome-type questions as part of the qualitative post-test of ESENER.

In general, the questions posed in ESENER were felt to work well. However, there was a view amongst OSH research experts that some of the questions were too subjective and open to interpretation. The Agency may wish to review the ESENER questionnaire prior to launching a new round of the survey, paying particular focus to the questions identified by stakeholders and the findings from the qualitative post-test of ESENER.

For comparisons to be reliable, as far as is possible, respondents must interpret and understand the questions posed in the same way. There was a view expressed by two of the OSH experts that some of the questions posed were a little vague or open to interpretation, and more direct, factual questions could have been used. For example, one expert thought that a question which asked respondents to say whether health and safety risks were a ‘major concern’, ‘minor concern’, or ‘no concern at all’ could have been broken down into a series of more direct questions such as ‘Is (health and safety risk) present in your establishment?‘; ‘Has anything been done to tackle the risk?’; ‘Was the action taken to tackle the risk sufficient?’.

Another OSH expert thought that the question ‘Is there a documented policy, established management system or action plan on health and safety in your establishment?’ was open to interpretation. It is worth noting, however, that this latter question has the benefit of picking up both formal and informal approaches to health and safety management (the latter are likely to be much more common in
smaller organisations) and so avoids the possible underestimation of the management of health and safety that may result from a more prescriptive question. We understand that the Agency is aware of the potential difficulties with these questions and aims to explore them further in the qualitative post-test, prior to drafting a new version of the ESENER questionnaire.

It is clear that significant efforts were invested in ensuring a robust translation of the ESENER questionnaire. However, stakeholders identified some areas in which translation may be improved.

For responses to be comparable, it is also necessary that the questions posed are equivalent. In other words, the questions and terminology used should have the same meaning when used in different countries. One OSH research expert felt that Question MM200 from the management representative questionnaire did not translate well. This question asks respondents to indicate whether a number of different types of health and safety risk are a major concern, minor concern, or no concern at all. The term ‘concern’ translates into German and Dutch as ‘problem’. Problem is perhaps a stronger term and would tend to imply that an issue is currently causing difficulties. In contrast, the term ‘concern’ in English may imply that an issue is less serious than a ‘problem’ and not, perhaps, requiring action promptly or in the near future. EU-OSHA has recognised that this question poses a potential difficulty and is exploring it as part of a qualitative post-test study of ESENER. Other participants in this ex-post evaluation also mentioned that they felt there were some problems with the terminology used and how those terms were understood due to differences in health and safety arrangements across countries. The Agency may wish to consider any additional steps that may help ensure that the different versions of the questionnaires used are comparable across countries. For example, one potential addition could be a small pilot of the questionnaire in all the countries surveyed. Provided substantial changes were not made to the questionnaire as a result of this pilot, these pilot interviews could be incorporated into the main sample for analytical purposes.

The overall design and structure of the questionnaire was felt to work well. However, OSH experts felt that filters had been applied in some cases where they were not needed, potentially limiting analytical possibilities.

Filters were applied in ESener, as in other surveys, so that only questions relevant to a particular respondent are asked. For example, if a respondent indicates that risk assessments are not conducted on a regular basis in their organisation, they are then asked a set of questions about the reasons for this. Alternatively, if they indicate that risk assessments are regularly conducted, they are asked a series of questions about when and where those assessments are conducted, what issues they cover etc. One OSH research expert felt that there were too many filtered questions, particularly with respect to areas of risk
management, which limited what he could explore in multivariate analyses. The Agency may wish to review the use of filtering within any future round of ESENER.

**Response rates for ESENER were felt to be comparable with other pan-European surveys of equivalent length with enterprises. However, overall response rates are generally low for this type of survey, and ESENER is no exception. There was also a wide variation in response rates across countries, something which is common to EU-wide surveys. Nonetheless, there may be benefit in considering ways in which response rates may be improved.**

Overall, response rates were judged by the vast majority of local fieldwork institutes involved in ESENER to be similar or better than other CATI surveys of an equivalent length among establishments or companies. However, response rates for this type of survey are generally low, and ESENER is no exception (the overall response rate for ESENER was 29.5 per cent). In addition, there was variation across countries in terms of response rates for both the management and employee representative interviews. For example, response rates for interviews with management representatives varied from 59 per cent in Greece to 14 per cent in Croatia. Response rates for employee representatives varied from 69 per cent in Finland (ie interviews with an employee representative on health and safety were carried out in 69 per cent of the establishments in which an interview with a management representative was carried out), to five per cent in Portugal. Low response rates give rise to the possibility of response bias. If this bias is systematic (ie some types of establishment are more likely to respond than others), this can lead to biased estimates.

It is difficult to accurately assess the impact of non-response on survey estimates. One way to do this is to conduct a non-response analysis by re-contacting enterprises who did not take part in the survey and asking a reduced set of questions about characteristics, management practices and reasons for non-response. This information can be used to correct for non-response bias in the estimates. However, this is not easy to carry out for the simple reason that the enterprises that are of interest are those that refused or were otherwise unavailable to participate in the survey in the first place.

One factor likely to affect response rates is the anticipated, and actual, length of interview. The anticipated length of interview was referred to in the opening script for ESENER, and if respondents perceive that this is too great a burden, they may be disinclined to participate. Equally, if the interview turns out to be longer than expected in practice, or to ‘feel’ too long once in progress, the interviewee
may choose to abandon the interview. In the technical report on ESENER\(^6\), it was reported that there were complaints about the length of the questionnaire in some countries (eg Bulgaria and Portugal) and, whilst in a number of other countries interest in the topic was judged to be high, ‘many’ respondents became disengaged towards the end of the interview. There were also ‘a relatively high’ number of interrupted interviews in a few countries (eg Malta, Portugal and Turkey) which could not be completed at a later date because the interviewee was reluctant to continue. The technical report suggests that a future interview schedule with management representatives could benefit from a reduction in length equivalent to two minutes, and advises that an average interview time of 25 minutes (this was the actual average time across countries) is the upper limit of what is practical. Given this, it would make sense when designing a future version of ESENER to give careful consideration to the length of any revised questionnaire. One of the potential benefits of pursuing one interview instead of the current two would be the time saved in identifying and obtaining contacts for additional respondents (ie as noted above, in ESENER’s current format, part of the interview with the management representative is taken up with asking questions about the presence of an employee representative in the establishment and obtaining their contact details).

In addition to considering the length of interview, collecting and analysing reasons for non-response can provide useful indications as to how response rates may be improved. Whilst detailed information on non-response was collected by the local fieldwork institutes involved in ESENER, there was also a high number of ‘other’ reasons for non-response recorded for some countries. It is perhaps worth the Agency reviewing the requirements for recording of reasons for non-response in any procurement exercise for a future round of the survey. We are aware that Eurofound, for example, have altered their requirements on this issue for the next round of the European Company Survey (ECS) and placed greater emphasis on the requirement of contractors to record systematically and in detail reasons for non-response. The Agency may also wish to review and consider the options available for improving the quality of fieldwork with a view to improving response rates. Options might include specifying within the procurement procedure: the use of a smaller, better trained and more experienced team of interviewers across each of the countries surveyed; a longer fieldwork period; and suggestions as to how participation could be made more attractive to potential participants. In their procurement exercise for ECS, Eurofound has asked contractors to propose ways of boosting response rates. The Agency could

consider adopting a similar approach to any future tendering exercise for ESENER.

The sample size for the employee representative sample was below 500 in the majority of countries, and in a number of countries less than 100. This limits the analytical possibilities for this data. The Agency should review whether, and how, it is possible to increase the sample size for employee representatives if they continue to be a target respondent in future surveys.

Sample sizes for the employee representative interviews ranged from 49 in Portugal to 685 in Finland, with sample sizes of less than 500 in 27 of the countries surveyed. The reasons for the small sample sizes are several, some of which have already been discussed. They include differences in the traditions and prevalence of employee representation across countries; the fact that employee representatives were recruited via managers and so access to them could be refused (for example, in Belgium, out of 795 establishments surveyed where an employee representative for health and safety was reported to exist, access to them was refused in 116 cases); and the fact that in some establishments the employee representative was also the person who had been identified in the establishment as ‘the most senior manager who coordinates health and safety activities’.

Small sample sizes limit analytical possibilities and make estimates less reliable. If future rounds of ESENER are to continue with interviews with an employee representative, it would be beneficial to consider all means of boosting the sample size for this group. This could include better intelligence on reasons for non-response and refusals (provided this was made available during the fieldwork period, adjustments could be made based on the intelligence gained to improve response rates); consideration of leaving the fieldwork period open as long as is feasible to secure as many interviews with this group as possible; and giving careful consideration to interview length.

The sample size for interviews with management representatives was in line with expectations and in all but one country, was 500 or more. However, the Agency may wish to consider increasing the sample size to both increase the precision of estimates and enable more detailed breakdowns of the data at national level.

As part of the technical report on ESENER, a bootstrap analysis was used to evaluate the impact of different sample sizes and the disproportionate sampling design used on the margin of error. According to the technical report, confidence
intervals\(^7\) ranged between +/- 1.5 per cent and +/- 7.5 per cent depending on the question concerned, the percentage of respondents giving a certain answer, and the sample size. The larger confidence interval relates to the smaller achieved sample size of 500.

All things being equal, the larger the sample size, the smaller the confidence interval and the greater the precision of the estimate obtained, ie the closer the estimate obtained in the survey is to the ‘true’ population value. Given this statistical fact, the Agency may wish to explore the possibility of increasing the sample size in future waves of ESENER as a means to improve the precision of estimates.

Increasing sample size may also enable a more detailed breakdown by sector at national level. For the 2009 ESENER survey data, the sample size achieved meant that findings could be broken down by industrial sector at EU level, but only by sector type (ie production, public or private sector) at national level. If costs allowed, the sample size at national level could be increased such that breakdowns by detailed sectoral level are possible. Alternatively, an increase in sample size could be used to provide data at detailed sectoral level for high priority sectors (eg construction) only.

### 3.3 Efficiency

Having considered whether the objectives of the ESENER project were relevant to key stakeholders, and whether the method and approach adopted enabled those objectives to be met, a further question is whether the process for designing and implementing the ESENER project was the correct one or could have been improved in any way.

Overall, the ESENER project appears to have been well managed and experts and contractors involved held generally positive views. Agency staff were well regarded for their commitment and expertise, and relationships were felt to work well. There are, however, aspects of the process that the Agency may wish to review.

The design phase for ESENER lasted seven months and involved research experts in both occupational safety and health, and survey design. It also involved input from the Agency’s risk observatory advisory group comprised of representatives from the social partners. This is a major strength in terms of

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\(^7\) As figures from ESENER are based on data from a sample of establishments rather than all establishments, they are estimates and subject to error. Confidence intervals describe the margin of error. They allow us to say that with a certain level of confidence, the ‘true’ population value is within +/- (a number) of the estimated value obtained through the survey.
ensuring the relevance of ESENER to key stakeholders and ensuring research instruments are well designed. However, there may be ways of organising expert input in a more efficient way.

Much of the process for developing ESENER has been described in Chapter 2. The involvement of both substantive subject and survey experts in survey design was considered a strength by those involved in the design of ESENER. Equally, the timeframe allocated for design is consistent with other EU-wide surveys of this nature and appropriate given that this was the first time an EU-wide survey on management practice in OSH had been developed. However, a shorter timeframe may be feasible in future if ESENER continues with many of the same questions, allowing the monitoring of trends over time.

Reflecting on the experience of designing ESENER, Agency staff felt that there may have been ways of working more efficiently with all those involved in the consultation. For example, it may prove more efficient to focus initial consultation on topics for study with a wide range of experts and then limit detailed questionnaire design to a much smaller group.

Findings from ESENER were made accessible through overview reports and an online data mapping tool, both available in all EU languages. The raw data was also made available through the UK Data Archive. However, the period between collection of the data and reporting of the findings was longer than anticipated. The Agency should review arrangements for reporting of the data to improve performance with respect to the ‘punctuality’ dimension of the European Statistical System (ESS)\(^8\).

Fieldwork for ESENER was completed by the end of June 2009. Publication of an overview report and associated summary document, available in all EU languages, was not available until approximately one year later. This was later than anticipated. The Agency should review arrangements for the production and publication of findings.

There was a mixed view amongst research experts about the budget and timetable available for the secondary analysis projects. From an Agency perspective, there was a view that commissioning a larger number of smaller scale, more focussed projects may provide greater benefit.

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\(^8\) Five quality dimensions are set out under the European Statistical System (ESS). These are: relevance; accuracy; timeliness and punctuality; accessibility and clarity; and comparability and coherence. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the release date of the data and the target date on which they should have been delivered, with reference to dates announced in the official release calendar.
There was a mixed view amongst the OSH research experts who conducted the secondary analysis projects about the budget and timescale for the work. Two experts felt the budget and timetable were fine, and a third felt the timetable was tight and the budget too small. One OSH expert noted that the tender specification for the work afforded plenty of scope to decide how best to approach the work. As far as the Agency was concerned, staff felt that in future it may be better to commission a greater number of smaller scale analysis projects that are more focussed in nature allowing a broader coverage of issues. The Agency may wish to consider the pros and cons of different approaches to the procurement of the analysis phase of the work.

3.4 Impact and sustainability

It is not possible to place any quantitative estimates on the impact of ESENER, but it is possible to consider how the data from ESENER has been used and its ‘impact’ from stakeholders’ point of view. The most relevant objectives of the ESENER project when considering its impact are: assisting policymakers and others in designing policies to support OSH management; sharing and promotion of research; and stimulating debate.

Table 3.1 below summarises some of the main impacts that have been reported (either in the interviews for the mid-term evaluation of EU-OSHA or the interviews conducted for this ex-post evaluation) in relation to the above objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Examples of impact</th>
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| Input to policy at national or European level; informing design and implementation of policies | ■ Input to reports and resolutions of the European Parliament (eg European Parliament report on the implementation of Directives on Health and Safety at Work as a Cost Factor⁹)  
■ Contribution to an overview of the situation with regards to health and safety in Europe by Eurostat¹⁰  
■ Input to Commission working papers (eg the report on the implementation of the |


Ex-post evaluation of ESENER

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Examples of impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Contribution to technical reports to the Commission&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>European social partners’ Framework Agreement on Work-related stress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Response to ad hoc requests from the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work’s working party on Community Strategy Implementation and Advisory Committee Action Programme (February 2011)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Input to reports of fellow EU agencies&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Input to national reports by relevant national ministries or authorities, for example in France, Spain, the UK, and Switzerland</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Input to national reports compiled by the social partners, for example in Denmark</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ In addition, focal points interviewed as part of the mid-term evaluation of EU-OSHA’s 2009-2013 strategy or as part of this ex-post evaluation, reported ESENER informing: the development of national OSH strategies (Turkey), policies and approaches to psychosocial risks (Turkey, Slovenia); national legislative debates on key issues (Slovenia, Cyprus)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>■ In addition, even where interviewees could not point to specific policies being informed by ESENER, a common view expressed was that it had helped to raise awareness, particularly of psychosocial risks. This may have been supported by national workshops on the results from ESENER organised by focal points in 17 countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing and promotion of research</td>
<td>■ Source of information used in research papers compiled by national ministries or agencies responsible for OSH (in the Netherlands and Cyprus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ Research studies using ESENER data conducted by independent, not-for-profit, international research institutes (for example, a study conducted by Rand Europe, ‘Does the European Union’s</td>
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</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Examples of impact</th>
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| Requirement for Risk Assessment Reduce Workplace Dangers?’ | ■ Research using ESENER data and presented at relevant conferences, for example at the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology in Zurich and the Second Congress of Risk at Work Prevention in Murcia, Spain  
■ Research using the ESENER data which has been submitted to or published in academic journals (eg PISTES, an online Canadian health and safety journal)  
■ In addition, secondary analyses of the ESENER data commissioned by EU-OSHA have been published and a workshop held to discuss the results |
| Stimulating debate         | ■ In addition to the above, presentations of the ESENER results have been made to MEPs in Brussels and Bilbao  
■ Presentations of ESENER findings have also been made by EU-OSHA staff at relevant conferences, such as the 2010 conference of the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology |

Source: IES

Whilst Table 3.1 provides an indication as to how ESENER has been used, and its impact from the point of view of the stakeholders, another question for this ex-post evaluation was how long these (positive) effects are likely to last. This is not an easy question to answer. However, there are a number of potential reasons for thinking ESENER will have a lasting impact to some degree. These are as follows:

■ ESENER has informed policy, strategies and legislative debates in some countries.

■ ESENER has been used as a reference point in a number of policy papers at EU and national level, and is likely to remain a key point of reference as long as no other EU-wide survey covering the same terrain is launched.

■ The ESENER data has been accessed by independent researchers through the UK Data Archive. This helps ensure that ESENER has ‘a life of its own’ outside its use by the Agency and the research it commissions.

However, the lasting impact of ESENER can perhaps only be secured by more waves of the survey being commissioned in the future, which will allow it to monitor trends over time and, possibly, link practice with outcomes.
The objective of providing EU-wide cross-nationally comparable information on OSH management practice was considered relevant by stakeholders to their needs. ESENER was seen as an appropriate means for achieving this objective, and overall appears to have been well managed and to have provided statistically valid and reliable data. ESENER has added value. This is evidenced in part by the impact ESENER has made, having been referenced and used in policy papers at EU and national level and having informed legislative debates, policies and strategies at national level. ESENER may also have some lasting impact given the fact that independent researchers have accessed the data to perform their own analyses, and by way of its perceived usefulness to stakeholders at EU and national level for monitoring OSH management practice and identifying areas in which to focus resources and efforts to improve OSH.

That said, this first attempt by the Agency at a cross-national survey of OSH management practice has identified a number of methodological challenges and aspects which could either be improved or reviewed to assess potential options for further development.

- The low and variable response rates of ESENER, whilst common to EU-wide surveys of enterprises, gives rise to potentially biased estimates. Making efforts to both improve response rates and explore the characteristics of non-respondents and their reasons for not participating may help to reduce the likelihood of response bias and both identify and correct any bias in estimates.

- The dual respondent approach adopted in ESENER, whilst having advantages in providing a comparative management/employee perspective on health and safety is not without its challenges. A single respondent approach, for example focussed on the person most responsible for managing health and safety in the enterprise, would be an alternative design option. Both options have their pros and cons, and this may be something the Agency would wish to review.
Whatever the choice of target respondent, the background, training and experience within the field of health and safety of that target respondent is likely to vary across countries and enterprises. Whilst having more information about the target respondent could be seen as a ‘Pandora’s box’ introducing further complexity, in terms of enhancing the overall usefulness of the data, it is probably better to know how the respondents compare than not to know. The Agency may wish to include more questions in future about the background, training and experience of respondents.

With the limited interview time available in a telephone-based survey, there will always be a limit to the scope of topics and issues that can be covered and the depth to which they can be explored. ESENER is no different. Additional questions and issues to be explored have been suggested as part of this evaluation. The Agency may wish to explore the analytical value of some of the questions asked in ESENER, and to explore whether there is scope to remove some questions in favour of others. Alternatively, there is a possibility that additional questions could be introduced without removing existing questions if a larger sample size could be achieved in each of the countries surveyed and selected question sets rotated (ie not all respondents are asked all questions in the survey, but for each theme or topic covered in the survey, enough respondents are questioned to generate reasonable estimates).

Whilst there are challenges with collecting reliable data on OSH outcomes such as employee sickness absence, accidents and injuries, collecting such data would potentially provide significant added value in allowing associations to be made between aspects of OSH management practice and outcomes. The Agency may wish to review the options and feasibility for collecting such data in future waves of ESENER.

Significant efforts were invested in the design and development of the questionnaires for ESENER and in their translation. There may still be one or two questions where problems persist and where further review would prove beneficial. The commissioned qualitative post-test of ESENER is a vehicle by which these questions could be improved. In addition, conducting small-scale pilots of the questionnaires across all countries surveyed rather than selected countries may ensure that questions and their meaning are comparable across countries.

The design phase of ESENER was appropriately long for a survey of this complexity, and the involvement of representatives from Government and the social partners, in addition to experts in survey design and OSH, is likely to have enhanced the relevance of the project. There is potential, however, for shortening the design phase if a significant part of the questionnaire(s) remains the same in a future round. There is also an argument for adjusting the way in
which expertise is employed in the design phase so that a smaller group of experts is involved in detailed survey questionnaire design whilst a wider group is consulted on themes, topics and issues to explore.

- The period between the completion of fieldwork and the production and dissemination of the findings from ESENER was longer than anticipated. The Agency should review the arrangements for production to improve performance with respect to the punctuality dimension of the European Statistical System (ESS).

In summary, ESENER has provided a useful dataset on comparative OSH management practice across the 31 countries surveyed. EU-wide surveys of enterprises are necessarily complex and methodologically represent a significant challenge. The challenges that have been identified and raised in this report also present opportunities for building on the experience to date and improving the reliability of a future round of the survey.
Appendix 1: Topic Guides

Focal Points (Turkey/Switzerland/Norway)

Relevance

■ To what extent was the information provided by ESENER relevant to occupational safety and health needs in (country)?

Effectiveness

■ To what extent has the information provided by ESENER helped identify areas in which workplaces need support in managing OSH?

■ To what extent has ESENER helped shape the design and implementation of policies to improve OSH in (country)? To what extent has it helped to determine how to allocate the available resources for OSH in (country)?

■ To what extent has ESENER helped raised the profile of OSH amongst policymakers (both those directly concerned with OSH and those working in related areas of social policy, eg policy with respect to the ageing workforce) in (country)?

■ How helpful has ESENER been in deciding on ways to implement agreements at national level relevant to the two framework directives on work-related stress, harassment and violence in the workplace?

■ In your view, did ESENER cover the right topic areas? Were the right questions asked? Are there any areas of OSH on which you would have liked to have seen a greater focus?

■ How did ESENER add value, if at all, to the information on OSH already available in (country)?

■ To what extent was the cross-national comparative aspect of ESENER useful?
Impact

If not covered above:

- How has ESENER been used, if at all, to improve OSH policy and practice? Are there any plans to use the data from ESENER?

*Probe for practical examples of how ESENER has had an impact; what has actually happened as a result of the information provided.*

Overall

- Overall, how useful has ESENER been? How could it be improved, if at all?
- (Only ask Norway and Switzerland) Would you say it was good value for money?
- Do you plan to be involved in any subsequent rounds of the survey?

OSH Experts (involved in secondary analysis projects)

Relevance

- To what extent did ESENER provide relevant and useful information on (topic)?

Effectiveness

- To what extent did ESENER ask the right questions on (topic)? Would different questions have been more useful?
- To what extent would additional, supplementary questions on (topic) have been useful? What questions would have been useful and how would they have helped in the analysis?
- Could any of the questions on (topic) or more broadly have been better phrased/worded?
- In terms of conducting the secondary analysis, were there any issues in terms of:
  - Sample size
  - Missing data (Item or respondent non-response)
  - Response bias
  - Weighting findings to the statistical universe
In terms of the survey methodology, what problems/challenges did this pose in terms of the analysis (eg in terms of respondent selection)? How could the survey methodology be improved in future, if at all?

**Efficiency**

- To what extent were the objectives of the secondary analysis project clearly defined?
- To what extent were the tender specifications clear and easy to understand?
- To what extent was the period for the analysis sufficient?
- To what extent was the budget sufficient for the work required?
- How well did the relationship with EU-OSHA work? (ie was enough direction/support provided in a responsive/timely way?)

**Impact**

- To what extent did the ESENER data add value to the research base on (topic)?

  *Probe for how it added value, if at all. Did it confirm existing evidence/ shed new light on the issue/ identify any surprising findings.*

- What is the main audience for these reports? How have/will the findings be disseminated?
- Ultimately what difference do you think these analyses will make to OSH practice or research?

**Summary**

- Overall, what are your views on the reliability/validity of the ESENER data?
- Overall, what went well/not so well in terms of the secondary analysis on (topic)?
- How could the survey be improved in future?

*Anything else they would like to add.*

*Thank them for their time.*
EU-OSHA Staff involved in ESENER

Background to the project

- Please describe briefly the background to the ESENER project.
- What were the main objectives of the project?
- How was the methodology selected?
- How was the questionnaire designed? How did you select the subject and survey experts to work on this?
- How did you select a survey contractor?

Relevance

- Overall, to what extent did ESENER provide the Agency with the information it was looking for? In retrospect, were certain areas covered in too much/too little detail? Are there gaps in the information that, in retrospect, would have been good to cover?
- To what extent have the secondary analyses added value?

Effectiveness

- What were the main challenges/difficulties you experienced in the design and implementation of ESENER?
- In retrospect, what aspects of the survey methodology worked well/not so well? How could the survey methodology be improved in future, if at all?
- How well did the survey take into account national contexts/differences? Is there any way in which better account could be taken in future?
- Have the secondary analyses of ESENER identified any issues either with the survey methodology or its application? How could these issues be addressed in future?

Efficiency

- Were sufficient resources (human, financial, time) available at the right time? Was there sufficient expertise within the Agency and/or sufficient expertise available to draw on (either internally or externally) to manage the project effectively?
- How well did the relationship with the survey contractor work? Is there any way in which this could have worked better?
■ How well did the involvement of subject and survey experts work? Is there any way in which this expertise could be better utilised?

■ How well did the collaboration with Eurofound work? Is there any way in which this collaboration could have worked better?

■ How well was the input of stakeholders managed from an Agency viewpoint? Is there any way in which this could be improved in future?

■ Were resources apportioned appropriately between the main phases of the research? (ie was too much effort or time spent on the design phase as opposed to implementation, or vice versa?) Were there any ‘pinch points’ that could be avoided in future by better allocation of resources?

■ What were the main challenges/difficulties in managing the ESENER project from an Agency viewpoint? How were these addressed? Any lessons for the future?

Impact

■ How has the ESENER data been used by policymakers? What difference has ESENER made?

Probe for practical examples of how ESENER has been used.

Sustainability

■ How have the results from ESENER, and the associated secondary analyses, been disseminated? To what effect?

Overall

■ Overall, what went well/not so well in the design, implementation and dissemination of ESENER?

■ How well did the project meet its objectives in your view?

■ How could the survey be improved in future, if at all?
European Company Survey Manager (Eurofound)

What are the main changes you plan on making in the design and implementation of the ECS 2012, compared with the 2009 survey? Why have these changes been made? How are these changes going to be implemented?

Probe for each phase of survey design and implementation.

Design
- Pre-test
- Translation process
- Piloting
- Unit of enquiry
- Choice of sampling frame (any associated screening procedures)
- Use of multi-mode approach
- Sample sizes

Implementation
- Fieldwork period (length and consistency across countries)
- Flexibility/uniformity in approach across local institutes
- Response rates
- Data validation and editing metrics
- Weighting procedures (trimming the weights)

Other
- User survey
- Complementary non-response analysis
- Approach to dissemination

Are there any changes they would like to have made, given their experience of previous versions of the ECS, but have been unable to do so? What are these changes? Why would they be useful? What has been the main barrier(s) to making the changes?

Have there been any changes to:
Their approach to tendering and the requirements placed on the contractor

Planned timetable/duration for the research as a whole (ie anything to improve the timeliness of the data)

Budget available

Anything else they think might be relevant/useful to EU-OSHA in designing and managing a new ESENER?

Thank them for their time and close.

**ESENER Survey Contractor**

**Effectiveness**

- In your view, was the most appropriate survey methodology used?

*When asking about survey methodology, probe on all aspects of survey method: sampling frame; unit of enquiry; coverage; rules for identifying and selecting respondents; match between target persons and topics chosen; mode; length of interview; sample size; questionnaire design and development (in particular ensuring that the questions are relevant to the national context and results are comparable across countries); overall cross-national comparability*

- Are there any areas in which you feel a different methodological approach should have been adopted?

- What were the main problems/challenges you experienced in terms of implementing the methodology adopted? How were these addressed? How could these be avoided in future?

- Was the approach taken to piloting sufficient in your opinion? If not, how could it have been improved?

- How effectively were national contexts/differences taken into account at all stages of the survey process? (from sampling, ie comparability of address registers, through to weighting, ie the statistical information available on the structure of the universe)

- How well did the translation process adopted work in practice? Could this have been improved in any way?

- How well did the survey questions work? (ie were there any questions that generated high levels of non-response?) Were there any questions that, in retrospect, may have been worded better?
How feasible would it be to collect data on OSH outcome measures in your opinion?

Efficiency

Were sufficient resources (time, human, financial) allocated to project design/implementation/analysis?

Was the balance of resources allocated across the different phases of the project appropriate (ie could/should more project resources have been allocated to design versus implementation or vice versa)?

How did the design/implementation/analysis of ESENER compare with other similar, European surveys?

Were the project objectives clearly defined?

Was sufficient expertise/support available from the Agency to manage the project effectively?

How well did the relationship with the Agency work (was timely advice/support available/ was the level of communication adequate/ whether any issues were experienced in terms of delays/ deviations from project plan and impact of these on achieving project objectives etc)?

What were the main challenges/difficulties you experienced in terms of successfully managing the project? How could these be avoided in future, if at all?

How effective was the approach taken to working with the different survey contractors in each country? How much flexibility was there in how the survey was carried out? Could/should a different approach have been adopted?

How did you find working with the different contractors in each country? How were these selected to carry out the work? What were the challenges involved in using these contractors and how were they overcome?

Impact

Compared to other European surveys, how well, in your opinion, have the results been disseminated?

Overview

Overall, what went well/not so well in the design, implementation and analysis of ESENER?

How could the design/implementation or dissemination of the survey be improved in future, if at all?
Anything else they would like to add.

Thank them for their time.
Appendix 2: Email Survey

1. Please could you tell us which organisation you work for, your job title, and your role and responsibilities.

2. How did you first hear about ESENER?

3. What questions, topics or aspects of ESENER are you most interested in? And why?

4. What are you using the ESENER data for?

5. What will be/have been the main outputs (eg reports, articles, presentations) from any work you have done using ESENER?

6. What added value, if any, does the ESENER data provide (ie what does it add, if anything, to existing data and literature on occupational safety and health)?

7. Are there any limitations, issues, or challenges with the data that you have encountered? Do you have any views on how these could be avoided in future, if at all?

8. Are there any topics not covered by ESENER that you would have found particularly useful? If so, what are they?

9. Overall, how useful has ESENER been? How could it be improved, if at all?