PROJECT

MEST

Methods for European Surveys of Travel Behaviour

Funding: European (4th RTD Framework Programme)
Duration: Feb 1996 - Feb 1999
Status: Complete with results

Background & policy context:

Data on patterns of travel and levels of demand are an essential input to sound policy decisions in the transport sector. The European Commission and Member States have perceived for some years that such data are not available publicly with adequate levels of quality, consistency and coverage.

Objectives:

MEST aimed to develop a common European survey methodology for long distance trips, based on the recording of travel diaries. In addition, it aimed to provide a methodology for sampling and analysing the diary data that would be more cost efficient and accurate than previous methods.

Related Projects:

- ASSEMBLING - Assembling a European network of monitoring centres for transport infrastructures.
- BRIDGES - Building bridges between digital transport databases, GIS applications and transport models to develop ETIS software.
- INFOSTAT - Information systems.
- TEST - Technologies for European surveys of travel behaviour.

Parent Programmes:

FP4-TRANSPORT - Specific research, technological development and demonstration programme in the field of transport, 1994-1998

Institute type: Public institution
Institute name: European Commission; Directorate-General for Energy and Transport (DG TREN; formerly DG VII)
Funding type: Public (EU)

Partners:

NA

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Key Results:

The project has produced detailed recommendations for:

- the design of a travel survey (such as the minimum journey length to be covered, and the survey duration);
- the protocol and data collection forms for conducting the survey (involving a combination of...
telephone and postal contacts);
• the co-ordination of survey procedures across Member States;
• weighting and correction methods for data analysis;
• sampling methods for selecting a representative set of respondents to provide the travel diary data.

Trials with a variety of survey methods across four Member States revealed a series of constraints and problems in data collection, such as the unwillingness of households to participate in survey work. This can often be attributed to suspicion and fatigue concerning such unsolicited contacts. The MEST research has indicated how telephone and post can best be used to improve response rates.

**Policy implications**

The common European survey methodology provides a benchmark for evaluation and improvement of the current survey work of Member States and commercial data providers. At a European level, it will support the collection of robust data as an input to the new European Transport Information System (ETIS) being developed by the European Commission to support transport policy making.

Such data on long distance trips, form a crucial element of decisions on European transport policy for:

• infrastructure planning, such as the Trans-European Transport Network;
• monitoring the success of policies on community cohesion (e.g. access to and from peripheral regions);
• monitoring the development of transport markets (e.g. quality of services and competitiveness of modes).

The project noted that further work is needed to integrate the survey data into a coherent software framework through appropriate interfaces, if ETIS is to work effectively. In addition, the contribution of new technologies for data gathering, such as web links via the mobile phone, will need to be kept under review.

Documents:
[mest.pdf (Final report)]

**STRIA Roadmaps:** Smart mobility and services

**Transport sectors:** Passenger transport