

# Euregio Study EWCS Methodology Report



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## In a nutshell

- » **A dataset as a data treasure** of **4,500** complete interviews on the working conditions of employees and self-employed persons from **3** > sub-regions, **2** languages in **1** European region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino.
- » This data set can be a **guide** to better working conditions and contribute to the **awareness** of employees and the **sense of community** in the European region.
- » The **EGTC European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino** made the project possible in the first place through generous funding and benevolent support.
- » **3** supporting organizations were operationally involved: The Arbeiterkammer Tirol from **Innsbruck**, the AFI | Arbeitsförderungsinstitut from **Bolzano** and the Agenzia del lavoro from **Trento**.

## 1. Preparation

The European Working Conditions Survey EWCS<sup>1</sup>, which will be carried out in the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino in 2021, has a long history.

The most important milestone was the AFI's 2016

| The EWCS was organized and carried out by the Institute for the Promotion of Labor in South Tyrol. This was the first time ever that working conditions were surveyed on a regional level according to the European model - until then, this had only been done by states.

The reason for the independent survey was that until 2016 the trilingual South Tyrol led a kind of marginal existence in the official Italian EWCS survey, which takes place every five years. In the course of the Italian EWCS surveys, two problems always arose: In South Tyrol, only very few interviews were conducted from the beginning and, just as serious, these were only conducted in Italian. This literal linguistic exclusivity does not do justice to the actual conditions in the country. 69.6% of the population have German as their mother tongue and 4.5% Ladin.<sup>2</sup> A thematically complex questionnaire like the EWCS must be able to be answered in the respective mother tongue in order to be adequately understood by all members of the target population. At the same time, a sufficient number of interviews must be conducted in order to be able to make methodologically sound statements. This is the only way to obtain valid results that reflect the working and living environment of all inhabitants of a multilingual region.

For this reason, the AFI | Arbeitsförderungsinstitut decided in 2016 to fully implement the European Working Conditions Survey EWCS.

The great success of the EWCS South Tyrol 2016 is on the one hand due to the fact that the local working conditions have been examined for the first time according to a scientifically recognized methodology, and on the other hand due to the fact that the local data cannot only be compared with the national Italian results, but also with the methodologically correct data of 35 participating countries, i.e. also with the German-speaking economic and cultural area, with which South Tyrol is closely connected.

With the survey results, the AFI | Arbeitsförderungsinstitut has made an enormous contribution to raising awareness of working conditions among the South Tyrolean population over the past six years and has been able to help shape public opinion about local working conditions.

### 1.1 Common objective and process in the European region

In the course of this successful implementation on the South Tyrolean level, it was obvious to think about an extension of the EWCS to the entire European region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino.

For this purpose, the Bolzano AFI agreed to | In 2019, the Austrian Labor Promotion Institute (AFI), the Innsbruck-based Chamber of Labor Tyrol and the Trento-based Agenzia del lavoro took a joint approach. The AFI acted as a pacemaker and interface between the three parts of the Euroregion and maintained the connection to the Euroregion during the following preparations.

A cooperation agreement between the European Association for Territorial Co-opera-

The agreement between the EGTC Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino and the three sponsoring organizations was reached in February 2020, in which the European Region made a total of 180,000 euros available for the survey and commissioned the three sponsoring organizations to implement the survey in their areas.

It has always been the aim to carry out the EWCS at the level of the European Region, because the conditions of the great Europe are reflected in the EGTC: The European Region is a political-economic-cultural framework characterized by two states and three language communities (German, Italian and Ladin) and in which a common public should be established in a very practical-worldly area, namely the working conditions in town and country.

The second goal is to learn from each other. If, for example, one area in a particular industry has significantly better values (e.g., higher job satisfaction, better working atmosphere) than the other two areas in the same industry, it is worth taking a closer look at why this is the case and what could be learned from it.

This survey can serve as a guide to identify and analyze strengths and weaknesses of the working conditions in the European region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino. In the planning and implementation of derived measures, politics and social partners such as trade unions and business associations have to be involved, which can use the appropriate levers.



## 1.2 Control and Working group

In order to ensure fruitful cooperation between the three parts of the country, it has been decided to form two working groups.

**The steering group is the decision-making body at the European regional level and the link to politics. Its members are:**

- » **Matthias Fink**, Secretary General of the European Region Tyrol-Sudtirol-Trentino (Tyrolean Presidency 2019-2021)
- » **Domenico Rief**, Chamber of Labor Tyrol
- » **Stefan Perini**, AFI | Labor Promotion Institute
- » **Tobias Hölbling**, AFI | Arbeitsförderungsinstitut
- » **Isabella Speziali**, Agenzia del lavoro
- » **Fritz Tiefenthaler**, Advisor to the Tyrolean Government

**The working group is responsible for the operational management of the project. Its members are:**

- » **Tobias Hölbling**, Head of the Working Group, AFI | Arbeitsförderungsinstitut
- » **Domenico Rief**, Chamber of Labor Tyrol
- » **Isabella Speziali**, Agenzia del lavoro

### 1.3 Target group

The target group of the survey was all persons aged 15 to 74 who performed at least one hour of paid work in the week preceding the time of the survey (excluding conscripts). This very broad definition includes employees, self-employed persons, pensioners with a small part-time job, housewives and the unemployed.

### 1.4 Language and adaptation of questionnaires

For the German-speaking areas of the Euroregion (province of Tyrol and large parts of

<sup>1</sup> The European Working Conditions Survey has been conducted every five years since 1991 by the European Agency for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, based in Dublin, Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> South Tyrol in figures 2016: 15



South Tyrol), the official Austrian version was used. The AFI added a question on language group membership and made several minor adjustments in the classification of school education. Furthermore, the farm size has been broken down more finely to take into account local circumstances. Trentino has used the official Italian version, the questions of which have also been used for the Italian-speaking South Tyroleans. The smallest ethnic group in South Tyrol, the Ladins, had to - as is unfortunately customary in surveys in South Tyrol - choose between German and Italian.

## 1.5 Market sounding and new adjustment due to the corona pandemic

In February 2020, Eurofound had just started the Europe-wide implementation of the seventh edition of the EWCS when the coronapandemic threw a spanner in the works of the previous outreach questionnaire practice (the so-called CAPI): Due to contact restrictions and curfews imposed across Europe, the survey could no longer be conducted in person as before. Eurofound decided not to postpone or even cancel the survey, but to conduct it by telephone <sup>(CATI<sup>3</sup>)</sup> at the earliest possible date.

Due to the switch to CATI interviews, the questionnaire had to be shortened to 20 minutes in order not to discourage potential participants due to too long a response time. This measure required the deletion of numerous questions. The ver-

The remaining questions were regrouped into several thematic blocks (so-called modules), which were assigned to the participants in turn according to a specific plan.

The partner organizations in the European region also had to revise their already published list of requirements and change the survey from face-to-face interviews to telephone interviews.

The market sounding was finally re-tendered by the three partner organizations in February 2021 and the contracts were awarded by direct award in March 2021.

## 2. Implementation

In March 2021, three opinion research institutes were commissioned to conduct the survey in the respective areas of the European region. In North and East Tyrol, the market research institute market (Linz) was chosen, in South Tyrol the Bolzano Institute for Social Research Apollis and in Trentino the Trieste SWG S.p.a.. After a trial phase in May 2021, the main investigation, which was originally planned to last eight weeks, ran from the first half of June until the beginning of September 2021 due to some delays (especially overlapping with other projects).

### 2.1 Sample selection and contact source

**The sample should wider two important distributions as parent variables:**

1. Distribution by gender and
2. Distribution of population among municipalities below or above 9,000 inhabitants.

### » Province of Tyrol:

The only source of data for the telephone interviews was the current Herald telephone directory for Austria, from which all Tyrolean contacts were entered into the system and contacted at random. If a person agreed to be interviewed, the next step was to check the corresponding target group and quota specifications and, if they were correct, to conduct the interview.

### South Tyrol:

Apollis adhered to three sources: Source 1 was the official civil register. The target persons from this register were contacted by mail and asked for their cooperation. Source 2 was the official telephone directory. The selection of households was random, but spatially stratified. This stratification was continuously monitored by the CATI software, so that this spatial component was largely eliminated in the course of the weighting procedure. Source 3 was the Apollis panel, an internal address directory. This directory was built up in earlier surveys in which the official registration register served as the selection frame and where no landline connection was available at the time of recruitment. Contacts from the Apollis panel are added under control of the spatial stratification described above.

### Trentino:

SWG has made use of the DBU, the so-called "Data-base Unico". This database contains the numbers and identification features of clients of all Italian telephone providers. From these, SWG selected and called random numbers by computer. If someone fell into the grid (place of residence or work in Trentino) and was willing to participate, he was included in the survey, taking into account the target group variables.

## 2.2 Training of interviewers

AFI conducted three training sessions using the materials provided by Eurofound, in German for market and Apollis, and in Italian for SWG. The survey institute Apollis repeated the training on two dates on its own initiative for employees who joined later.

## 2.3 Field phase

All interviews in the entire European region were conducted using the CATI method based on the Eurofound model. The interviewer and interviewee went through the questionnaire, which consists of core questions common to all participants and automatically assigned modules, step by step using a computer program. One advantage of the CATI method is that, theoretically, no questions or statements can be forgotten or incorrectly asked - all items are predefined by the software in terms of content and flow logic.

The computer program automatically assigned the individual modules to the potential participants. An interview usually lasted 20 minutes.

## 2.4 Special features and survey difficulties

### Province of Tyrol:

In general, from the markets' point of view, there was a relatively long "finding phase" for the interviewers in this survey, who needed a relatively long time to adjust to the study systematics and characteristics (ideal greeting/introduction, explanation of the study background, selection and assignment of the target persons, etc.).

<sup>3</sup> Computer assisted telephone interview, computer-assisted telephone interview

The explanatory welcome texts (with the reference to Eurofound, the study on the "improvement of living and working conditions", the reference to the European framework, etc.) were a certain barrier to establishing contact, especially at the beginning. According to market, interviewers felt that this made the survey unnecessarily complicated; as a result, the participation rate was very sluggish, especially at the beginning. It was not until market simplified the greeting texts, and only used a "Study commissioned by the Chamber of Labor on working conditions in Tyrol" had occurred, everything had been simpler.

As market had already indicated several times during the study, especially the thank-you gift to the participants, the Herbert Pixner CD provided, was perceived very suspiciously by the potential interview partners. On the one hand, the participants were not very interested in the gift, and on the other hand, many did not really understand the connection with the study content, i.e. why a participant would receive this CD in the first place. As a result, only about one in four wanted the CD. The same was true for the raffle (only in the province of Tyrol), although according to the market it was somewhat better received.

#### » South Tyrol:

Apollis explained its late start to the survey in July 2021 by saying that there had been delays in the spring due to tendering, over which the company had no control. These delays meant that Apollis had to use its resources for another contract that it had already agreed to before the EWCS contract was signed, but was confident that it would be able to complete it by the deadline of August 31.

Due to the late start, which fell in the middle of the vacation season, the company had a hard time responding to the requirements for a rule-compliant ab-

interviews and asked for two extensions. At the end of September, the data set with the agreed interviews was delivered.

Apart from the inconvenient start of the survey in the middle of summer, Apollis reported no major difficulties. The gifts were well received, with more than two-thirds of the participants wanting to receive Herbert Pixner's CD. According to Apollis, the interview duration was reasonable and actually averaged the 20 minutes stated by Eurofound.

The delivery of the CD was delayed in the federal state of Tyrol and South Tyrol until January 2021, which caused some angry inquiries at Apollis. After several requests, the gifts have been sent in the end.

#### » Trentino:

SWG did not report any significant difficulties during the field phase beyond the distrust of telephone surveys that is usually encountered. This usual mistrust of telephone surveys among the target population is due on the one hand to ignorance of the content of the survey (many think it is intended to sell something), while others simply do not have the time or are not interested in participating. The fact that the survey was commissioned by the Agenzia del lavoro helped to dispel any initial mistrust on the part of potential participants, according to SWG. The only criticism was that the interviews took too long. The gift has been well received.

## 2.5 Response rate and Response behavior

In the three participation areas, the number of targeted interviews as well as the

planned sampling distributions fully achieved.

In the province of Tyrol, the distribution in the sample between rural and urban areas (by definition > 9,000 inhabitants) was about two thirds (rural) to one third (urban) according to the representative quota. According to the market, the participation rate in the interview itself was roughly identical in both regions, i.e. there were no significant differences in the willingness to participate in the study depending on the degree of urbanity.

Apollis (South Tyrol) was able to extract 1,519 complete interviews from 17,024 persons contacted, but with the help of its own database (panel) with persons (N=127) who were more willing to participate in such surveys. Significant response biases cannot be derived from this, and the data are fully usable. The South Tyrolean participation rate according to city/state or number of inhabitants (threshold value 9,000) was equally distributed, as expected.

Once again, in Trentino it has been confirmed that the use of automated calls, although fully welcome as a statistical method, is the least productive. SWG automatically called 63,865 numbers for 1,531 fully completed interviews; the success rate is therefore 2.4%. The participation rate by city/state or population (threshold 9,000) was approximately identical.



## 3. Data preparation

Collected data are first of all raw data, which can be subject to errors. These must be subjected to a quality check in order to be able to classify the extent to which the collected data are reliable in terms of statistics and content. In order to enable plausible conclusions and deeper analyses, it is often necessary to weight the collected data in empirical studies. Such weightings assign an individual value to each case, based on an external frame of reference.

The datasets of the three polling institutes were very similar due to the adoption of the Eurofound rules and were again adjusted to each other after the completion of the field phase using a sample dataset developed by Apollis. The AFI merged the three datasets into a single one that includes all cases from the entire Euro- pare region.

### 3.1 Data cleansing

All item codes were checked for accuracy during questionnaire entry into the software.

The three institutes commissioned had to pay special attention to items Q5, Q6 and Q13. In contrast to the other open-ended questions, these items are used to classify the occupations and industries of the respondents and the organizations in which they work. The credibility of these codes was checked by the respective representatives of the three sponsoring institutions AK, AFI and Agenzia del lavoro. On average, a low single-digit percentage of the codings were objected to in the entire European region and, after content-related



The AFI also performed checks with the check variable age on the entire dataset. The AFI also performed checks with the age variable on the entire data set.

### 3.2 Weighting and reweighing

Weighting is used when certain groups are over- or underrepresented in the sample (cf. Brosius 2013: 300), e.g. sociodemographic data such as age, gender and place of residence do not reflect the actual distribution in the population.

- so almost always in large-scale studies.

The major frame of reference, according to Eurofound's model, was the LFS, the 2019 Labor Force Survey<sup>4</sup>, to which the weightings are aligned.

Since different versions of the labor force survey (2019 and 2020 editions) were used in the individual sub-areas due to a misunderstanding, a reweighting became necessary, which was carried out by all commissioned institutes according to the agreement and specifications of Apollis.

The individual steps of weighting and stratification were implemented exactly according to the specifications of Eurofound.

The threshold values of the post-stratification in the overall data set vary from the lower end at 0.0 to 0.25 to the upper end at 4 to 4.8. The extreme values mentioned are reached in only a few cases (a total of 1.5% of the cases) and allow a clean further processing of the data.

Due to their size, the weighting tables for the three survey areas are not included in this report, but can be obtained from the author if required.

### 3.3 Classifications: Occupation, Economic sector and education level

The ISCO occupational classification (ILO 2012) was classified down to the third level by the survey institutes commissioned (SWG even classified down to the fifth level), as was the information on the NACE and Italian ATECO classification<sup>5</sup>. Both classification systems allow the classification of employees (companies and organizations) into precisely defined economic sectors or activities (ILO 2012: V) and thus offer a Europe-wide/international comparability of economic structures (ATECO 2007:9) and occupations.

The ISCED index (ISCED 2011), which classifies the highest level of educational attainment of the interviewees, was recorded throughout Europe down to two levels.

### 3.4 Data quality check

The quality check of self-collected and/or externally supplied data must be at the beginning of any analysis.

Schendera (2011, IX) summarizes this well when he says: "The quality of data is not an end in itself. Data at the end of a quality process are thus always also information. If information is the basis of knowledge

knowledge is power, then it should be clear what erroneous data means." Incomplete, inconsistent, or erroneous data in the untested raw data set can only lead to erroneous analysis and, based on that, biased and incorrect research results.



**Table 1**  
Best steps according to Schendera

	Result
Completeness of the data set	All variables of the comparative questionnaires (Austrian and Italian edition of the EWCS) are completely included in the delivered raw data set. The response options (values) are included in full.
Uniformity of the data set	The uniformity of the data is given except for minor inadequacies that were easy to correct.
Double data rows and multiple data rows	No duplicate cases/multiple data rows present.
Missings	No problems with missing values. Missing values due to modules are to be calculated by means of imputation and therefore do not count as missings in the usual sense.
Outlier	The univariate outliers are within the usual, manageable range (individual variables checked by frequency and/or boxplot). Complex multivariate outliers were not tested.
Coding ATECO- ISCO	After a substantive review of a total of 4,500 cases, a low single-digit percentage range of classifications appears unconvincing to the sponsoring organizations Europe-wide. The AK and the AFI changed the two-fold cases in joint coordination, the Agenzia del lavoro in agreement with SWG.

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<sup>4</sup>EU Labor Force Survey

<sup>5</sup>Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne, Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community. Link in the bibliography.

### 3.5 Check for normal distribution

The data are not normally distributed in their entirety. However, according to Zöfel,<sup>20026</sup> such a normal distribution rarely occurs in empirically obtained data. Since the individual deviations are not really significant when looking at the corresponding histograms, the data can be treated as if they were normally distributed.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.6 Significances and group-thresholds

A significance test checks whether the result of a test is also valid in the population. The probability of error  $p$  that can be committed (i.e., if the null hypothesis is incorrectly rejected) is between 0 (impossible error) and 1 (smaller error). Statements with a probability of error of 0.05 or less are considered significant in this study.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the significance limits generally<sup>9</sup> accepted in empirical social research apply:  $p \leq 0.05$  (significant),  $p \leq 0.01$  (very significant),  $p \leq 0.001$  (highly significant).

Group threshold: A group, however defined, must have a minimum size of 50 cases in order to make valid statements about the population.

<sup>6</sup> Zöfel 2002: 25

<sup>7</sup> "Much more is also decisive how much the actual distribution deviates from the normal distribution. (...) In such a case, where the distribution seems to be at least approximately normally distributed, statistical tests that assume a normal distribution can still be performed. (...) You should just be a little more careful (conservative) in interpreting these tests." Brosius 2007: 182.

<sup>8</sup> cf. Zöfel 2002: 54

<sup>9</sup> Zöfel 2002: 63

### 3.7 Imputation

Because the original questionnaire had to be shortened to about 20 minutes, not all questions could be asked of every participant. The questions were bundled into modules, which were asked in different combinations. Thus, each participant answered about two thirds of all questions. The missing third of the answers can be extrapolated using a statistical method called imputation. The aim of this procedure is to calculate the missing third of the answers in such a way that the natural range of answers is reflected as faithfully as possible.

In March 2022, Eurofound will have decided whether to impute the European dataset and, if so, which method to use. If Eurofound decides in favor of an imputation, it will inform the sponsoring organizations about the exact procedure. AK Tirol has asked the Management Center Innsbruck for a possible calculation, which has already confirmed its interest in the implementation.

### Conclusion

The European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino has successfully carried out the European Working Conditions Survey EWCS. This role as a pioneer among the European regions is also appreciated by Eurofound and has been actively supported and supervised by the Dublin Foundation.

Now a data set of 4,500 persons is available, which is representative for the working population of the whole European region and which allows to investigate the working conditions within the European region and to compare them on a European level.

The path from the idea to the finished data set was not always easy and showed many times, even within the three sponsoring organizations, how different opinions, preferred approaches and legal cultures can be, even in the small area of the "country in the mountains". Nonetheless, the three sponsoring organizations have always pulled together, made joint decisions, and steered the survey safely into port in cooperation with the commissioned institutes. The EWCS dataset is a treasure trove of data that can contribute a great deal to understanding and improving working conditions in the European region.

The data quality check did not reveal any deficiencies. Fortunately, the necessary weightings turned out to be low. Thus, the data set can be used for further analyses.

**Tobias Hölbling**  
[tobias.hoelbling@afi-ipl.org](mailto:tobias.hoelbling@afi-ipl.org)



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» **Table 2**  
Contacts and contact attempts (South Tyrol: Apollis)

	Quantity gross	Quantity net	Number Net (%)
Registration number unknown	6.469		
Wrong number	690		
No contact possible (10 contact attempts)	3.022		
No target budget	198		
No target person in the household	3.066	88	
Open dates	88	70	2,5%
Not interviewable	70	68	2,0%
Never reachable	68	176	1,9%
Other reason for exclusion without interview	176	317	4,9%
Other person denied	317	1.341	8,9%
Target refuses	1.341	1.519	37,5%
Target person interviewed	1.519	3.579	42,4%
Total	17.024		100,0%



» **Table 3**  
Contacts and contact attempts (Trentino: SWG)

<b>Totale contatti</b>	<b>63.865</b>
Numero di interviste completate	1.532 *
Screenout	1.563
Esclusi perché non in grado di rispondere (scarsa comprensione della lingua, ecc)	0
Interviste cadute perché non interessati	5.527
Interviste cadute per altri motivi	35
Interviste interrotte da riprendere	0
Interviste interrotte definitivamente	56
Fax	220
Segreteria Telefonica / irraggiungibile	4.188
Appuntamenti fissati	9.800
Numero libero	36.005
Numero occupato	4.939

» **Table 4**  
Sample Size and Realized Interviews by Source (South Tyrol: Apollis)

Register of residents	6.943	429
Phone book	9.809	926
Panel	272	164
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.024</b>	<b>1.519</b>

» **Table 5**  
Composition of the population register sample (South Tyrol: Apollis)

<b>Age groups</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
15 - 24 years	0	0
25 - 34 years	1.220	537
35 - 44 years	1.548	820
45 - 54 years	1.290	925
55 - 64 years	321	282
65 years and older	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.379</b>	<b>2.564</b>

» **Table 6**  
Composition of the sample by sex, age and number of inhabitants (Trentino: SWG).

<b>Interview history</b>	<b>aspired</b>	<b>confirms</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.500</b>	<b>1.531</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>aspired</b>	<b>confirms</b>
male	823	793
female	677	738
Total	1.500	1.531
<b>Age groups</b>	<b>aspired</b>	<b>confirms</b>
15 - 24 years	101	54
25 - 34 years	276	316
35 - 44 years	363	402
45 - 54 years	453	421
55 years and older	306	338
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.500</b>	<b>1.531</b>

Municipalities with more than 9,000 inhabitants	aspired	confirms
1 - Trento	331	339
2 - Rovereto	110	110
3 - Pergine Valsugana	60	60
4 - Arco	49	50
5 - Riva del Garda	49	49
6 - Mori	28	29
7 - Lavis	25	26
8 - other communities	848	869
Municipalities with less than 9,000 inhabitants	aspired	confirms
Comunità di valle	276	316
1 - Comunità territoriale della Val di Fiemme	47	50
2 - Comunità del Primiero	27	27
3 - Comunità Valsugana e Tesino	73	76
4 - Comunità Alta Valsugana e Bersntol	143	147
5 - Comunità della Valle di Cembra	51	36
6 - Comunità Val di Non	98	99
7 - Comunità della Valle di Sole	51	52
8 - Comunità delle Giudicarie	100	105
9 - Comunità Alto Garda e Ledro	146	148
10 - Comunità della Vallagarina	275	272
11 - Comun General de Fascia	28	30
12 - Magnifica Comunità degli Altipiani Cimbri	16	15
13 - Comunità Rotaliana Königsberg	70	72
14 - Comunità della Paganella	15	16
15 - Territorio Val d'Adige	320	352
16 - Comunità della Valle dei Laghi	38	35



