

The EFES database and other sources of information

The recent study for the European Parliament entitled "Employee Financial Participation in Companies' Proceeds", pointed out the fact that "there are very few sources of information on the availability and take-up of financial participation schemes across countries", the four main sources of information being due to EFES, EWCS, ECS and CRANET.

Amongst these, the EFES database is the only database on the topic.

A database (French "base de données") is a computer container to store all information related to an activity. A database makes it possible to store and retrieve a set of information of several kinds, as well as links between the different information. So year after year, the EFES database records all information about employee ownership and employee share plans in ALL large listed companies in Europe (covering 97% of employment in listed companies) and in ALL large non-listed employee-owned companies, in a systematic, consistent and coherent way. Data are based on Annual Reports, which means systematic, audited and certified information, annually.

EWCS, ECS and CRANET enquiries are not databases. They are periodic enquiries based on interviews or mailings. By nature, answers are random (e.g. 15% of completed questionnaires are returned to investigators), companies are not the same from one survey to another, the questions are not the same. Nothing of what constitutes a "database". It is obvious that the results of postal or telephone enquiries can in no way near the quality of audited and certified information systematically recorded as found in the EFES database. In addition, these enquiries are based on "establishments" and not on companies as in the EFES database.

EWCS (European Working Conditions Survey) is carried out by the Dublin Foundation every 5 years (last ones in 2005, 2010). EWCS last survey was in 2010, based on interviews face-to-face. It was through 108 questions on which one single question involved indirectly employee share ownership. Question EF7 was: "Thinking about your earnings from your main job, what do they include?... G - Payments based on the overall performance of the company (profit sharing scheme) where you work?... I - Income from shares in the company your work for?"

ECS (European Company Survey) is carried out by the Dublin Foundation, every 4 years (last ones in 2004, 2009, 2013). The latest ECS survey in spring 2013 was based on telephone interviews. It was through 48 questions on which two single sub-questions about "variable pay" involved employee share ownership. Question 43-C was: "Q43. Since the beginning of 2010, were there negotiations at this establishment between management and the employee representation with regard to... C. Financial participation (e.g. share ownership, profit sharing)". Question H23-D-E was: "H23 Now I am going to read out certain variable payment options on top of basic pay that might be in place in your establishment. Could you please tell me for each of these options, whether or not they are available to at least some employees?... H23-D Variable extra pay linked to the results of the company or establishment (profit sharing scheme). H23-E Variable extra pay in form of share ownership scheme offered by the company."

CRANET (Cranfield Network of universities): CRANET enquiries are through postal questionnaires, every 3 to 5 years depending from one country to another, and a 12 to 25% response rate, not bringing coherent up-to-date information, HR managers being questioned about HR practices. Last Cranet Survey published in 2011 gathered data over a period from late 2008 until mid-2010, depending on each country. CRANET is sometimes described as a database in this sense that it stores information from all enquiries made in various countries.