THE EUROPEAN DATA LABORATORY
FOR COMPARATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH – ZA-EUROLAB

The ZA-EUROLAB is a research infrastructure for comparative social research located at GESIS-ZA. GESIS is a member of the Leibniz association. The ZA-EUROLAB is funded by GESIS and supported by the 6th Framework Programme “Structuring the European Research Area - Research Infrastructures Action” of the European Community.
What is the ZA-EUROLAB

The ZA-EUROLAB serves as a resource centre for European social research by supporting access to nationally and internationally comparative data sets. It was established at the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research (ZA) at the University of Cologne in 1996 in order to host researchers supported by the “Training and Mobility of Researchers (TMR) – Large Scale Facility (LSF)” programme and thereafter to support researchers who were given access within the “Improving Human Potential (IHP) – Access to Research Infrastructures (ARI)” programme of the European Community. Presently, researchers can receive support from the 6th framework programme “Structuring the European Research Area - Research Infrastructures Action” to access the facilities provided by the GESIS-ZA. The objective of these programmes is to provide researchers throughout the member countries of the European Community and the states associated with access to large-scale facilities that are vital for high quality experimental research. To be considered for support a facility has to meet the following criteria:

- Provide a world-class service which is essential to carry out top quality research;
- Be rare in Europe;
- Have investment or operating costs that are relatively high in relation to those costs in this particular field;
- Provide adequate scientific, technical and logistic support to external, particularly first-time users.

GESIS-ZA provides services in the area of acquisition, processing, documenting and making available social science data, especially survey data. It holds over 5000 data sets and data collections. Even though there is no particular restriction, emphasis in gathering data is on topics such as education, unemployment, political attitudes, election studies, leisure and occupation, media and environment. Among the data sets intensively used are the EUROBAROMETERS (a data pool of comparative surveys from European countries taken for more than 30 years), the German General Social Survey (ALLBUS), which is conducted every two years, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) for 43 countries from Australia, America, Europe to Japan.

Furthermore, it is the holding archive of the original party programmes from “The Comparative Manifestos Project”.

More than 400 data sets from the surveys conducted in the former GDR since 1975 were included in the holdings.

GESIS-ZA is also the European centre for integrating the EUROBAROMETERS, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and the major election studies in Europe. Beyond this, the GESIS-ZA provides consulting services for secondary analysis and data archive management.

For the first time this collection of European wide comparative studies is available in one place, the ZA-EUROLAB. Furthermore, background information and context information is provided through direct links to data bases of the World Bank, OECD, UNESCO etc.

ZA-EUROLAB closely cooperates with the research infrastructures (RISS C) in Luxembourg and ECASS at the University of Essex, United Kingdom.

Since 1997, the ZA-EUROLAB has supported 210 researchers from 29 countries at 3372 access days. It has received positive evaluations both at national and European level and is recognised as an important research infrastructure to support high level comparative research. In Spring 2007 the ZA-EUROLAB was institutionalised and now offers its services to the scientific community on a permanent basis.
What does the ZA-EUROLAB offer

Access to the ZA-EUROLAB databases: Visitors to the ZA-EUROLAB are introduced to the GESIS-ZA information systems informing about relevant data sets and related literature that might support the generation and test of hypotheses. Advice is also offered ranging from experimental to comparative research design and from locating relevant data to data analysis and testing empirical hypotheses.

Training in data management and archiving: GESIS-ZA experts provide assistance in data management, developing standards for data documentation, harmonising data for better comparability etc. Visiting scholars are also encouraged to bring their own national data sets and will be assisted in integrating it with other relevant data sets for comparative analysis.

Training seminars: Since 1972 the GESIS-ZA offers training programmes in advanced methods of social research. Training programmes in advanced analysis methods take place in the ZA Spring Seminar for Empirical Social Research. Leading international experts are invited to teach courses and supervise practical application of the new techniques to selected data sets.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of access days into these three different areas of access. 63% of the access days have been provided in the field of data access for research purposes so far, 25% in the field of training seminars in statistical methods and 12% of the access days were provided in the field of data management and archiving.

Figure 1: Distribution of access days per activity 1997–2007 in %
Access Days by Type of Activity (N=3372)
Access to the ZA-EUROLAB

Access to the ZA-EUROLAB has so far mainly been given to researchers supported by the programmes of the European Community. On the basis of an application an international selection panel evaluated the candidates. Financial support to access the ZA-EUROLAB was given by the European Community to those candidates positively evaluated by the selection panel. Increasingly, access to services offered by ZA-EUROLAB is also provided to researchers with own funding from national science foundations, home institutions, research grants etc.

Researchers from 29 countries worked at the ZA-EUROLAB between 1997 and mid 2007. As can be seen from Figure 2 researchers from Spain and The Netherlands had the highest usage of the ZA-EUROLAB closely followed by United Kingdom, Italy, and Romania. Furthermore, 41% of the access days were used by post-graduates, 33% by experienced researchers, 18% by post-doctoral researchers, and 8% others (cf. Figure 3).
Research projects carried out at the ZA-EUROLAB

Altogether 119 projects comprising 210 researchers have been carried out at the ZA-EUROLAB so far. The topics cover among others political science, sociology, statistics, economy, and psychology. A list of the research projects is given below.

Summary activities reports from the Training and Mobility of Researchers (TMR) – Large Scale Facility (LSF) programme at the ZA-EUROLAB 1996-2000 and the "Improving Human Potential (IHP) programme - Access to Research Infrastructures (ARI)" action can be found at: http://www.gesis.org/eurolab

Some of the high level international research projects which have been supported at the ZA-EUROLAB 1997-2007 are listed below.

John Curtic User group:
The European Voter
Validation of Multivariate Methods with Particular Reference to Nonlinear Principal Components Analysis and Procrustes Analysis
ZA Data Confrontation Seminar for the European Values Survey
Equivalence of Measurement Instruments for Attitude Variables in Comparative Surveys, taking Method Effects into Account: The Case of Ethnocentrism
Monitoring Democratic Five Year Plans: Multiple Coding of British Manifestos and US-Platforms

Jan Budge User group:
Religious and Moral Pluralism Data Confrontation Seminar
Religion and Social Class as Party Cleavages in Western Europe – a Comparative Study
Nonmetric Unidimensional Survey Measurement using Large Scale Data Sets

Comparative Study of Purchase Behaviour of the European Consumer
Israel Public Opinion in Comparative Perspective
Career Mobility Patterns in Contemporary Italy
The Political Culture in Italy and in the Other European Mediterranean Countries
German Government and Support for European Integration
Institution, Parties and Electoral: The Reason of Turnout Decrease: The Italian Case in a Comparative Perspective
The Analysis of the Maser and Voice Statement of Global 500 Companies: A Comparative Study of Asian, American and European Firms
Cultural and Social Differences in the Memory of Public Debts
Forex Direct Investments in Bulgaria
The Multi-wave Data Base ‘Social Data Archive’ based on the Model of the other European Data Archives under the Large Scale Facilities
Portuguese Electoral Behaviour in a Comparative Perspective, 1975-2005
ICTs and Transformations in Democracy
Comparative Study of Attitude Change toward the State in Europe and the United States
Voluntary Organizations and the Development of Civil Society in Post-communist Central Europe
Work attitudes and Change of Employment and Labour Market Structures: A Cross-National Comparison
Acquisition, Processing, and Dissemination of Data within the Social Sciences
Explaining the regularity of Coalition Governments
The Diffusion Process of the Internet: A Uses and Gratifications Approach to Online Services Adoption
How Nations Perceive Themselves in 19 Countries: The Stocks of Knowledge of National Identity in an International Comparison and in Time Comparison
Tourist Motivations in the Portuguese Inland
Quality of Life of the Elderly - International Comparative Analysis
Religious and Health: The Link, an International Perspective
Health services, social networks and household strategies in changing political, economic and socio-cultural contexts
Audience Responses to Media Diversification
Biocentrity: Consumer Perception in the EU Bodies Politic: Women, Politics and News Media in Global Context
Elements of Youth Socio-Cultural Identity in Romanian Society During the Transition
Modeling Choice Decision in Frequently Purchased Products and Services
A Comparative Analysis of the Factors Determining the Choice of Labour Market Flexibilisation Policies in the EU Measurement Issues of Political Participation
Mental Maps (Perceptions, Stereotypes, Images) in Connection with the EU Enlargement
Sixties’ Absence Among Employees in Norway and Finland
Perceptions of Political Culture of the Balkans: Examining the Balkan Region in a Comparative Perspective
Ten Years of Social Transformation in the Slovak and Czech Republics
New Ethnic Minorities in Denmark: Facing the Challenge of Diversity
Research, Values, Life Strategies, Social Spaces of Choice in Transition
Legitimacy and Social Support for Social Policy in Romania During the Transition Period
A Comparative Study on the Social Bases of Support for New Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe
Application of the Rating Scale Model to the Measurement of Job Satisfaction based on the 1980 IFS Survey
Occupational Processes and Interlabour Mobility in the European Union, Theory and Evidence from ECRP-DP: Data Application of Models for Computational Data on Comparative Data Set
Improving Data Quality in Updated Surveys
The Conditions of European Democracy
National Identification of Majority-Groups and Belief of Ethnic Groups
Political Interest in Greece and Spain in the Context of Western Europe
European Policies About Prostitution in Comparative Perspective
Probability Matrix Decomposition Models
Explaining Left-Right Definition to the Extreme Right in Europe
Contrasting Attitudinal Bases to Euroscepticism
The Quality of Graphical Representations of Categorical Variables in Multidimensional Scaling: Mathematical and Methodological Implications
Using Loglinear Models with Latent Variables for Correcting Response Patterns in Comparative Research
A Comparative Study of Religious Independents and Religious Affiliates within Established Western Democracies
Survey Data in the Internet: Tools for Documentation and Dissemination
The Influence of the Mother on the Process of Stratification
Multiple Imputation in the ISSP Database
The Multilevel Model of General Strain Theory
Explaining Differences in Internet Diffusion and Acceptance Among EU Member States and the EU-13: An Initial Comparative Study
SAKON v.0. – The Oukat Center Data Management Application
Monitoring Democracy Development and Electoral Behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe, Data Management, data integration and archiving organisation
Subjective well-being: Romania in perspective
Change in attitude towards EU perceived benefits and drawbacks of EU membership
Institutionalizing European Defence: Main Trends in the Public Perceptions in the Age of the War on Terror
Civil Society in Eastern Europe
Transport Mobility and Time Budget
Consequences of the Federal Budgetary Cuts on the Social Situation of Students
The Field of Advertising. A Study in Sociology
Policy Voting in Advanced Industrialized Democracies. The Case of The Netherlands, 1921-1994
Trust, social capital and political culture in Italy and other EU countries
European societies: testing typologies
The impact of culture for political attitudes – a comparison of contemporary European Societies: Quality of life in Romania comparative with European Countries
Political support and Generalized Trust in European Societies
The Europeanization of Political Parties: Rhetoric, Policy Change and Usage of Space in Spanish and Italian Party Leadernship from the Maasstricht Treaty to the European Constitution
Local political participation in a comparative perspective
Life styles and quality of work life in Romania
Social Capital and Attitudes towards the Welfare State
Governance and Cosmopolitanism: The Portuguese Agricultural Credit Cooperatives
The Multilevel Model of Social Theory
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Location

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