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SYNERGIES FOR EUROPE'S  
RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES  
IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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SERISS (Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences) aims to exploit synergies, foster collaboration and develop shared standards between Europe's social science infrastructures in order to better equip these infrastructures to play a major role in addressing Europe's grand societal challenges and ensure that European policymaking is built on a solid base of the highest-quality socio-economic evidence.

The four-year project (2015-'19) is a collaboration between the three leading European Research Infrastructures in the social sciences – the European Social Survey (ESS ERIC), the Survey of Health Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE ERIC) and the Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA AS) – and organisations representing the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), European Values Study (EVS) and the WageIndicator Survey.

Work focuses on three key areas: Addressing key challenges for cross-national data collection, breaking down barriers between social science infrastructures and embracing the future of the social sciences.

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## Executive Summary

Most social surveys collect data on respondents' educational attainment. Current measurement practice involves a closed question with country-specific response options, which are needed because of the differences between educational systems. However, these are quite difficult to compare across countries. This is a challenge for both migrant and international surveys. Therefore, a measurement tool for educational attainment that was initially developed for German migrant surveys in the CAMCES project (Schneider, Briceno-Rosas, Herzing, et al. 2018; Schneider, Briceno-Rosas, Ortmanns, et al. 2018) was extended in the SERISS-project in work package 8, Task 8.3. In deliverable D8.8, we provide a database of educational qualifications and levels for 100 countries, including the definition of a search tree interface to facilitate the navigation of categories for respondents in computer-assisted surveys. All country-specific categories are linked to 3-digit codes of UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education 2011 for Educational Attainment (ISCED-A), as well as to the education coding scheme used in the European Social Survey (ESS), "edulvlb". A live search of the database via two different interfaces, a search box (for a limited set of countries) and a search tree (for all countries), is available at the surveycodings website at <https://www.surveycodings.org/levels-education>. The search box and search tree can be implemented in survey questionnaires and thereby be used for respondents' self-classification in computer-assisted surveys. The live search feature can also be used for post-coding open answers in already collected data.

## 1 Introducing SERISS and Deliverable D8.8

Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences ([SERISS](#)) is a four-year project that aims to strengthen and harmonise social science research across Europe (2015-'19). [Work package 8](#) (WP8) of SERISS aims to provide cross-country harmonised, fast, high-quality and cost-effective coding of open-ended questions on respondents' occupations and industries and closed questions on respondents' level and field of education into international standardized classification systems, and to develop a tool to collect standardized social network information, as described in SERISS Annex 1 (European Commission, 2015). Occupation, industry, employment status, educational attainment and field of education are core variables in many socio-economic and health surveys. In addition, the size and intensity of social networks are key variables in social surveys. However, their measurement, especially in a cross-cultural, cross-national and longitudinal context, is cumbersome, error-prone, not sufficiently standardised and often expensive. This work package takes recent scientific and technological developments as an opportunity to improve this situation for the benefit of survey measurement quality and to provide cost-effective solutions to Research Infrastructures by developing a survey module with the related survey questions and the databases for answering these questions.

This report concerns Task 8.3 "Compile the API-database of educational attainment and field of education" of WP8 (for details in how the API itself works, see Martens 2018), here the focus is on educational attainment. The responsible partner is ESS ERIC (GESIS- Leibniz Institute of the Social Sciences); partners are SHARE ERIC (CentERdata).

Task 8.3 results in four deliverables:

- D8.9 Database of field of education for 34 languages
- Explanatory note on this database (see Ortmanns and Schneider 2019)
- D8.8 Database of educational attainment
- Explanatory note on this database (focus of this report)

Deliverable D8.14 already provided the phrasing for the relevant survey questions "You were educated in ..." (using a country list as response options) and "What is the highest level of education you have attained?". The accompanying database provided the translations of these questions for 47 languages (Tijdens 2016). The CAMCES project, which ended after SERISS deliverable D8.14 was completed, recommended wording these questions as "Where did you obtain your highest educational qualification?" and "What is your highest educational qualification?" respectively. However, these wordings are only available in 5 languages, using the TRAPD translation approach.

### 1.1 Outline of Deliverable D8.8

This report concerns deliverable D8.8. The objective of this deliverable was to develop a database of educational qualifications and levels for 99 countries. The main output of D8.8 is this database, including most European and OECD countries as well as some of the most common countries of origin of today's migrants in Europe and specifically Germany. This report accompanies the educational attainment database, which is downloadable as an excel file from the website <https://www.surveycodings.org/levels-education>. The file is called **education\_attainment\_A\_for\_API\_v2\_2019-08-30\_SERISS\_del.xlsx**.

The remainder of this section introduces the concept of educational attainment, gives basic information on its measurement and provides an overview of the relevance of education in Social Science research. Section 2 gives an overview of the normal survey measurement strategies involving educational attainment, and introduces the new strategy suggested by the CAMCES and surveycodings education tool. Section 3 gives more detailed background information on the actual workings of the tool: the design of the database, the countries

covered, the available target classifications, the syntax for deriving international codes, and the survey interfaces. Section 4 gives an outlook.

## 1.2 What is Educational Attainment?

The term 'education' is broadly conceived in international education statistics and surveys to include both general or academic as well as (formal) vocational or professional education. The boundary between the two is impossible to draw consistently across countries. Educational *attainment* refers to the highest formal educational programme successfully completed by an individual. Formal and non-formal education are distinguished by the recognition (or not) of an educational programme as part of the country's educational system by the relevant authorities. Formal education is ultimately institutionalized by the state, whereas non-formal education is designed by its providers in order to complement the formal education system. The main characteristics of formal education are that it is hierarchically structured, provided in schools, colleges, universities or other educational institutions and leads to a certification that is recognized by the relevant national education authorities (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012, para.57). The main indicator for educational attainment is thus the highest educational qualification obtained by the respondent (not just the completion of individual courses or modules that are part of an educational program). "In ISCED, the term 'qualification' is synonymous with 'credential'. Other terms such as 'certificate', 'degree' or 'diploma' are types of qualification and are treated as being synonymous with each other within ISCED" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012).

## 1.3 The Relevance of Education in Social Science Research

Educational attainment is one of the most widely used concepts and measures in Social Science research (Smith 1995), especially when social stratification plays a role for the research question at hand. This area of research is often interested in the role of education in and of itself. Research into educational inequalities studies how e.g. social class origin, gender or migration background affect education, and how this differs across countries and over time as educational systems expand (Breen et al. 2009; Breen and Jonsson 2000, 2005; Müller and Karle 1993; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). Research into returns to education in turn examines how education, which is assumed to increase 'human capital' and productivity but also results in formal credentials, influences labour market outcomes, including unemployment risks, social status or class attainment and income (Becker 1993; Blau and Duncan 1967; Brauns, Gangl, and Scherer 2003; Mincer 1974; Spence 1973; Thurow 1972). Differences across countries in these relationships are often interpreted with respect to the educational system and its links to the labour market (Allmendinger 1989; Bol and van de Werfhorst 2013; Bol and Van de Werfhorst 2016). Education also has strong effects on outcomes not or only indirectly related to the labour market, such as health (Glanz, Rimer, and Viswanath 2008; Ross and Wu 1995), but here the theoretical interest is less in education itself or its credentialing role, but in socio-economic status, for which education is often used as an indicator (Miech and Hauser 2001; Ross and Wu 1995).

Education is also an important background or control variable, which is widely implemented in studies and quite often substantial effects are identified. Social mobility research analyses the relationship between social class origin and destination class (Breen 2004; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992). Since this relationship is strongly mediated by education, in order to identify net social mobility effects, the resulting models need to control for educational attainment. Education is also an important control variable for instance when analysing values and behaviours, e.g. political attitudes or voting behaviours (Bekhuis, Lubbers, and Verkuyten 2013; Weakliem 2002), gender role attitudes (Bolzendahl 2004; Kalmijn 2003) or attitudes towards minorities and migrants (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Semyonov 2008; Wright and Hyman 1979). The effects of education are interpreted in a variety of ways, referring to socialisation, cognitive ability, skills and competencies, credentials, or social status.

## 2 Asking about Education in a Survey

Given the widespread interest in and effects of educational attainment, and the use of education as an indicator for socio-economic status and cognitive skills in the absence of more targeted (and much more expensive) measures for these concepts, almost all social science surveys ask respondents about their highest educational level completed or highest qualification obtained. Current measurement practice in national and international surveys involves a closed question providing a limited number of fixed response categories containing the most common qualifications in the country of survey. Because of the differences between educational systems, these response options are country-specific. The advantage of this response design is that it is not very costly for researchers in terms of time and labour, and not very burdensome for respondents and can be applied across survey modes. However, these are quite difficult to compare across countries. Each educational system has its unique idiosyncratic institutions, and their certificates often have proper names which rule out translation (Schneider, Joye, and Wolf 2016). This is a challenge for both migrant and cross-national surveys (Braun and Mohler 2003; Braun and Müller 1997; Schneider 2009). In international surveys, country-specific response options thus need to be harmonised.

The state-of-the-art for cross-national surveys is thus to use country-specific questionnaire items for education, which are coded into a cross-nationally comparative coding scheme after data collection. Research has shown that this is actually often rather unsuccessful, and that the education distributions substantially differ, within countries and years, across surveys (Ortmanns and Silke L Schneider 2016b, 2016a). Ensuring that this is done consistently across countries is thus a major challenge and requires a concerted logistical effort involving ex-ante output harmonization: This means that the desired harmonised target variable is specified at the outset. Then, country-specific measurement instruments are developed in such a way that this output variable can be derived after data collection by recoding the country-specific education categories into international education categories. This complex process normally has to be repeated for every international survey, given that different surveys decide for different target variables, and different national teams implement different country-specific measurement instruments.

In (national) migrant surveys, since there is only one country team and migrants come from a multitude of countries of origin, the solution to the problem is quite different. A first approach is to ask respondents to indicate the national qualification that they think that their highest foreign qualification most closely corresponds to, which can be a difficult judgement to make (especially if the destination country does not offer any corresponding type or level of education: see e.g. what somebody who completed an apprenticeship in Germany would respond in an American survey, which only asks about high school completion and higher education?). This is the most common approach in general population samples as well, where respondents with foreign qualifications are a minority. A second approach is to ask generic questions that have only weak links to the educational system of the destination country, such as whether the respondent has completed primary education or studies in higher education. Here the issue lies in the fact that terms such as 'primary education' or 'higher education' do not carry a universal meaning across educational systems in the world, at least none that respondents would be able to apply to their own educational attainment. While primary education is internationally defined to refer to the first 4-6 years of education, often offered in a corresponding school type, for respondents educated in countries not having such a specific school type for these years, primary education may rather be understood to refer to what is the most basic education level in these countries, which internationally rather corresponds to lower secondary education.



Both problems, asking about education in terms of country-specific categories referring to the country the respondent was actually educated in, as well as the harmonisation of country-specific education categories across countries, could be solved by implementing a new measurement strategy: firstly asking respondents about where they obtained their highest qualification, only then asking about the highest qualification itself, using country-specific categories for the educational system previously indicated, and finally using pre-specified mappings from country-specific to internationally comparable education categories to render the resulting data comparable. This latter point would be achieved by using a database with this mapping and target variable information for generating the country-specific response options. This is the approach taken by the CAMCES and surveycodings tools for educational attainment.

The specific questionnaire could be slightly optimised for general population (as opposed to migrant) surveys because in these surveys, only a small minority has not been educated in the survey country and it would be inefficient to offer all of them a detailed list of educational systems to indicate where they were educated. This detailed list is thus only shown to those respondents who, in an additional but more simple question, indicate that they have not been educated in the country of the survey. While the CAMCES question module reflects this optimised option, the surveycodings question module (Tijdens 2016) implements the more generally applicable approach that would work for both scenarios, but be most efficient for migrant surveys.

Another issue that also affects *monocultural* surveys is the increasing differentiation of educational systems. This implies that country-specific measures of educational attainment may need to become more detailed to continue to adequately capture the diversity of levels and types of education offered in a country. Very detailed measurement would require long lists of response options though, which are rather burdensome for respondents and take a lot of interview time due to the amount of reading that needs to be done. With the innovative survey question interfaces that were developed in the CAMCES and SERISS projects, a relatively high number of response options can be offered to respondents without the need to read all of them. Thereby the surveycodings education tools can also be attractive for monocultural surveys that need to measure education at a relatively high level of detail, but not to the degree of life course histories of educational careers - something that lies beyond the scope of our tool.

The CAMCES project developed two survey interfaces to indicate their educational attainment using the country-specific categories offered by the database. It is hoped that respondents can more easily respond to the survey question on their education using the search tree interface than using a question with an unstructured long list of response options. Furthermore, a text string matching interface (search box) was designed, which may be useful for countries with very many educational qualifications that cannot be easily summarised, or for post-coding of open responses. For CAPI surveys, a piece of software was developed in the CAMCES project to allow implementing both search interfaces and databank integration without re-programming the CAPI software. These interfaces are also offered by surveycodings.org. The survey software would record the detailed qualification ID, which would be recoded into the linked classifications via syntax files (see section 3.4).

The next section introduces the different elements of the surveycodings education tool, focusing on the underlying database and the included classification information.



### 3 The Surveycodings Tool for Educational Attainment

This chapter presents the surveycodings education tool in some more detail. It firstly gives details on the countries currently covered by the database in section 3.1. Section 3.1 provides basic information on the underlying database. Further details on the classifications covered by the database are provided in section 3.3, and how to obtain them from questionnaires using the database in section 3.4. The interfaces are presented in section 0.

#### 3.1 Countries Covered

In the CAMCES project, we had covered 41 countries, focusing on the main countries of origin of migrants arriving in Germany in the 1990s, which are mainly Southern and Eastern European countries, and some other European countries included in the European Social Survey. For these countries, we offer both interfaces for all countries using Latin script and the search tree only otherwise. Next, we included six countries of origin of migrants that arrived in Germany since 2013 (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Gambia, Iran, Somalia, Syria), because we had the opportunity to implement the CAMCES tool in two German refugee surveys. For these countries, we only developed the interface of the search tree because they either do not use Latin script or have rather simple educational systems.

SERISS WP8 extended the CAMCES multilingual database of educational qualifications and levels from 47 to 100 countries, involving 121 education contexts (meaning country-language or country-region combinations) now available in surveycodings.org. We added the remaining EU and OECD countries, as well as more Arab and African countries, but also some Latin American and Asian countries, resulting in 53 additional countries. In SERISS, also only filling information for the search tree interface was pursued, and development for the search box interface was stopped since pilot studies run in the CAMCES project showed more complications and lower data quality (especially item nonresponse and non-codable responses) using the search box interface. The added value of more detail was also too unclear to be worth the high level of extra effort that would have been needed.

Table 1: Overview of the countries covered in SERISS educational attainment database

Country	Language/Region	Interface	ISCED 1997			ISCED 2011			EduIvlb
			official	alternative	LFS	official	alternative	LFS	
Afghanistan**	Persian	1	x	x		x	x		x
	Pashto	1	x	x		x	x		x
Albania*	Albanian	2	x	x		x	x		x
Angola	Portuguese	1	x	x		x	x		x
Algeria	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Argentina	Spanish	1	x	x		x	x		x
Armenia*	Armenian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Australia	English	1				x	x		x
Austria*	German	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Azerbaijan*	Azerbaijani	1	x	x		x	x		x
Belarus*	Russian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Belgium*	Dutch	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	French	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Benin	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Bosnia and Herzegovina*	Bosnian	2	x	x		x	x		x
Brazil	Portuguese	1	x	x		x	x		x
Bulgaria*	Bulgarian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Burundi	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Canada	English/all provinces except Quebec	1				x	x		x
	English/Quebec	1				x	x		x
Chile	Spanish	1				x	x		x
Côte d'Ivoire	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Croatia*	Croatian	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cyprus	Greek	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Czech Republic*	Czech	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Czechoslovakia* (former)	Czech	1		x			x		x
	Slovak	1		x			x		x
Denmark	Danish	1	x	x		x	x		x
Egypt	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Eritrea**	English	1	x	x		x	x		x

Country	Language/Region	Interface	ISCED 1997			ISCED 2011			Eduvlb
			official	alternative	LFS	official	alternative	LFS	
Estonia	Estonian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Russian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ethiopia	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Finland*	Finnish	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
France*	French	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gambia**	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Georgia*	Georgian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Germany*	Germany	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ghana	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Greece*	Greek	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Guinea	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Hungary*	Hungarian	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Iceland	Icelandic	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
India	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Indonesia	Indonesian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Iran**	Persian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Iraq	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Ireland*	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Israel	Hebrew	1				x	x		x
Italy*	Italian	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Japan	Japanese	1	x	x		x	x		x
Jordan	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Kazakhstan*	Russian	1	x	x		x	x		x
	Albanian	2	x	x		x	x		x
Kosovo*	Serbian	2	x	x		x	x		x
Kuwait	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Latvia	Latvian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Russian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lebanon	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Libya	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Lithuania	Lithuanian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Russian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Country	Language/Region	Interface	ISCED 1997			ISCED 2011			Edulvlb
			official	alternative	LFS	official	alternative	LFS	
Luxembourg	French	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Macedonian	2	x	x		x	x		x
Macedonia*	Serbian	1	x	x		x	x		x
	Albanian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Madagascar	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Malta	English	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mexico	Spanish	1	x	x		x	x		x
Montenegro*	Montenegrin	2	x	x		x	x		x
Morocco*	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Netherlands*	Dutch	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
New Zealand	English	1				x	x		x
Nigeria	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Norway	Norwegian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Oman	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Pakistan	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Palestinian Territory	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Philippines	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Poland*	Polish	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Portugal*	Portuguese	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Romania*	Romanian	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Russian Federation*	Russian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Rwanda	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
Saudi-Arabia	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Serbia*	Serbian	2	x	x		x	x		x
Slovak Republic*	Slovakia	1	x	x		x	x		x
Slovenia*	Slovene	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Singapore	English	1				x	x		x
Somalia**	Somali	1	x	x		x	x		x
	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
South Korea	Korean	1				x	x		x
Spain*	Spanish	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sudan	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x

Country	Language/Region	Interface	ISCED 1997			ISCED 2011			Eduvlb
			official	alternative	LFS	official	alternative	LFS	
Sweden	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
	Swedish	1	x	x		x	x		x
Switzerland	German	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	French	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Italian	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Syria**	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Tajikistan*	Tajik	1	x	x		x	x		x
	Russian	1	x	x		x	x		x
Togo	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Tunisia	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
	French	1	x	x		x	x		x
Turkey*	Turkish	2	x	x		x	x		x
Ukraine*	Ukrainian	1	x	x		x	x		x
	Russian	1	x	x		x	x		x
United Arab Emirates	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
United Kingdom*	English/England, Wales, Northern Ireland	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	English/ Scotland	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
United States of America	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
USSR (former)*	Russian	2		x			x		x
Venezuela*	Spanish	2	x	x		x	x		x
Vietnam*	Vietnamese	1	x	x		x	x		x
Yemen	Arabic	1	x	x		x	x		x
Yugoslavia (former)*	Serbian	2		x			x		x
Zambia	English	1	x	x		x	x		x
<b>Sum: 100 countries</b>	<b>121 contexts</b>	<b>93 ST, 28 CB &amp; ST</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Notes:</b> Interface denotes 1= search tree only, 2= combination box and search tree *funded by CAMCES project; **funded by refugee surveys									

### 3.2 The surveycodings Database of Educational Attainment

This section describes the structure of the database for educational attainment, which is a simple Excel file. The database is also available for live search online at <https://www.surveycodings.org/education/database-live-search>. However, as of 31/08/2019, the live search does not include the full set of 100 countries available in the Excel file.

The Excel file consists of 11 sheets. The first is named “overview” and documents the information provided in the other sheets. The detailed structure of the sheets and their relationships can also be found in Appendix II.

The sheet “edcontext” provides the information on the education contexts covered by the database, which mostly correspond to countries. However, this list includes units that are not countries but need to be covered separately anyway (e.g. in the case of multilingual countries, such as Belgium, qualifications need to be covered in both French and Dutch; similarly, in the UK, there are different qualifications in Scotland as compared to the rest of the UK). This information is needed to link the response to the question where the respondent was educated to the education categories applicable in this country, which should be offered to the respondent in the question on his/her highest educational qualification, so that only relevant response options are shown to respondents. Next to basic information such as country codes and language, there is information on the script used. This information is useful for implementing the tool in surveys and facilitates offering a suitable interface. While the search tree always works, the search/combination box requires that the script of the education context corresponds to the script of the CAPI device or the device via which the web survey is accessed. Given the tools were initially developed for mostly European surveys, the search box was only developed for contexts using Latin script.

The sheet “qualification” is the main sheet covering all educational qualifications and levels for all countries, and is thus described in somewhat more detail. In contrast to fields of education, occupations and industries, input harmonisation cannot be applied to educational qualifications: as mentioned above, it is impossible to translate educational qualifications and levels reliably into different languages. In the same vein, it is impossible to use the same structure for the search tree in all countries. Instead, each country covered by the database required development of its own list of qualifications and levels of education as well as definition of a country-specific search tree. The current version of the database covers roughly 3600 educational qualifications. The main sources used to fill this database are the showcards of the European Social Survey (ESS) from round 5 onwards (European Social Survey 2010), for non-EU OECD countries the education measures to be implemented in PIAAC Cycle 2 in 2021/22, and showcards of other surveys. This information was complemented by information from the most recent official ISCED 1997 and 2011 mappings publicly available (Eurostat 2019; UNESCO-UIS 2019), as well as the documents of the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education (Nuffic 2019) and of the German BQ-Portal for foreign professional qualifications (BQ-Portal-Team 2019). If information is available on outdated qualifications, they are covered in the database, too. The source used for each qualification is indicated in the database sheet “qualification”, field “source” and the detailed information and an overview on all sources is given in the database-sheet “source”.

The database field that actually identifies the qualification or level of education is called “name” and consists of an 8-digit code identifying the education context (see above, table “edcontext”) and the specific qualification. The field “description” provides the country-specific label of the respective education category. Sometimes, one educational programme spans several levels of education, and the resulting qualification indicates completion of the highest of these levels. In order to adequately capture completion of the lower educational levels included in such a programme, and that do not conclude with a qualification themselves, the database of educational qualifications also contains definitions for the attainment of these constituent levels (e.g. very commonly primary education, consisting in

the first 4-6 years of basic education, which altogether lasts 8-10 years, corresponding to lower secondary education).

The sheet “qualification” also contains the structure of the search tree. The field “treelevel” defines whether the database entry is to be shown at the first or second level of the search tree (or, if empty, not at all). The database field “parent\_name” contains the value of the field “name” of the first level entry that the more detailed entry belongs to. First level entries do not have “parents” of course, so for these, this field is empty. The database field “treeorder” finally specifies the order of multiple educational qualifications within the 1st level of the tree.

Finally, this sheet also indicates the international classification codes corresponding to each qualification. It also documents from where this information was taken. When there were several sources for the classification codes available, the information was taken from the most recent source available when working on the respective country. The sheets “isced97”, “isced97lfs”, “isced11”, “isced11lfs” and “edulvlb” then contain the coding frameworks (categories and their descriptions) provided by the international education classifications presented in section 3.3. They are thus the key for the coding information provided with each national qualification, and are the international target variables that can be derived from data using the surveycodings education tool by recoding detailed qualifications codes into these international codes (see section 3.4).

The remaining sheets are of lesser importance for most users. The sheet “synonym” contains alternative terms used for some of the national qualifications. This sheet contains only two columns, “qualification\_name” which is linked to the sheet “qualification” and the row “description” which contains the alternative terms themselves. This table is only used for education contexts for which the combination/search box was developed to improve matching results. The sheet “translation” provides the translation of the country and language names into 6 languages, namely English, Dutch, French, German, Spanish, and Turkish. These were developed and used in the CAMCES project since pretesting found that instructions are needed asking respondents to respond to the question in the language used in the selected education context when using the combination/search box. The sheet “source” offers detailed information on the sources used, most importantly, to transparently document which specific ISCED-mapping was used for which country or qualification included in the database.

### **3.3 Classifying Educational Attainment Using surveycodings**

The surveycodings education tool facilitates the harmonisation of country-specific education categories into various international classifications. These are presented here.

#### **3.3.1 The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)**

ISCED is an internationally agreed classification designed for the cross- nationally comparable coding, analysis and reporting of data related to educational programmes and qualifications. It is thus a tool for harmonising education-related information. It aims to describe and classify educational programmes and qualifications at all levels (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012). It covers almost all countries in the world and is centrally maintained and documented by UNESCO Institute for Statistics. It was initially developed for policy planning and the promotion of education worldwide. ISCED is therefore commonly used in official statistics (e.g. by OECD and Eurostat).

Its first version was adopted in 1975, and ISCED has, since the 1970s, been used as the standard for international education statistics and indicators as published e.g. by UNESCO, the OECD or Eurostat (e.g. OECD 2017). In line with its initial purpose, the technical means and data available, ISCED made use of administrative rather than survey data in the early phase. The 1975 version was hardly used in surveys yet (with the exception of the



International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS; OECD and Statistics Canada 1995). The 1997 revision of ISCED (OECD 1999; UNESCO 2006) was motivated by the OECD to improve economically relevant education indicators in order to promote the performance of educational systems and thereby economies. Next, ISCED has been revised between 2008 and 2011, and the new version was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2011. This revision was promoted by Eurostat because of the Bologna reforms and the importance of ISCED for the production of education-related indicators, e.g., in the Europe 2020 strategy. Furthermore, sample surveys organised by official bodies such as OECD and Eurostat (e.g. PISA, PIAAC, EU-LFS or EU-SILC) had started to use ISCED in the late 1990s for the coding of micro-data related to educational attainment. Slowly, the focus changed from enrolment, finance and personnel statistics (education inputs) to indicators related to educational attainment as well as knowledge, skills and competences (education outputs). Given ISCED 1997 was not designed to be used for survey data and lacked the relevant concepts for this purpose, especially the concept of educational attainment, this development was another driver of the 2011 revision. Finally, ISCED 97 did not yet provide a standard coding system. When developing the new International Standard Classification of Education in 2011, it was therefore decided to introduce separate sub-classifications, each with a 3-digit standard coding scheme, for educational attainment and qualifications (ISCED-A), educational programmes (ISCED-P) and fields of education and training (ISCED-F). The term 'educational qualification' was introduced to ISCED for the first time with ISCED 2011. ISCED-A is the classification suitable for the measurement of education in surveys (OECD, European Union, and UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2015; UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012).

While ISCED 1997 defined 7 levels, this most recent version of ISCED distinguishes between 9 main levels of education on the first digit. Levels of education group educational programmes and qualifications into an ordered series of categories, which represent gradations from foundational to complex and specialised educational content and learning outcomes. Table 2 shows the main levels of both ISCED 2011 and ISCED 1997 side by side.

*Table 2: ISCED 2011 and 1997 main levels*

<b>ISCED-A 2011</b>		<b>ISCED 1997</b>	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Label</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Label</b>
0	Less than primary education	0	Pre-primary education
1	Primary education	1	Primary education
2	Lower secondary education	2	Lower secondary education
3	Upper secondary education	3	Upper secondary education
4	Post-secondary non-tertiary education	4	Post-secondary non-tertiary education
5	Short cycle tertiary education	5	First stage of tertiary education
6	Bachelor level education and equivalent		
7	Master level education and equivalent		
8	Doctoral level education	6	Second stage of tertiary education

Given the differentiation of educational systems, ISCED offers further distinctions within levels relating to several complementary dimensions. Both ISCED versions differentiate general and vocational education, while ISCED 1997 also differentiated pre-vocational education (in ISCED 2011 mostly subsumed in general education). The 1997 sub-dimension of programme destination was, together with programme duration at secondary levels, turned into different degrees of completion and access to higher education levels in ISCED 2011. Duration at tertiary level was moved from a sub-dimension to an increased distinction of main levels to better allow the identification of the levels implemented in a wide range of countries as a consequence of the Bologna reforms. The full ISCED 1997 and ISCED-A 2011 classifications as they were implemented in the database are provided in Appendix I:

Detailed ISCED Tables. Further details can also be found in Schneider (Schneider 2008, 2013).

In addition to the official codes of ISCED 1997 and 2011, the CAMCES/SERISS WP8 Team at GESIS developed alternative ISCED mappings that use the coding scheme of the official ISCED but in some cases map national qualifications differently than the official mappings, following country expert advice (Schneider 2008) when available. We also developed valid codes for educational qualifications for which we could not find an official ISCED code. The alternative ISCED codes are intended to improve cross-national comparability as well as coverage compared to official ISCED. Most of the alternative codes are however identical to the official ISCED code.

### 3.3.2 Education Coding in the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS)

The EU-LFS uses a coding scheme that aggregates detailed official ISCED categories. Programme orientation is not reflected in the EU-LFS. Before 2014, the variable in the EU-LFS was named “HATLEVEL” and distinguished 13 education categories with 2-digit codes derived from the ISCED 1997 classification. It distinguished between the 6 main levels of ISCED and partially reflected the sub-dimensions programme destination (contrasting A/B with C) and, within ISCED 3C, duration (EU-LFS 2015).

In 2014, the EU-LFS implemented a new variable named “HAT11LEV” as a consequence of the revision of ISCED in 2011. It mirrors the main levels of ISCED11. On ISCED level 3 it additionally separates programmes according to their duration and if they provide access to tertiary education. It therefore specifically allows identifying qualifications from programmes classified as ‘partial completion’ in ISCED 2011, a category that is disputable in its placement within ISCED level 3. This classification distinguishes between 12 education categories (EU-LFS 2017).

Table 3 presents both EU-LFS variables side-by side so that their conceptual correspondence can be seen.

*Table 3: Harmonised education variables in the EU-LFS*

Value	HAT11LEV Label	Value	HATLEVEL Label
0	No formal education or below ISCED 1	0	No formal education or below ISCED 1
100	ISCED 1	11	ISCED 1
200	ISCED 2 (incl. ISCED 3 programmes of duration of less than 2 years)	21	ISCED 2
		22	ISCED 3c (shorter than 2 years)
300	ISCED 3 programme of duration of 2 years and more without possible distinction of access to other ISCED levels	30	ISCED 3 (without distinction a, b or c possible, 2 years and more)
302	ISCED 3 programme of duration of 2 years and more sequential (i.e. access to next ISCED 3 programme only)	31	ISCED 3c (2 years and more)
303	ISCED 3 programme of duration of 2 years and more terminal or giving access to ISCED 4 only		
304	ISCED 3 with access to ISCED 5, 6 or 7	32	ISCED 3a,b
400	ISCED 4	41	ISCED 4a,b
		42	ISCED 4c
		43	ISCED 4 (without distinction a, b, or c possible)
500	ISCED 5	51	ISCED 5b
600	ISCED 6	52	ISCED 5a
700	ISCED 7		
800	ISCED 8	60	ISCED 6

### 3.3.3 Education Coding in the European Social Survey (ESS)

In ESS rounds 1 to 4, education was measured in the ESS using the main levels of ISCED 1997. Following research showing that ISCED criteria and/or mappings were often not applied (Schneider 2009), resulting in deviations from official data (Ortmanns and Silke L Schneider 2016b, 2016a), and a cross-national validation analysis (Schneider 2010), which found that this way of harmonizing national education variables results in different amounts of aggregation error across countries and thus comparability problems, it was decided to harmonize education in a more controlled and differentiated way in the ESS.

For this purpose, a new coding scheme with 26 categories was developed, resulting in the variable 'edulvlb' (as a successor for 'edulvl' and its corrected version 'edulvla' used in rounds 1-4). Like ISCED 2011, it is a 3-digit hierarchical coding framework with 9 main levels, which allows for the derivation of purpose-built educational variables. The edulvlb coding scheme is thus closely related to ISCED 2011, but because it was adopted by the ESS *before* ISCED 2011 was finalized, the numeric codes are different at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> digit levels. Also, the category labels use ISCED 1997 terminology since the ISCED 2011 terminology was not yet entirely finalized. Edulvlb considers intended deviations from the official mapping to ISCED, i.e. it builds upon the alternative ISCED 2011 variable described above (European Social Survey 2010).

Furthermore, two distinctions were added for the ESS that do not feature in ISCED, to better reflect important differentiations in education in many European countries: Firstly, programme destination does not, like in ISCED, only differentiate whether there is access to the next higher level, but whether there is access to the more selective (usually general/academic) types of education at the next higher level. For ISCED level 2, this means that general qualifications giving access to vocational upper secondary education only can be distinguished from general qualifications giving access to general upper secondary education, which captures tracking in lower secondary education which exists in a number of European countries. For ISCED levels 3 and 4, this means that general qualifications not giving access to traditional universities can be differentiated from general qualifications providing this access. Secondly, edulvlb differentiates different types of tertiary education within the Bachelor's and Master's levels. Here, the distinction captures an institutional split between traditional universities and other institutions of higher education of a very high rank vs. modern/polytechnic institutions of higher education of a usually lower rank. So, for surveys interested in such distinctions, which are highly relevant to the (re-)production of social stratification, this is an interesting addition to the SERISS education database.

Table 4 shows the edulvlb coding scheme and how it conceptually corresponds to ISCED 2011 and ISCED 1997 in both levels-only and detailed versions.

Even though the ESS country-specific education categories were the starting point for the CAMCES and later SERISS education database, edulvlb codes were also developed for most other countries covered in the CAMCES/SERISS education database (see Table 1).

Table 4: *edulvlb coding scheme and correspondence with ISCED 1997 and 2011*

Code	Description (using ISCED 1997 terminology) for level successfully completed	alternative ISCED-A 2011	ISCED 1997
000	Not completed ISCED 1	000	0
113	ISCED 1	100	1
119	General ISCED 2 < 2 years, no access ISCED 3	100	2Cgs
129	Vocational ISCED 2 < 2 years, no access ISCED 3	100	2Cvs
211	General ISCED 2 >= 2 years, no access ISCED 3	243	2Cgl
212	General/pre-vocational ISCED 2, limited access ISCED 3	244	2A/Bg/p
213	General ISCED 2, full access ISCED 3	244	2Ag
219	General ISCED 3 < 2 years	244	3B/Cgs
221	Vocational ISCED 2 >= 2 years, no access ISCED 3	253	2Cvl
222	Vocational ISCED 2, limited access ISCED 3	254	2A/Bv
223	Vocational ISCED 2, full access ISCED 3	254	2Av
229	Vocational ISCED 3 < 2 years	254	3B/Cvs
311	General ISCED 3, no access tertiary	343	3Cgl
312	General ISCED 3, limited access tertiary	344	3A/Bg
313	General ISCED 3, full access tertiary	344	3Ag
321	Vocational ISCED 3 >= 2 years, no access tertiary	353	3Cvl
322	Vocational ISCED 3, limited access tertiary	354	3A/Bv
323	Vocational ISCED 3, full access tertiary	354	3Av
411	General ISCED 4, no access tertiary	443	4Cg
412	General ISCED 4, limited access tertiary	444	4A/Bg
413	General ISCED 4, full access tertiary	444	4Ag
421	Vocational ISCED 4, no access tertiary	453	4Cv
422	Vocational ISCED 4, limited access only	454	4A/Bv
423	Vocational ISCED 4, full access tertiary	454	4Av, 3BCv+4Ag
510	General/academic ISCED 5	540	5As (int)
520	Vocational/professional ISCED 5	550,560	5Bs
610	Vocational/professional or lower track ISCED 6	650	5A/Bm
620	General/academic, upper or single track ISCED 6	640,660	5Am
710	Vocational/professional or lower track ISCED 7	750	5Al
720	General/academic, upper or single track ISCED 7	740,760	5Al
800	ISCED 8	840,850,860	6

### 3.4 Recoding of Database-generated Detailed Codes into Harmonized Codes

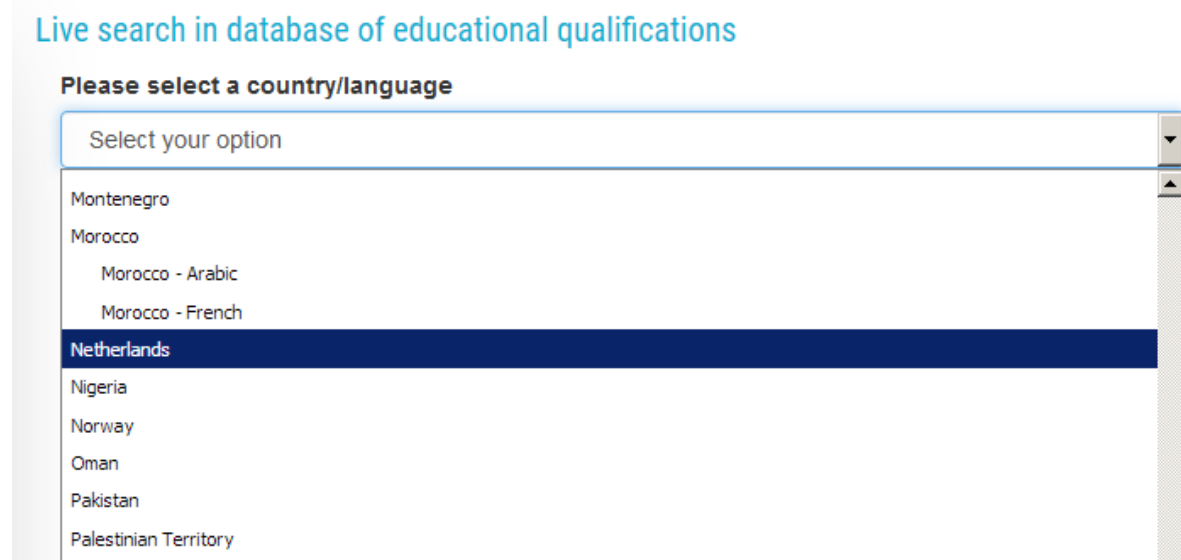
The data resulting from implementing the tool in a survey can be used very flexibly because it is coded in detail (i.e. at the national qualification level) during data collection. It is only recoded into a more aggregate international coding scheme afterwards. This means that the target classification does not need to be determined before data collection but can be changed ex post by applying a different recoding syntax file to the data. The disadvantage of this approach is that the respective syntax has to be provided to users of surveycodings, however this is not grave because it can be automatically derived from the database. It is available for download at <https://www.surveycodings.org/education/data-processing>.

### 3.5 Survey Interfaces Available for Live Search at [surveycodings.org](https://www.surveycodings.org)

The website <https://www.surveycodings.org/education/database-live-search> allows prospective users of the database to browse through it in the database live search using both available interfaces. Thereby potential users can get an idea of what the tool can look like when implemented in a computer assisted survey. Please note that as of 31/08/2019, not all countries have yet been included in the live search. Consult the Excel file for full country coverage.

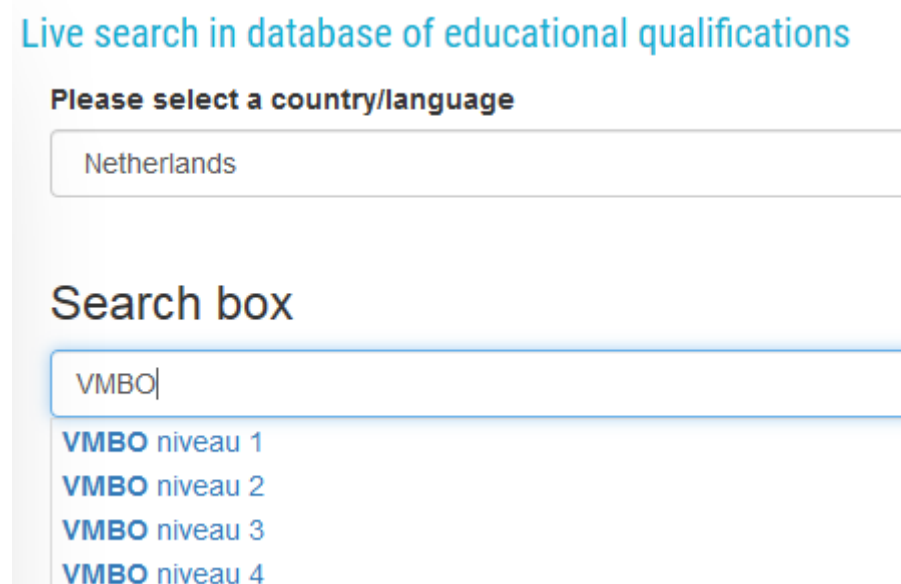
First, the user needs to select a country (and, for multilingual countries, language) for which to search the database (the combined information is referred to as 'education context' in the database, see section 3.1). Screenshot 1 shows what the country/language selection looks like at [surveycodings.org](http://surveycodings.org).

*Screenshot 1: Country/language selection*



After this selection has been made, the two search interfaces - a search box using text string matching and search tree - become available. Screenshot 2 presents the search box interface for the Netherlands, using the search term "mbo".

*Screenshot 2: Search box interface*



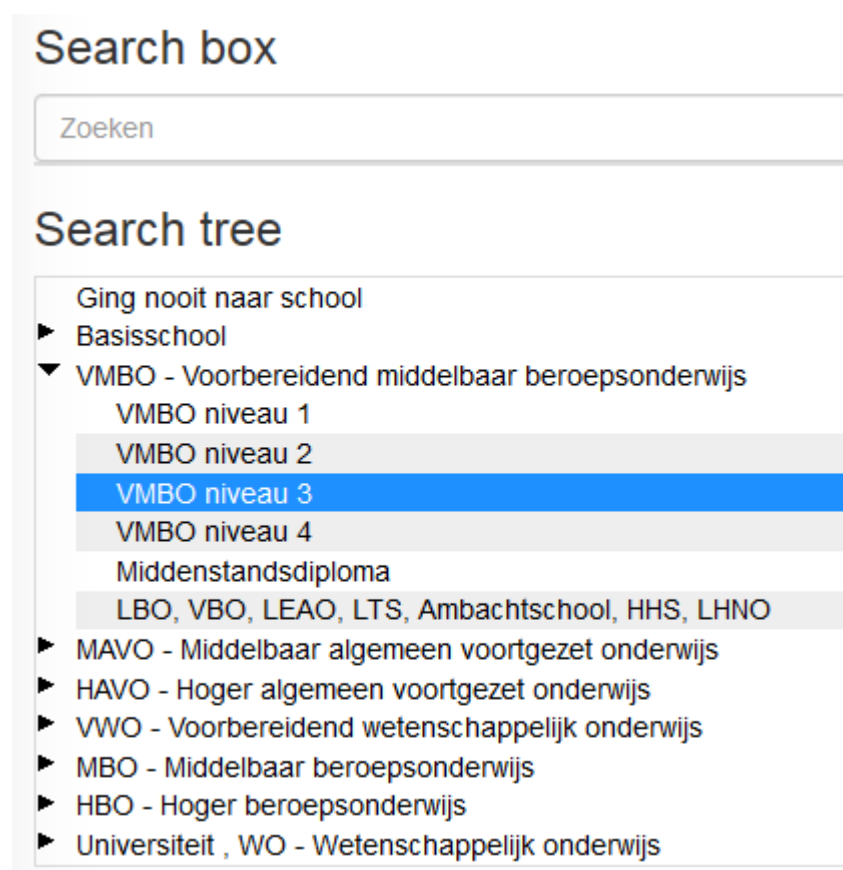
In an actual survey questionnaire, the search box is implemented not just as a search box, but a combination box - i.e. it would save the textual information entered in the field if no result from the database is selected by the respondent. The search box interface in the database live search online may also be useful for post-coding of open responses.

The search box interface is not available for countries not using Latin script since for these countries the database contains rather few entries anyway because we aimed to produce a search tree in the first instance. The search box interface also turned out to work less well

than the search tree interface in pilot studies. It is thus only recommended for use in survey questionnaires if the search tree is used as a fall-back to reduce missing data.

Screenshot 3 shows the search tree interface for the Netherlands. This interface is recommended for implementation in most computer-assisted survey questionnaires since its use should be fairly intuitive for respondents and there is no ambiguity regarding the level of detail required (as in the text string matching interface).

Screenshot 3: Search tree



Questionnaires using the surveycodings education tool are ideally self-administered so that the respondent him/herself can interact with the search box and/or navigate the search tree, making it most suitable for web surveys. In CAPI surveys, this can be achieved by temporarily switching to CASI mode, i.e. the interviewer handing the tablet or laptop over to the respondent to respond to this question. In CATI mode, it may be rather cumbersome to use because interviewers will either need to read out the full first level list, and then the full second level list of the first level entry selected by the respondent. Alternatively, the interviewer could ask the question openly, navigate the search tree him/herself, and confirm the result with the respondent. This would however be a less standardized process than what is usually desirable in surveys.

Screenshot 4 shows information on the classification of the selected entry into various classifications systems, including the international codes as well as the English label of the corresponding harmonised categories. This information will be coded in the data when implementing the tool in a questionnaire by running a centrally provided syntax over the data, and can also be used for post-coding.



#### Screenshot 4: Coding information for educational attainment

##### Information

**Description:** VMBO niveau 3

**Classifications:**

- ISCED1997: 2Ag - General lower secondary education, access to ISCED 3A and 3B
- ISCED1997-LFS: 21 - ISCED 2
- Alternative ISCED1997: 2Ag - General lower secondary education, access to ISCED 3A and 3B
- ISCED-A2011: 244 - General lower secondary education with direct access to upper secondary education
- ISCED2011-LFS: 200 - ISCED 2 (incl. ISCED 3 programmes of duration of less than 2 years)
- Alternative ISCED2011: 244 - General lower secondary education with direct access to upper secondary education
- edulvb: 212 - General/pre-vocational ISCED 2, limited access ISCED 3

**Synonyms:**

- Basisberoepsgerichte leerweg

### 3.6 Considerations for Survey Organisers

Survey organisers considering using the surveycodings education tool in their survey should consider the following points:

- The tool was developed to facilitate harmonisation in cross-cultural surveys. It is thus most useful for migrant surveys and cross-national surveys. Given the integration of the tool in the survey questionnaire, for cross-national surveys it would be efficient only if all countries use the same centrally administered survey platform/software.
- If you are running a migrant survey, for which the tool is most fruitful, please check whether the countries of origin of the migrants in your country are covered in the database (check [availability page on surveycodings.org](#)).
- The tool measures educational qualifications at a fairly detailed level - more detailed than what is usually measured in surveys. This is possible because the tool does not use a simple long-list question, like most surveys do, but offers two different search interfaces. So if you are interested in measuring education in detail, the tool may be useful for you also if you are running a national (non-migrant) survey.
- The database will also be useful for those needing to post-code educational qualifications into any of the classifications offered by the surveycodings Education Tool. You can do so using either the [live database search](#) or the Excel version of the database.
- In which mode(s) are you planning to run the survey? Check our detailed information on different modes [here](#). The education coding tool has been specifically developed for CAPI and CAWI surveys. In CAPI, the device needs to be handed over to the respondent because the education question requires self-administration, especially for migrants. In CATI mode, it would thus only work if the interviewer speaks the language of the country in which the respondent was educated (i.e. it should be ok to use for non-migrants, but then the benefits of using the tool are limited).



- We do not recommend using the tool for proxy measurements, e.g. asking the respondent about the education of their partner, mother or father. The level of detail asked will be too high for most respondents to know.
- Every effort has been made to ensure that the database of qualifications and levels of education is as accurate and complete as possible for each country and language. However, users are advised to carry out checks on the database before use. These checks should be conducted for each country/language version for which the database will be used and involve the input of local survey teams wherever possible. The surveycodings education team will be happy to receive user feedback and suggestions for database revisions.

## 4 Outlook

Measuring respondents' level of education in a survey is not an easy task. Building on the International Standard Classification of Education and earlier work in the CAMCES project, WP8 of SERISS has extended the multinational database of educational qualifications and levels covering 99 countries and 120 educational contexts. This database can be used via two interfaces, namely a search box and a search tree. The former may be useful for post-coding, while the latter is recommended for implementation in computer-assisted, especially web surveys.

Earlier versions of the tool have been piloted in German migrant surveys. The biggest challenge was actually getting it set up for survey use - which does unfortunately not work at the push of a button. Another challenge is the untested nature of all new database entries added since then, and the by nature limited amount of testing regarding the others.

For surveys interested in implementing this tool, we therefore firstly recommend using the search tree interface because this gives the respondents a better hint at the information aimed at. This is not possible when using the text-string matching which can be quite challenging without an adequate instruction (for which we have translations into 5 languages only so far). Secondly, we urge any survey planning implementation to carefully pretest and pilot-run the tool in all countries/language versions it is intended to be fielded.

While there is no dedicated funding at this point in time for maintenance and updating, let alone further extension of the education database, we will try to respond to user requests and provide limited support as much as possible. This also pertains to potential technical updates of the surveycodings website in the framework of the SSHOC project. Feedback is always welcome - please email [silke.schneider@gesis.org](mailto:silke.schneider@gesis.org).

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## 6 Appendix I: Detailed ISCED Tables

Table 5: ISCED 97 levels and sub-dimensions

Code	Level	Destination	Orientation	Duration	Description
0	0				Not completed primary education
1	1				Primary education
2					Lower secondary education not further defined
2C					Lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3 not further defined
2Cv			v		Vocational lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3 not further defined
2Cp			p		Prevocational lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3 not further defined
2Cg			g		General lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3 not further defined
2Cvs		C	v	s	Vocational lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3, < 2 years
2Cps		C	p	s	Prevocational lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3, < 2 years
2Cgs		C	g	s	General lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3, < 2 years
2Cvl			v	l	Vocational lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3, >= 2 years
2Cpl	2		p	l	Prevocational lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3, >= 2 years
2Cgl			g	l	General lower secondary education without direct access to ISCED 3, >= 2 years
2B					Lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3C only not further defined
2Bv		B	v		Vocational lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3C only
2Bp		B	p		Prevocational lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3C only
2Bg		B	g		General lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3C only
2A					Lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3A or 3B
2Av		A	v		Vocational lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3A or 3B
2Ap		A	p		Prevocational lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3A or 3B
2Ag		A	g		General lower secondary education with direct access to ISCED 3A or 3B
3					Upper secondary education not further defined
3C	3	C			Upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5 not further defined
3Cv		C	v		Vocational upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5 not further defined



3Cp		p		Prevocational upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5 not further defined
3Cg		g		General upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5 not further defined
3Cvs		v	s	Vocational upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5, < 2 years
3Cps		p	s	Prevocational upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5, < 2 years
3Cgs		g	s	General upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5, < 2 years
3Cvl		v	l	Vocational upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5, >= 2 years
3Cpl		p	l	Prevocational upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5, >= 2 years
3Cgl		g	l	General upper secondary education without direct access to ISCED 5, >= 2 years
3B				Upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5B not further defined
3Bv	B	v		Vocational upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5B
3Bp		p		Prevocational upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5B
3Bg		g		General upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5B
3A				Upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5A not further defined
3Av	A	v		Vocational upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5A
3Ap		p		Prevocational upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5A
3Ag		g		General upper secondary education with direct access to ISCED 5A
4				Post-secondary non-tertiary education not further defined
4C				Post-secondary non-tertiary education without direct access to ISCED 5 not further defined
4Cv	C	v		Vocational post-secondary non-tertiary education without direct access to ISCED 5
4Cg		g		General post-secondary non-tertiary education without direct access to ISCED 5
4B	4			Post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to ISCED 5B not further defined
4Bv	B	v		Vocational post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to ISCED 5B
4Bg		g		General post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to ISCED 5B
4A				Post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to ISCED 5A not further defined
4Av	A	v		Vocational post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to ISCED 5A
4Ag		g		General post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to ISCED 5A
5				First stage of tertiary education not further defined
5B	5			First stage of tertiary education, occupationally specific programmes without access to ISCED 6 not further defined
5Bs			s	First stage of tertiary education, occupationally specific programmes without access to ISCED 6,

			<= 2 years
5Bm		m	First stage of tertiary education, occupationally specific programmes without access to ISCED 6, 3-4 years
5Bl		l	First stage of tertiary education, occupationally specific programmes without access to ISCED 6, >4 years
5A			First stage of tertiary education, theoretically based programmes with ultimately access to ISCED 6 not further defined
5As	A	s	First stage of tertiary education, theoretically based programmes with ultimately access to ISCED 6, <= 2 years
5Am		m	First stage of tertiary education, theoretically based programmes with ultimately access to ISCED 6, <= 2 years
5Al		l	First stage of tertiary education, theoretically based programmes with ultimately access to ISCED 6, >4 years
6	6		Second stage of tertiary education
9			Unclassifiable
9000			Not covered by official mappings

**Notes:**

**Destinations** A, B and C are defined differently across levels. "A" denotes programmes giving access to ISCED 3A/3B at level 2, access to 5A at level 3 and access to level 6 at level 5. "B" denotes access to 3C at level 2, access to 5B at level 3, and no access to level 6 at level 5. "C" denotes terminal programmes at levels 2 and 3.

**Orientation** distinguishes vocational (v), prevocational (p) and general (g) programmes.

**Duration** differentiates short (s) programmes of less than 2 years duration and long (l) programmes of 2 years or more at levels 2 and 3. At level 5, short (s) programmes last 2 years or less, medium (m) duration programmes last 3-4 years, and long (l) programmes last more than 4 years.

Table 6: ISCED-A 2011 - Codes for educational attainment

Code	Main level	2nd digit (mostly orientation)	3rd digit (mostly duration and access)	
0	0 Less than primary education	0 Less than primary education	Less than primary education	
100	1 Primary education	10 Primary education	Primary education	
240	2 Lower secondary education		General lower secondary education not further specified	
242			General partial lower secondary education without direct access to upper secondary education	
243			24 General	General lower secondary education without direct access to upper secondary education
244			General lower secondary education with direct access to upper secondary education	
250			25 Vocational	Vocational lower secondary education not further specified
252				Vocational partial lower secondary education without direct access to upper secondary education
253				Vocational lower secondary education without direct access to upper secondary education
254				Vocational lower secondary education with direct access to upper secondary education
260				26 Orientation unspecified
340			3 Upper secondary education	
342	General partial upper secondary education without direct access to tertiary education			
343	34 General	General upper secondary education without direct access to tertiary education		
344	General upper secondary education with direct access to tertiary education			
350	35 Vocational	Vocational upper secondary education not further specified		
352		Vocational partial upper secondary education without direct access to tertiary education		
353		Vocational upper secondary education without direct access to tertiary education		
354		Vocational upper secondary education with direct access to tertiary education		
360		36 Orientation unspecified		
440	4 Post-secondary non-tertiary education	44 General		
443			General post-secondary non-tertiary education without direct access to tertiary education	
444			General post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to tertiary education	
450			45 Vocational	Vocational post-secondary non-tertiary education not further specified

Code	Main level	2nd digit (mostly orientation)	3rd digit (mostly duration and access)
453			Vocational post-secondary non-tertiary education without direct access to tertiary education
454			Vocational post-secondary non-tertiary education with direct access to tertiary education
460		46 Orientation unspecified	Post-secondary non-tertiary education not further specified
540	5 Short-cycle tertiary education	54 General	
550		55 Vocational	
560		56 Orientation unspecified	
640	6 Bachelor's or equivalent level	64 Academic	
650		65 Professional	
660		66 Orientation unspecified	
740	7 Master's or equivalent level	74 Academic	
750		75 Professional	
760		76 Orientation unspecified	
840	8 Doctoral or equivalent level	84 Academic	
850		85 Professional	
860		86 Orientation unspecified	
999	9 Not elsewhere classified	99 Not elsewhere classified	999 Not elsewhere classified
9000	90 Not covered by official mappings	900 Not covered by official mappings	9000 Not covered by official mappings
	<b>Notes:</b> the official coding scheme was complemented by some new codes that were needed for completeness: 240, 250, 260, 340, 350, 360, 440, 450, 460, 9000.		

## 7 Appendix II: Structure of the Database of Educational Qualifications and Levels

Table name	Field name	Long description	Short description	Reference to table	Reference to field
edcontext	name	Education contexts (country, language, regions, scripts) context ID: 5 digit code (1-3: country code using iso3166-num; 4: languagenum, 5: regionnum)	Context ID		
	locale-name	locales identifying countries and languages	Locale		
	edcontext-name	adapted locales (change only affects the UK)			
	iso3166-num	numeric ISO country code	Country (iso 3166-num)		
	iso3166-1	ISO country code (iso 3166-1 alpha 2)	Country (iso 3166-1 alpha 2)		
	iso3166-3	ISO codes for historic countries (iso 3166-3 alpha 2)	Historic country (iso 3166-3 alpha 2)		
	country-official-en	country (English)	Country name		
	languagenum	consecutive within-country language code			
	ISO639-alpha3	language code (iso 639-alpha3)	Language (iso 639-alpha3)		
	ISO639-alpha2	language code (iso 639-alpha2)	Language (iso 639-alpha2)		
	language-official-en	language (English)	Language		
	iso15924-num	numeric script code (iso 15924-num)	Script (iso 15924-num)		
	iso15924	script code (iso 15924)	Script (iso 15924)		
rtl	script from right-to-left				
userinterface	available search interfaces for survey implementation (1=search tree only)	Interfaces (1=search tree only)			
regionnum	consecutive within-country region code				
region-official-en	region name in English	Region			
searchterm	translation of "search"	Translation of "search"			
active	edcontext is active (1=yes)	Active (1=yes)			
qualification		Educational qualifications and corresponding classification codes			
	name	qualification ID: 8 digit code (digit 1-5: edcontext_name, digit 6-8: consecutive code within-context)	Qualification ID		

Table name	Field name	Long description	Short description	Reference to table	Reference to field name
	edcontext_name	context ID	Context ID	edcontext	name
	country-language-region	country-language-region information			
	description	national name of the educational qualification	National name		
	treelevel	structure of the search tree: indicates the level of the entry	Search Tree level		
	parent_name	structure of the search tree: defines the parent (first-level-entry) for all second level entries	Search Tree Parent		
	treeorder	structure of the search tree: indicates the position within parent entry	Search Tree order		
	qualfrom	transliteration of the national name of the qualification if not using Latin script	Transliteration		
	note	English description of the qualification	English description		
	searchable	qualifications is included in the search box (1=yes)	Search Box (1=yes)		
	searchweight	weight used for ordering the qualifications in the search box list of results			
	source_name	source of the name of the qualifications, often survey, year/round	Source	source	name
	source-category	number of the category if source is as survey			
	isced97_name	official ISCED 1997 code	ISCED 1997	isced97	name
	isced97lfs_name	EU-LFS codes for ISCED 1997 (variable "hatlevel")	ISCED 1997-LFS	isced97lfs	name
	iscedsources_name-97	source of ISCED 1997	Source	source	name
	isced97_name-a	alternative ISCED 1997 code	Alternative ISCED 1997	isced97	name
	isced97-deviation	justification for alternative ISCED 1997 code	Deviation		
	isced11_name	official ISCED 2011 code	ISCED 2011	isced11	name
	isced11lfs_name	EU-LFS codes for ISCED 2011 (variable "hat11lev")	ISCED 2011-LFS	isced11lfs	name
	iscedsources_name-11	source of ISCED 2011	Source	source	name
	isced11_name-a	alternative ISCED 2011 code	Alternative ISCED 2011	isced11	name
	isced11-deviation	justification for alternative ISCED 2011 code	Deviation		
	edulvlb_name	edulvlb code used in the ESS	edulvlb	edulvlb	name
	qualversion	version of the qualification	Version notes		
	qualpublic	date of production of qualification version	Production date		
	qualchangekey	qualification version note	Version notes		
	active	qualification is active (1=yes)	Active (1=yes)		

Table name	Field name	Long description	Short description	Reference to table	Reference to field table
synonym	qualification_name	Alternative names of the qualifications	Qualification ID	qualification	name
	description	qualification ID alternative term of an educational qualification	Alternative national name		
isc97	name	ISCED 1997 classification ISCED 1997 code	Code	qualification	isc97_name, isc97_name-a
	level	main level of ISCED 1997	Level		
	destination	destination of the educational program	Destination		
	orientation	orientation of the educational program	Orientation		
	duration	duration of the educational program	Duration		
description	description of the ISCED 1997 code	Description			
isc97lfs	name	EU-LFS coding of ISCED 1997	Code	qualification	isc97lfs_name
	description	EU-LFS codes for ISCED 1997 (variable "hatlevel") description of the EU-LFS codes for ISCED 1997	Description		
isc11	name	ISCED 2011 classification ISCED 2011 code	Code	qualification	isc11_name, isc11_name-a
	description	description of the ISCED 2011 code	Description		
isc11lfs	name	EU-LFS coding of ISCED 2011	Code	qualification	isc11lfs_name
	description	EU-LFS codes for ISCED 2011 (variable "hat11lev") description of the EU-LFS codes for ISCED 2011	Description		
edulvlb	name	Eduvlb classification (coding scheme of the ESS since round 5)	Code	qualification	edulvlb_name
	description	edulvlb codes description of the edulvlb codes	Description		
source	name	Sources used for qualifications and mappings abbreviation of the source used as ID	Source ID	qualification	source_name, iscsource_name-97, iscsource_name-11
	description	description of the source	Description		



Table name	Field name	Long description	Short description	Reference to table	Reference to field
translation	referenceyear	reference year of the source	Reference year		
	access	further details to access the source (e.g. URL)	Access		
	edcontext_name	Translations context ID		edcontext	name
	country-en	name of the country in English			
	language-en	name of the language in English			
	region-en	name of the region in English			
	country-fr	name of the country in French			
	language-fr	name of the language in French			
	region-fr	name of the region in French			
	country-de	name of the country in German			
	language-de	name of the language in German			
	region-de	name of the region in German			
	country-es	name of the country in Spanish			
	language-es	name of the language in Spanish			
	region-es	name of the region in Spanish			
	country-nl	name of the country in Dutch			
	language-nl	name of the language in Dutch			
region-nl	name of the region in Dutch				
country-tr	name of the country in Turkish				
language-tr	name of the language in Turkish				
region-tr	name of the region in Turkish				