



Making metadata inclusive: content development in the European Language Social Science Thesaurus (ELSST)

IASSIST Conference, 2 June 2023: Session F2

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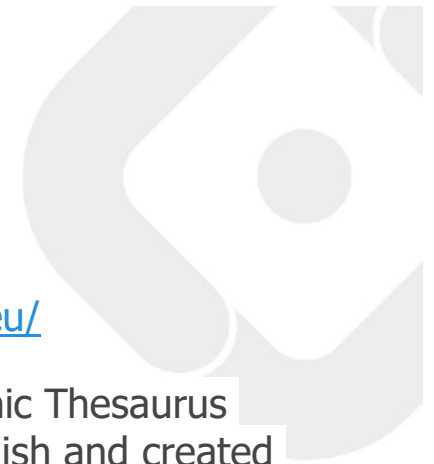


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ELSST background and history

- European Language Social Science Thesaurus (ELSST): <https://elsst.cessda.eu/>
- Originally based on UK Data Archive's Humanities and Social Science Electronic Thesaurus (HASSET). LIMBER project translated HASSET into French, German and Spanish and created ELSST in 2000
- ELSST funded by Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) since 2012
- 3,300+ concepts cover core social science disciplines: politics, sociology, economics, education, law, crime, demography, health, employment, environmental science – conforms to ISO 25964
- Multilingual - translations contributed by CESSDA Service Providers: 16 languages - Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Romanian, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish
- Available under CC BY-SA 4.0 licence, downloadable from Zenodo





ELSST Content development

- As research develops, new and updated concepts needed
- Terminology changes over time
- International collaboration needed to ensure concepts and terms are meaningful across languages
- Content development meetings held fortnightly, all translators invited
- ELSST Translator meetings held bi-monthly
- Annual release of ELSST - only one release a year currently possible because of translation timescales
- Some languages may not be fully updated each year due to resource constraints



Inclusivity: what needed to change?

- Gender and sexuality hierarchy reviewed in 2021
- Why update?
 - thesauri are composed of words; language changes with society and we do not want to transmit stereotypes and gender bias
 - some terms were no longer current; better terms now available to describe the diversity of social reality
 - coverage no longer sufficient for an expanding, nuanced research area
- How to approach the change?



Updating gender and sexuality coverage

- Key ELSST translator has research expertise in area of gender:
 - reorganised existing terms and hierarchies and found the gaps in coverage
 - defined new terms and hierarchies that were needed
- Working with an expert increased our understanding of the area (differences between sex, gender identity and sexual orientation) and allowed effective restructuring of terms and structures covering identity
- Changes made to terms (deprecated, relabelled, moved, or added new), placed them in the right hierarchies, created space for future additions



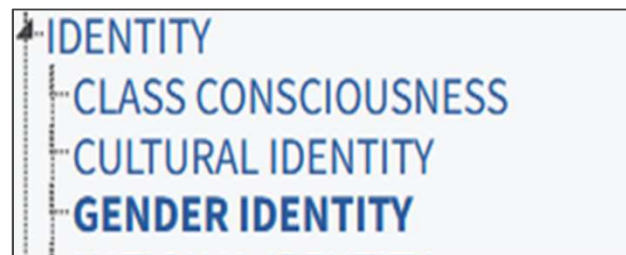
Updating gender and sexuality coverage

- Content development group discussed regularly
- Researched a range of sources to find useful term definitions:
 - [Homosaurus](#)
 - LGBTQIA+ associations, e.g. [LGBT Resource Center at UC San Francisco glossary](#)
 - Verywellmind [Glossary of Must-Know Sexual Identity Terms](#)
 - Gender Identity Research & Education Society (GIRES) [guide to terminology](#)
- Terms have to be relevant across all ELSST languages
- Improved coverage went live September 2022 ([ELSST release 3](#))



'Identity' hierarchy: before update

ELSST version 2
and before:



'Identity' hierarchy: after update

ELSST version 3:
(September 2022)





Updating civil status and family structure

- Revising gender and sexuality led to revision of hierarchies and terms used to define relationship status: one size doesn't fit all
- Changed 'marital status' to 'civil status' to include civil partnerships and other legal unions
- Different types of family structures and parental composition: single-parent families, nuclear families, multi-parent families, step-families, blended families, shared parenting, co-parenting, etc.
- First phase to be released September 2023, more work to be done

Improving gender inclusivity across ELSST

- Updating terms doesn't cover everything: gender inclusivity must be applied across ELSST
- We recognise diversity and want to promote inclusivity
- First step: changing definitions and other associated notes - 'his/her' and 'he/she' to 'their/they', etc. and equivalents across languages
- Second step: in ELSST, count nouns are generally expressed as plurals in the English version. Most (but not all) translator languages use same convention, including languages that use gender in their nouns, where some changes may be needed

Languages and gender inclusivity

- Where languages use gender, masculine form may have been traditionally used, now changing to become more inclusive
- German example: 'Gender star' (*Genderstern*) introduced: an asterisk placed within a noun to indicate it refers to men, women and nonbinary people, e.g.
 - Teachers = *Lehrer* (male) *Lehrerinnen* (female): becomes *Lehrer*innen*. Other characters also used: *Lehrer/innen*, *Lehrer·innen*, *Lehrer:innen*
- In French, the star is sometimes used after a feminine word, e.g. Teachers = *enseignantes**. Middle dot/other character used, e.g. *enseignant·es*, *enseignant-es*, *enseignant-e-s*, *enseignant(e)s*



Improving gender inclusivity across ELSST

- ELSST Translator documents provide guidance on gender inclusivity:
 - use of characters, as previously described
 - use of other strategies, e.g. using a term that does not have gender, such as *Lehrpersonal/Lehrkräfte* or *personnel enseignant* = Teaching personnel/Teaching staff
- Guidelines developed and maintained in collaboration with translators
- A degree of flexibility is required:
 - practice may differ across languages
 - pressure on translator resources

Where next?

- Complete ongoing gender inclusivity work
- Use lessons learnt to inform future practice:
 - further develop translation policy on inclusivity in gender identity, sexual orientation, race, etc.
 - apply policy to all new terms, hierarchies and definitions
 - revise existing terms, hierarchies and definitions
 - monitor changes over time and review accordingly
- Our next hierarchies for review: ethnicity and race, demography



■ Any questions?

Thank you for listening!

Contact form <https://thesauri.cessda.eu/elsst/en/feedback>

