



HIS • HES

The HIS/HES Database User Survey 2009

Summary of the results

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Päivikki Koponen (1)
Johanna Mäki-Opas (1)
Antti Tuomi-Nikula (1)
Jean Tafforeau (2)

- (1) National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Finland
(2) Scientific Institute of Public Health (IPH), Belgium

INTRODUCTION

The development of the European Health Survey Information Database (<https://hishes.iph.fgov.be/>) is one of the main tasks of the ongoing EUHSID project. The HIS/HES Database User Survey was conducted in order to improve the usability of the database. The survey was carried out with the Digium Enterprise (<http://www.digium.fi/en/>) software during April – May 2009. This is an Internet-based software service for collecting information and managing feedback.

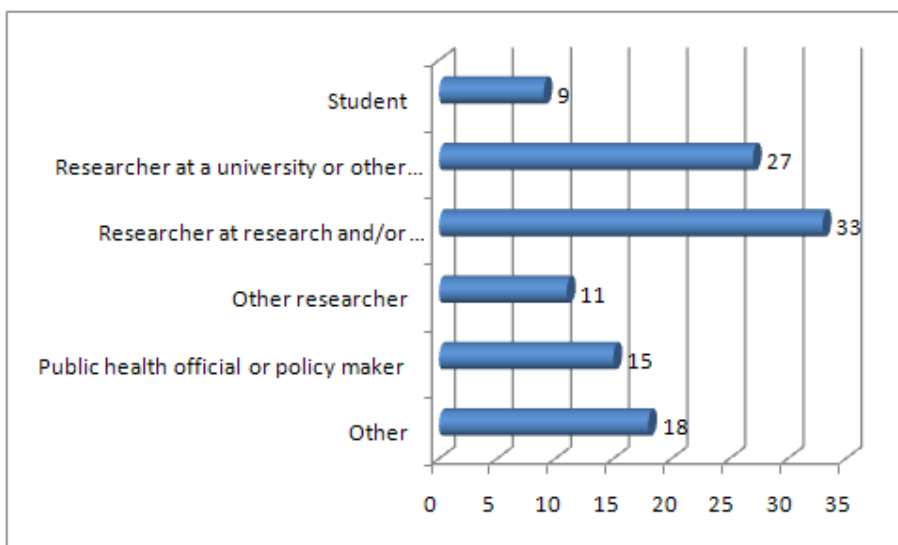
The aim of the User Survey was to further develop the HIS/HES Database and application based on the users' feedback, by describing their opinions on how to improve the usability of the database. The survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) included 15 questions on the respondents' background, usability of the database, strengths and weaknesses of the database and needs for improvements. There were both multiple-choice and open questions.

BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

An e-mail with the link to the survey was mailed to all users who had accessed the database during the past two years (604 persons). Because of the incorrect addresses, not all of them received the survey or there is a possibility that the mail was considered as junk mail and did not reach the respondent. The users' e-mail addresses were collected directly from the HIS/HES Database (the date of the last login of each user is kept).

After one reminder 113 replies were received from 27 countries. Most respondents were from the United Kingdom (n=13), Belgium (11), Finland (11), Germany (8), Spain (7) or USA (7). Other respondents were from Italy (6), Austria (5), the Netherlands (5), France (4), Luxembourg (4), Switzerland (4), Czech Republic (3), Latvia (2), Norway (2), Australia (1), Bulgaria (1), Cyprus (1), Denmark (1), Estonia (1), Hungary (1), Lithuania (1), Poland (1), Portugal (1), Romania (1), Slovakia (1) and Sweden (1). Most of the respondents were researchers either at a university or other education institute or at a research and/or development or statistical institute (Figure 1). There were also policy makers or public health officials and students, or officials from EU bodies such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

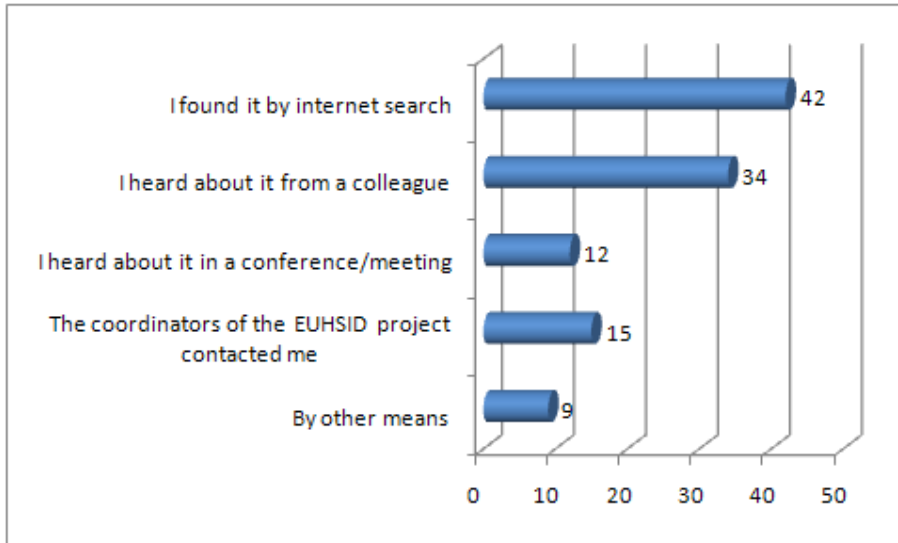
Figure 1. Current position of the respondents (n)



THE USE OF THE DATABASE

Over 37% of the respondents had found the HIS/HES Database by internet search and approximately 30% had heard about it from a colleague. Other users had heard about it in a conference or meeting, or from the coordinators of the EUHSID project (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Sources of information about the HIS/HES Database (n)



One fifth (21%) of the respondents had used the database more than 10 times, 19% from 5 to ten times, and 38% had used the database only from one to four times. Approximately 22% had visited the database, but had not really used it. The reasons given for not using the database were that the database did not contain the information the respondent was looking for, or they had been too busy to really use it. Over 60% of respondents had visited the database during the past 6 months.

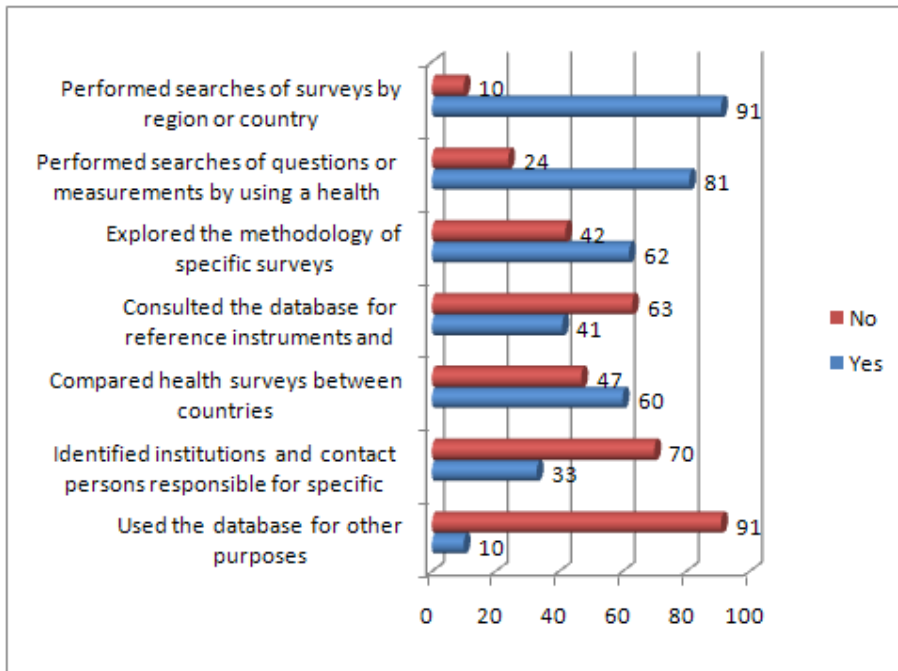
Only 25% of the respondents had read the user manual. Those who had read it considered the user manual to be at least somewhat useful (46% very useful).

The database was most commonly used to:

- perform searches of surveys by region or country
- search questions or measurement methods by using a health topic
- explore the methodology of specific surveys (Figure 3)

A few respondents had used the database for their university studies to learn about survey methodology. All respondents considered the database to be at least somewhat useful, 46% considered the database to be very useful.

Figure 3. For what purposes the users had used the database (n)

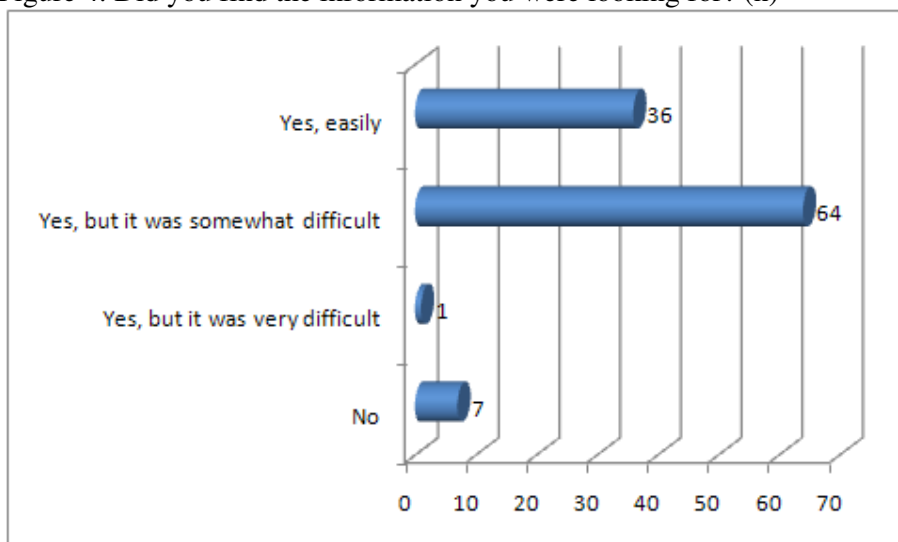


USABILITY OF THE DATABASE

Difficulties in using the database

33% of the respondents found easily the information they were looking for in the database. 59% did find the information, but with some difficulties (Figure 4). However, when the respondents were asked if they have had any problems or difficulties in using the database, 70% answered no. The respondents (n=26) reported several problems in using the database: the structure of the database was not very user-friendly, search methods were somewhat problematic and information was lacking.

Figure 4. Did you find the information you were looking for? (n)



Best features of the database

58 comments for the question “What is the best feature in the database” were received. Users of the database were pleased to find a large amount of health surveys conducted in EU area from one place. The users found the database to be comprehensive and they appreciated the fact that it contains very much information. The possibility to compare the surveys with the help of the database was also one of the best features. In many comments the possibility to find the questions used in surveys were mentioned.

“updated information about the conduct of the health surveys and the availability of the data”

“It is very easy to compare questions to a specific topic between different surveys. There is lots of important information stored in the database (about the instrument, methodology etc.) and it is updated all the time. Especially when designing a survey it is very useful.”

Worst features of the database

47 comments for the question “What is the worst feature in the database” were received. The users felt that sometimes in the database the information is lacking, it is not comprehensive or it is outdated. Also the structure of the database is not always very user-friendly. The usability is somewhat difficult: it was not always easy to go from page to page, problems in printing the information from the database, and some users did not find all topic codes logical and easy to comprehend.

“Can be tricky to find the relevant information as the right terminology has to be used.”

“It does not allow you to create databases and many surveys have incomplete information, specially methodological aspects. It also does not include the source of the question (i.e. reference).”

“The search options for general survey methodology (e.g. sample size)”

“The search features are somewhat unsophisticated”

Suggestions for further development of the database

Respondents are expecting better search methods (e.g. key word search), more frequent updates (more surveys, contact information of the surveys, links to the original survey), more user-friendly structure, data of the survey results, better outputs, and more languages, or they wanted to have a password reminder.

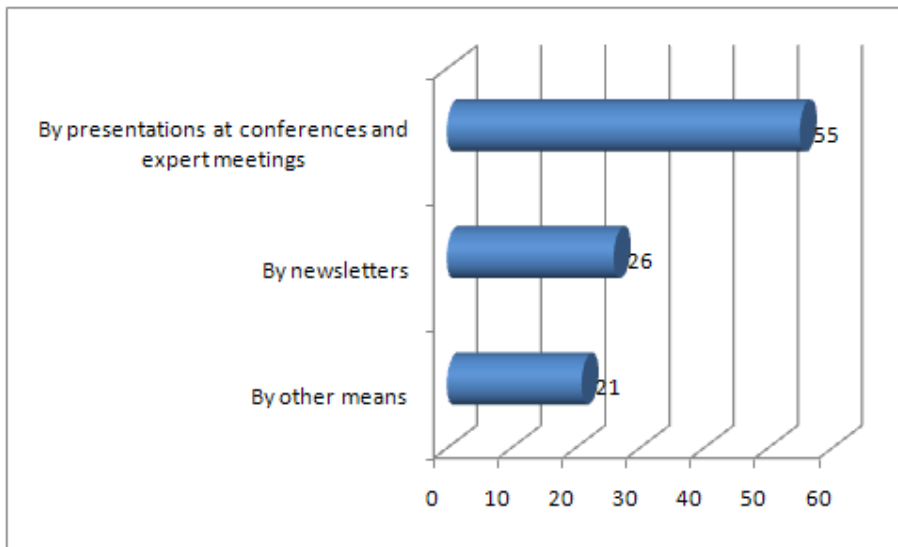
“Convert the protocols etc into user friendly information. It currently appears to be a standard form turned into an interactive web page. Makes it hard to follow if you are not familiar with it”

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE DATABASE

Only 33% of respondents had visited the EUHSID project website (<http://www.euhsid.org/>) and 21% had read the first EUHSID newsletter (first issue was mailed in March 2009). Half of those who had not read the newsletter had not received it. The best way to disseminate the information

about the database according to respondents is by presentations at conferences and expert meetings (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Best way to disseminate information about the existence of the database (n)



OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT THE DATABASE

In their final remarks a few respondents emphasized their satisfaction that the database is available and supported the idea that it should be further developed and updated.

This is a fantastic project and much needed. It would be even better to have other countries (e.g. China, India, South America) included also, and to have direct links to the survey websites and data downloads where available. Perhaps also a blog where people can explain the procedures and any problems they encountered when accessing the data, purchasing it, jumping through bureaucratic loops, appraising it and analysing and interpreting it.

Some also wanted to point out the need for developing the database to be more user-friendly.

I think if you want to increase the number using the database, you need to improve the appearance and make it easier to find relevant information. It is hard to find your way around the database and it is easy to close it down completely in error.

CONCLUSIONS

The user survey was successful in receiving feedback from different types of users and from several countries, also outside Europe. Many valuable comments were received which will be helpful in the database development. Problems, which users had encountered, will be addressed. For example the topic code definitions will be added to the database, list of surveys and website addresses will be placed to the project's website and the structure of the database will be evaluated based on these comments. The existence of the user manual needs to be emphasized, because many of the problems reported by the users could be avoided with the help of the user manual. Examples on how to use the database efficiently will also be included in the project newsletters.

Appendix 1. The survey questionnaire

HIS/HES Database user survey 2009

Background information

Current position

- Student
- Researcher at a university or other education institute
- Researcher at research and/or development institute (e.g. public health institute)
- Other researcher
- Public health official or policy maker
- Other, please specify _____

Country

Other country, which? _____

The use of the database

How did you find the HIS/HES Database?

- I found it by internet search
- I heard about it from a colleague
- I heard about it in a conference/meeting
- The coordinators of the EUHSID project contacted me
- By other means, which _____

How many times have You approximately used the database?

- More than 10 times
- 5-10 times
- 2-4 times
- I have used the database only once
- I have visited the database website, but I have not really used it

Why not?

- Login problems
- I found the database too difficult to use
- The database did not seem to contain the information I was looking for
- Other problems, please specify _____

When was the last time You accessed the database?

- Less than 6 months ago
 6-12 months ago
 1-2 years ago
 More than 2 years ago

Have you read the database user manual?

- Yes
 No

Did You find the user manual

- Very useful
 Somewhat useful
 Not useful

While using the HIS/HES Database, have You

| | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Performed searches of surveys by region or country | () | () |
| Performed searches of questions or measurements by using a health topic | () | () |
| Explored the methodology of specific surveys | () | () |
| Consulted the database for reference instruments and examination protocols | () | () |
| Compared health surveys between countries | () | () |
| Identified institutions and contact persons responsible for specific health surveys | () | () |
| Used the database for other purposes | () | () |

Please specify for which other purposes you have used the database?

Did you find the information you were looking for?

- Yes, easily
 Yes, but it was somewhat difficult
 Yes, but it was very difficult
 No

Usability of the database**Have you had any problems or difficulties in using the database**

- No
 Yes, please specify what was problematic and/or difficult

Do you consider the database to be

- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not useful

What is the best feature in the database?

What is the worst feature in the database?

Please suggest improvements how we could make the database more useful and easier to use

Have you visited in the project website www.euhsid.org?

- Yes
- No

Have you read the first issue of the EUHSID newsletter (http://www.euhsid.org/docs/EUHSID_newsletter_1.pdf)?

- Yes
- No

Why not?

- I have not received any newsletter
- I found no time to read the newsletter
- I was not interested
- Other reason, why? _____

What is the best way to disseminate information about the existence of the database?

- By presentations at conferences and expert meetings
- By newsletters
- By other means, which _____

Other comments about the HIS/HES database or the project website
