DATELINE

Design and Application of a Travel Survey for European Long-distance Trips Based on an International Network of Expertise

Funding: European (5th RTD Framework Programme)
Duration: Apr 2000 - Jun 2003
Status: Complete with results

Background & policy context:

Following a decade of discussions about the possibilities of conducting a coordinated European long-distance travel survey, DATELINE commenced in April 2000. Having developed the appropriate methodology agreed by all 15 EU Member States, and having completed the survey design and questionnaire, the project has now concluded its most significant stage, namely the empirical phase of data collection - the fieldwork.

The DATELINE project presents concepts, methods and potential for implementing a homogenous European travel survey of long-distance mobility in all the member States of the European Union, based upon an international network of expertise. This is in response to the need for passenger transport statistics at the European level, for which no high quality database is currently available.

Objectives:

The project’s four specific objectives have been to:

- Develop a survey design for long-distance passenger travel to be applied in all Member States addressing the needs of the respondent and implement the state-of-the-art in travel behaviour surveys;
- Implement these surveys in all Member States;
- Create a database providing answers to planning related issues and provide input for analysis; and
- Integrate this database in both a national context and in the Eurostat statistical programme.

Methodology:

During the first nine months of the project, the concepts, overall methodology and sampling methodology were developed and a survey network has been established in all EU countries. The following survey lasted one year, so that all seasons have been covered.

Database building has been concurrent with data collection and data analysis commenced during the autumn of 2002.

The logistical processes and requirements that were necessary in order to prepare the Europe-wide survey were considerable. Questionnaires had to be printed and Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) systems were programmed. In addition, each country agreed to use its own customised announcement letter, bearing the official signature and logo of its national Ministry of Transport or statistical office.

Related Projects:

Relevant research projects from the Fourth Framework Programme:

- Methods for European Surveys of Travel Behaviour (MEST)
- Technologies for European Surveys of Travel Behaviour (TEST)
Relevant research projects from the Fifth Framework Programme:

- A Transport Information Agent for accessing the different ETIS data sources (ETIS-AGENT)
- Core Database development for the European Transport policy Information System (ETIS-BASE)
- Thematic Network for European Transport policy Information System Development (ETIS-LINK)

**Parent Programmes:**
*FP5-GROWTH KA2 - Sustainable Mobility and Intermodality*

**Institute type:** Public institution

**Institute name:** European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy and Transport (DG TREN)

**Funding type:** Public (EU)

**Partners:**

- SOCIALDATA, Institut für Verkehrs- und Infrastrukturforschung GmbH (DE);
- Helsinki University of Technology, Transportation Engineering (FI);
- Ministry of Transport, AVV Transport Research Centre (NL);
- Peter Davidson Consultancy (UK);
- POLIEDRA, Politecnico di Milano (IT);
- Statistics Netherlands (NL);
- TIS.PT, Consultores em Transportes, Inovaçao e Sistemas (PT);
- TRIAS SA (GR);
- Universität für Bodenkultur, Institute for Transport Studies (AT);
- University of Maribor, Civil Engineering Informatics Centre (SI);
- University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Transport Operations Research Group (UK);
- Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (CH).

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**Key Results:**

DATELINE has carried out an in-depth survey on long-distance travel behaviour in the (then) EU-15 Member States and Switzerland starting in summer 2001 and running for 12 consecutive months. The entire sample comprised a grand total of some 86,000 persons from over 21,000 households in the 16 countries.

General project outputs included the project’s official ‘European Coding Book’, explaining how to code socio-demographic as well as travel information.

Travel survey findings comprised:

- An average survey response rate of 69%;
- A high level of interest in the subject matter by respondents, reported in all participating countries;
- proof of the efficiency of the devised survey system as half of all respondents answered after the first contact;
- confirmation of the two-phase survey approach which has worked out well for most countries, though some cases adjustments had to be made in the form of methodological combinations;
- a persisting issue with geocoding of places, though significant improvements have been achieved;
- confirmation of the call for flexibility in the methodology allowing to address cultural differences among countries;
- the positive experience of co-operation between different countries and institutions, however it has also shown that it requires much energy and time to find working compromises and to mix different survey traditions;
- confirmation of the need to continue research into the use of appropriate survey methods; and
- the need for further discussion of an appropriate definition for long-distance travel: 'as the crow flies' distance versus absolute distance.

**Policy implications**

DATELINE findings have helped pave the way for the creation of a European database for long-distance travel to provide answers to planning related issues and provide input for analysis. This database will need to be integrated in both a national context and in the Eurostat statistical programme. The ultimate goal is to establish a European Transport Policy Information System (ETIS) that will provide policy-makers and policy analysts with the capability to include the European dimension in monitoring and analysing developments in European transport related strategic issues concerning infrastructure investments, forecasts, projects and policy impact assessments.

Passenger

Key Findings
No results directly relevant to this theme. However, please note that some findings relevant to the project's key theme (Long-distance) are generically applicable.

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**Policy Implications**
No policy implications directly relevant to this theme. However, please note that some

**STRIA Roadmaps:** Smart mobility and services  
**Transport mode:** Multimodal transport  
**Transport sectors:** Passenger transport  
**Geo-spatial type:** Other