



Title	Key Strategic Drivers for the cessa-ERIC 2010-2015 (D3.1a)
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Authors	K. Schürer and WP3 team
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Key Strategic Drivers for the cessda-ERIC: 2010-2015

Mission

The cessda-ERIC will improve social science research across the European Research Area (ERA) by providing, on not for profit basis, a comprehensive and integrated social science data research infrastructure which will facilitate and support research, teaching and learning of the highest quality throughout the social sciences. It will achieve this through the development and co-ordination of standards, protocols and professional best practices pertaining to the preservation and dissemination of data and associated digital objects and by facilitating researcher access to important resources of relevance to the European social science research agenda.

The cessda-ERIC will provide effective leadership and be a catalyst for change across its areas of interest by supporting member and partner organisations to enable them to derive maximum benefits from membership; it will engage openly and constructively with its varied user communities; and will work with other stakeholders for mutual benefit. It will both demonstrate the highest standards and professionalism in all its activities and will promote and enhance professionalism amongst its members and related Service Providers.

In order to pursue its mission and meet the expectations and requirements of its membership, the cessda-ERIC will follow a pre-determined (yet flexible) set of strategic priorities during the first five year period, 2010-2015.

1. Establish 'identity' of the cessda-ERIC and demonstrate excellence in organisational processes and accountability to the membership

Being a new organisation and legal entity it will be important for the cessda-ERIC to quickly establish its own identity and reputation within the field of social science data infrastructures, not only across the ERA but worldwide. In line with this it will need to put in place – and be seen to have put in place – measures to ensure that its work is clearly communicated, transparent and accountable, operating within the governance structure underpinning it, and providing the expected returns to its members.

Key objectives will include:

Theme 1.1: promotion

- Actively promote the strategic aims and objectives and work programme of the cessda-ERIC to all stakeholders, including the researcher community, within the ERA and beyond.

Theme 1.2: governance

- Establish and maintain effective and transparent governance arrangements.
- Establish clear reporting structures with and between the Board and the Assembly of Members.
- Establish a 'user-friendly' and flexible system of service level agreements between the cessda-ERIC, Members and Service Providers, together with a system for monitoring these.

- Establish effective communication channels between all Members, Service Providers and the cessa-ERIC.

Theme 1.3: finance

- Establish and maintain effective and transparent internal systems of financial control and accountability.

Theme 1.3: staffing

- Establish and maintain procedures for the recruitment and employment of staff (directly and indirectly) based on open, accountable and competitive processes.
- Establish and maintain procedures for the effective review of staff, including personal development and the promotion of skills training across all staff.
- Promote a culture of inclusiveness across the cessa-ERIC in which all staff feel empowered.

2. Extend the cessa-ERIC membership and widen participation at all levels

The cessa-ERIC will out of necessity start with a membership smaller than the current CESSDA since the former requires a commitment and engagement with funders that the latter does not, and as a result some countries will require more time and effort than others to secure the appropriate levels of financial support needed. As a result an important strategic driver will be to increase the number of full members over time, not only to increase coverage and participation in the infrastructure but also to spread the costs.

In order to maximise participation in the research data infrastructure, the cessa-ERIC allows for a flexible and multi-layered system of membership which allows engagement and collaboration with the ERIC at a number of levels as well as the development of countries to full member status.

Key objectives will include:

Theme 2.1: widen

- Increase number of Full Member countries of the cessa-ERIC.
- Increase number of Associate Member countries of the cessa-ERIC.

Theme 2.2: collaboration

- Strengthen effective collaborations with other data organisations, producers and suppliers through the development, promotion and recruitment of Affiliate Members.
- Maintain productive working relationships with related ERICs.
- Produce a framework for promoting, managing and maintaining the transition of Associate Members to Full membership.
- Broker productive relations between the cessa-ERIC and cross-national data creators.
- Identify and collaborate with data producers and disseminators in other disciplines to encourage cross-disciplinary research.

3. Maintain a technical development programme to support the work of the cessda-ERIC, its members and collaborators

Innovation in technology is central to many of the activities of the cessda-ERIC as well as the network of Service Providers fuelling the research data infrastructure. The cessda-ERIC will need to engage with technology at a number of levels, both directly and indirectly. At one level the cessda-ERIC will need to undertake technical development itself, creating and maintaining the technical infrastructure that will serve as the backbone supporting exchange of data, metadata and controlling access to the distributed resources. At a second level, the cessda-ERIC will need to support the development of common tools to be used within the network of Service Provider organisations, and in helping the extension of the infrastructure. A third level of engagement will be in the form of ‘technology watch’, surveying other domains and areas of technological development to ensure effective knowledge transfer.

Key objectives will include:

Theme 3.1: portal

- Extend functionality of the existing data portal to include item-level resource discovery information across the entire membership of the cessda-ERIC, at all levels.
- Maximise interoperability of the data portal with other social science data-related metadata collections.
- Provide seamless interface between resource discovery of metadata and access to entire data collections.

Theme 3.2: middleware

- Build and maintain robust middleware for operation of secure yet flexible system of AAA across all member countries.

Theme 3.3: common tool kit

- Support and foster the development of modular common tool kit to be used internally by data organisations linked to the cessda-ERIC, including: multi-lingual thesaurus management tools; data ‘publishing’, ingest processing tools; data access, dissemination, browsing and visualization.
- Test, promote and advise on relevant data management, dissemination and visualization tools developed externally to the benefit of the cessda-ERIC membership.

Theme 3.4: grid

- Continuously explore potential offered by grid technologies, including cloud solutions.
- Design and implement Service Orientated Architecture (SOA) for the social sciences.

Theme 3.5: web

- Maintain and extend the cessda-ERIC website and intranet as a source of expert knowledge and conduit for information transfer within the membership and the research community it serves.

4. Actively contribute to the development, promotion and adoption of Standards for data management

Standards are essential to creating greater interoperability. As such the cessda-ERIC will

need to perform a pivotal role in ensuring that the necessary metadata standards are continuously developed, maintained, enhanced and more over, implemented. Much of this work will be centred around the existing Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) and how it inter-relates to other metadata and information standards. Equally, given the distributed nature of the cessda-ERIC data infrastructure, maintaining a system of Persistent Identifiers (PIDs) will also be essential.

Key objectives will include:

Theme 4.1: data management

- Promote the continued adoption of the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) through a programme of training, best practice and up-take of tools to support the creation and exchange of DDI compliant metadata
- Proactively support the extension of DDI functionality and applicability to an extended range of data types (such as qualitative data) through the development of new versions and modules.

Theme 4.2: data identification

- In collaboration with others, develop and maintain a robust and flexible system of persistently and uniquely identifying digital data objects across collections and overtime (PIDs).

5. Advance the use and monitoring of professional standards regarding operational processes

The adherence to professional excellence will be a driving factor for the cessda-ERIC and its related Service Providers. As such the cessda-ERIC will need to develop and promote a set of professional standards to be aimed at, as well as a system to monitor compliance to these, and training to support best practice.

Key objectives will include:

Theme 5.1: operational excellence

- Establish a system for the independent and accountable monitoring of professional standards within the cessda-ERIC service providers.

Theme 5.2: professional excellence

- Set standards and policies for the highest levels of professional expertise in data curation and preservation.
- Promote training, excellence and best practise in operational processes within the cessda-ERIC service providers based upon the Open Access Initiative Standard (OAIS) Reference Model and the Seal of Approval.
- Provide training within the cessda-ERIC and beyond on best practise in data management.
- Build and maintain effective collaborations with other organisations where these will deliver mutual benefit.

6. Promote quality data-driven evidence based research within the social sciences

The cessda-ERIC will fundamentally build and maintain a virtual infrastructure. Yet the value of this will to a large extent ultimately be dependent on both the quantity and

quality (especially) of the data populating the system. More needs to be done to both maintain and increase data sharing and to open up new sources and forms of data outside of the traditional academic and publically-funded domains. The cessda-ERIC also needs to champion best practise in data creation, data management and data use, respecting the rights of data subjects and sensitivities.

Key objectives will include:

Theme 6.1: access

- Champion data sharing within the social sciences through increased open access to data while simultaneously maintaining appropriate controls and secure managed access for sensitive data.
- Promote best practise to ensure at all time the rights and confidentiality of data subjects via authentication and registration.
- Champion the generation of quality research based on quality data within the social sciences.
- Promote cross-national comparative data analysis and evidence-based comparative research.

Theme 6.2: extend

- Increase the volume and variety of quality data accessible to the social science research community.
- Expand the preservation of cultural inheritance.
- Increase the variety and diversity of digital objects that are supported by members of the cessda-ERIC.