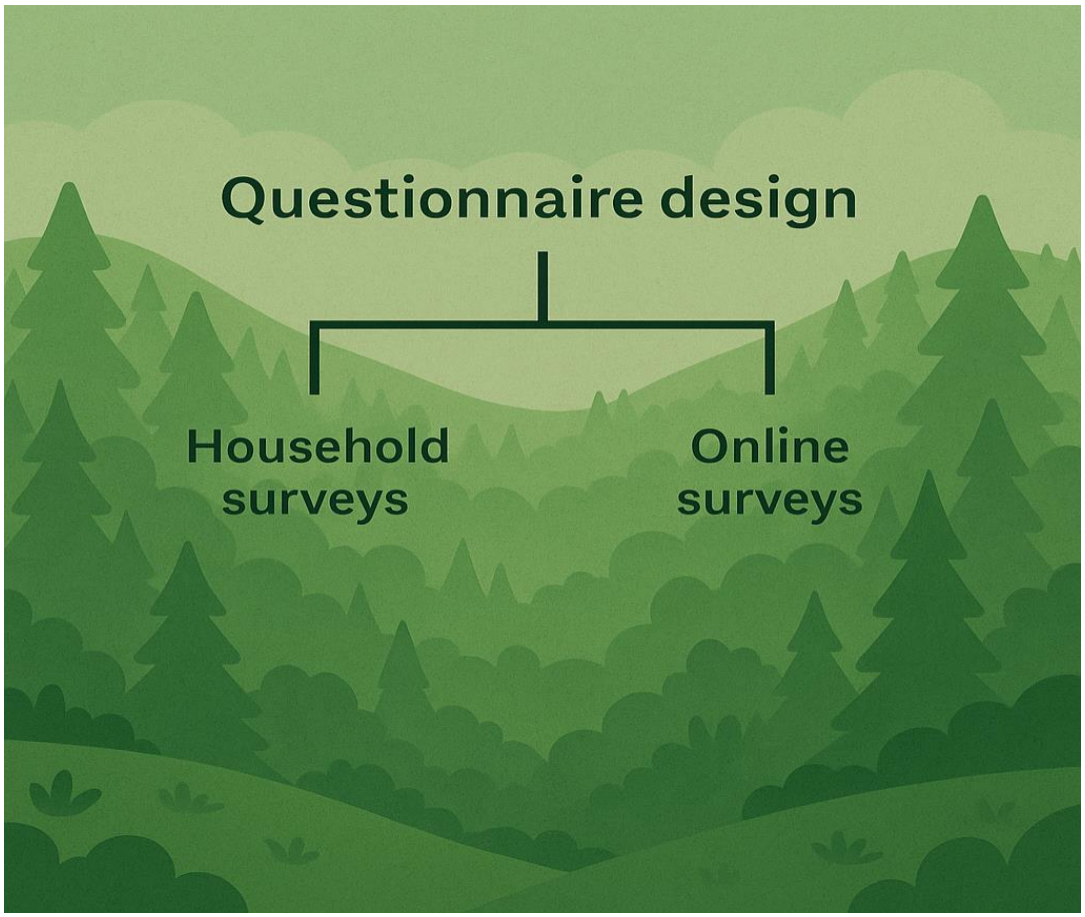

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING SURVEYS

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING HOUSEHOLD AND ONLINE PANEL SURVEYS

SUPERB
Upscaling Forest Restoration

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101036849.

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Recommended citation:

Kazungu, M. & Hunziker, M. (2025). Guidelines for conducting household and online panel surveys to explore attitudes towards forests and forest restoration in Europe. Horizon 2020 Project No. 101036849, European Commission, 9 pages.

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BRIEF SUMMARY

These guidelines provide practical recommendations for designing and implementing household and online surveys to investigate public attitudes towards forests and forest restoration. Aimed at researchers, practitioners, and policy actors, the guide promotes a collaborative and culturally sensitive approach to questionnaire development, informed by local insights, exploratory interviews, and existing literature. The survey should address five key areas: perceived benefits of forests, perceived restoration types, perceived impacts of restoration, willingness to support restoration, and respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. For household surveys, the guide outlines procedures for sampling, ethical compliance, and improving response rates through postal invitations and reminders. The online survey section includes advice on setting quotas, selecting qualified survey firms, and ensuring data quality. Questionnaires are available in twelve European languages and are designed to be inclusive and representative of national and regional contexts. The overall aim is to support evidence-based decision-making and foster public engagement in sustainable forest management and restoration efforts.

Questionnaire development and design

A standardised questionnaire should be developed through a collaborative process involving both researchers and forest restoration practitioners. It is advisable to include representatives from different countries or regions to ensure cultural and contextual relevance.

The development and design of the questionnaire can follow three main steps: starting with exploratory interviews with experts, followed by key informant interviews, and concluding with the actual survey design. These steps are outlined briefly below:

1. Unstructured expert interviews

In the first stage, conduct unstructured interviews with experts, such as forestry and restoration specialists in each country or region. These interviews help to establish the broader context, identify existing regulations, and explore key issues affecting forests and forest restoration (see SP104). Insights gained from these interviews should be synthesised to inform the development of specific research questions for further investigation.

2. Key informant interviews

Building on the expert interviews, the second stage involves key informant interviews (KIs) with individuals who possess in-depth knowledge of forest use and the perceived benefits of forests in their regions (Kazungu and Hunziker, 2025). These interviews offer valuable insights into local perspectives on forests and restoration practices. It is recommended to select 3–4 key informants per region or country. Their responses should be carefully analysed and synthesised to inform the design of the survey questionnaire. For further guidance on conducting and analysing KIs, see Kazungu and Hunziker (2025).

3. Survey questionnaire design

The questionnaire is structured around four key themes:

- Perceived benefits of forests
- Perceived impacts of restoration on forest benefits
- Willingness to support forest restoration
- Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

To ensure inclusivity and accessibility, the questionnaire should be translated into the main languages spoken in the survey regions. Advanced AI translation tools (e.g., DeepL) can support this process, but all translations must be thoroughly reviewed by native-speaking researchers to ensure linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness.

Regional household surveys

This subsection outlines recommended steps for implementing a regional household survey to explore public attitudes towards forests and forest restoration in specific (rather small) region. The following guidelines can be adapted to suit different national or regional contexts:

Selection of survey areas

- Select a minimum of three municipalities per region to ensure a balance between urban and rural contexts.
- Aim to include diverse population sizes to improve representativeness and generalisability of results.

Access to household registers

- Collaborate with local authorities or reputable agencies to obtain up-to-date household registers.
- Ensure all data access complies with national and regional data protection regulations (e.g. GDPR in Europe).

Sampling strategy

- Use random sampling to select households from the population register.
- Within each selected household, apply a "next birthday" method (e.g. invite the adult aged 18 or above whose birthday comes first in the calendar year).
- Limit responses to one individual per household to avoid sampling bias.

Survey distribution

- Send postal invitations that include a QR code and a web link to access the online survey.
- Clearly state the purpose of the survey, estimated time to complete, and data protection measures.
- Dispatch a reminder letter approximately 10 days after the initial invitation to increase response rates.

Sample size and representation

- Determine the number of invitations based on municipality population sizes, ensuring proportionate representation.
- A minimum of 1,000–1,500 invitations per region is recommended to obtain a robust sample for statistical analysis.

Ethical and legal considerations

- Adhere to all relevant data protection laws, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national equivalents.
- Inform participants about their rights, voluntary participation, and how their data will be used and stored.

Data collection period

- Choose a multi-month window (e.g. 3–6 months) to allow flexibility and accommodate response waves.
- Monitor participation rates regularly and adjust outreach strategies if needed.

Largescale/national online panel surveys

This subsection outlines recommended steps for implementing largescale online panel surveys to explore public attitudes towards forests and forest restoration of an entire country or a large and densely populated region. The following guidelines can be adapted to suit different national or regional contexts:

Study background

- Study area: Define whether the survey targets the national level or specific regions (e.g., Spain, Sweden; North-Rhine-Westfalia, etc.).
- Survey type: Use an ad hoc online survey tailored to the project's needs.
- Sample size: Define a suitable sample size (e.g. n = 1,000) based on statistical and representational requirements for each country or region.
- Survey duration: Aim for a completion time of approximately 10–15 minutes to maintain respondent engagement and ensure high-quality responses.
- Target population: Adults aged 18 and above, including all genders and demographic groups.
- Quota criteria: Use quotas based on age group, gender, and region to achieve a balanced and representative sample.

Selecting an opinion panel survey company

Issue a call for bids to select a qualified opinion survey company. Potential providers can be identified through:

- Direct invitations to experienced or pre-approved firms
- Public calls posted on relevant procurement platforms used by your organisation

Quality indicators for company assessment

Develop a set of quality indicators and assign appropriate weights based on the objectives and resources of the survey. The following indicators are commonly used:

- Panel size (capacity to reach required quotas)
- Panel recruitment method (ensuring participant diversity and quality)
- Sampling detail and reliability
- Flexibility in survey implementation and deliverables
- Experience with similar topics or past projects
- Quality of survey programming and layout
- Implementation timeline and responsiveness
- Cost-effectiveness

Evaluate each bid based on these indicators. The company with the highest composite score should be selected for implementation.

Project kick-off

Following selection, organise a kick-off meeting with the chosen company to confirm:

- Survey timelines
- Questionnaire programming and testing procedures
- Data delivery formats and security protocols
- Communication and reporting milestones

REFERENCES

Kazungu, M. and Hunzicker, M. (2025a). Exploring societal perceptions of forests, ecosystem benefits, and restoration: A case study in Sweden, Scotland, Germany, Serbia, Croatia and Spain. J. Environ. Plan. Manag. https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2025.2490716

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The survey questionnaire is available in the following European languages: English, Swedish, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Croatian, Serbian, Czech, Romanian, Dutch, and Danish. It is published as SP 105b (file location to be added via Gateway).