

Attitudes to Distributional Equity

Report to the European Science Foundation

Frank Cowell, STICERD, LSE. February 2002

1. Executive summary

1.1.Objectives

In the previous two years researchers in the workshop group had independently advanced the idea of Internet research in the field. A number of experimental sites had been set up by senior researchers and the topic had become the focus several graduate students' work in various European universities.

The June workshop meeting was to bring together the co-ordinating group, key associated researchers and other leading scholars in order to:

- Compare and contrast the results of co-ordinated pilot studies conducted in 2000/2001.
- Present key results from individual experiments in the field.
- Provide a forum for discussion of related research.
- Develop a strategy for the next three years.

1.2.Main features of workshop

The two-day workshop included:

- Presentations of work-in-progress on a number of related projects in social equity.
- Demonstration of the development of a "Virtual Laboratory" incorporating the pilot experiments using the Internet.
- Discussion of preliminary results using the Virtual Laboratory.
- Planning meetings for further funded research

1.3.Outcomes

As a direct result of this workshop a number of discussion papers have been completed and some papers associated with the workshop presentation have been accepted for publication.

Some of the preliminary presentations at the workshop have since been included in major international conferences.

A three-year programme for developing the research initiative was discussed. Specific funding plans were proposed and have subsequently been put into action. The results of these further funding initiatives – in Sweden and the United Kingdom – have all been favourable so far.

1.4.Participation

The workshop brought together representatives from five European countries plus Israel.

2. Scientific content

2.1. Questionnaire-experiments

The principal results from a number of questionnaire experiments were presented and discussed including:

- Preference reversals in a social context and their relationship to phenomena in the risk literature.
- A comparison of social-welfare judgments and judgments under uncertainty.
- Inequality and risk comparisons, in East and West Europe.
- An experimental analysis of the distributional principles incorporated in the work of the philosopher Larry Temkin.

2.2. The Virtual Laboratory

This Internet tool for the analysis of attitudes to income distribution was presented and discussed. The prospects for its development were considered and specific proposals for this are to be the subject of further funding bids. A summary of the principal features can be inspected by going to the “Attitudes to Income Distribution Website”:

<http://darp.lse.ac.uk/vlab/>

2.3. On-line presentations

The following conference presentations

- Attitudes to Risk and Inequality
- Preference Reversals

are also available on line by going to:

<http://darp.lse.ac.uk/Frankweb/Frank/presentationwrite.asp>

3. Final Programme

Attitudes to Distributional Equity Workshop Funded by the European Science Foundation

Hotel Jerbourg, Guernsey, C.I. 1st-2nd June 2001

Friday 1st June

Arrival, Hotel Jerbourg.

11:30 **Coffee.** Welcome and introductory session on European Science Foundation project.

11:45 Avraham Polovin: Preference reversals

12:30 Yoram Amiel: B4-U4. Results from a social-welfare experiment

13:15 **Lunch: (free)**

14:15 Wulf Gaertner: Inequality and risk comparisons, East and West

15:00 Kurt Devooght: A test of the Temkin model

15:45 Mårten Palme: I4a – an extension of the basic transfer-principle model

16:30 **Tea.** Round table discussion. Funding options for the coming years.

17:00 Guillermo Cruces: The “Virtual Laboratory” and the design of Internet experiments.

17:45 Erik Schokkaert: Internet experiments with Belgian students.

18:45 Informal Discussion: Language and the Internet.

20:00 **Dinner: Hotel Jerbourg**

Saturday 2nd June

09:15 Frank Cowell: Links between risk and inequality

10:00 Liema Davidovitz: Early experience with Internet experiments – where next?

10:45 **Coffee.** Round table discussion. Research plans – next steps.

11:15 Frank Cowell and Guillermo Cruces: The “Virtual Laboratory” further plans

12:30 **Lunch**

14:00 Frank Cowell, Yoram Amiel, Erik Schokkaert: Attitudes to distributional equity – poverty and political decision-makers

15:30 Free time

20:00 **Dinner: Hotel Bon Port**

Close of Workshop

4. Assessment

4.1. Work already completed

The workshop reported on a number of research initiatives that have, in the months following the project, been incorporated in finished research papers and in forthcoming scientific publications.

The Virtual Laboratory has been launched in pilot version as a research tool in the participating countries.

4.2. Work in prospect

One purpose of the workshop was to develop a coherent strategy for further funding applications.

The first stage of this has now taken place. Successful applications have been made to funding bodies in the UK and Sweden for a related project involving also the relationship between risk and aspects of social equity. Further funding is being sought from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council under its Research Methods Programme.

5. Final list of participants

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6. Participant information

6.1. Country of origin

Belgium 2
Germany 1
Israel 3
Norway 1
Sweden 1
UK 3

6.2. Age

20-29	1
30-44	4
45-59	5

6.3. Gender

M: 9
F: 2