

3.1. Research and surveys

Research and surveys are an essential step in the process of lobbying and advocacy. It provides essential information to decision makers. As such it allows the employers' organisation to shape the debate, with the authorities, but also with the wider public via communications, and feed it with quantitative information, with qualitative information and also with information on future prospects.

It is also a means to get to know better members views, and to serve as input to determine the direction the employers' organisations' lobbying efforts will take in terms of contents. What are the priorities we should lobby for? Which solutions are viewed as viable and relevant, and which as harmful or non-priority? what is the possible impact? Views on the possible impact of proposed solutions.

Finally, a survey may also help to determine members needs towards the employers' organisation itself in terms of priority activities related to services. This is important, but the priority in surveys should however be on the external information surveys can bring.

In this paragraph, we have used the notions research and surveys together. This is normal in the general view on lobby and advocacy, where often (academic or secondary sources) research goes hand in hand with new information collected via surveys (so-called primary sources of information). In this case of the COVID-19 crisis, research is at this stage limited. There are hardly any researched models which allow to predict the effect of a pandemic on the state of the economy. Research hence will be limited, but should not be totally neglected. Some institutions may have already recent figures regarding some aspects, which may allow to estimate the size of the economic impact of COVID-19 via a comparison with the present vs one year back normal state. Or VAT revenue- port traffic and so on. But most probably, surveys will be the main actual source of information, and will function on the basis of extrapolation. It can be expected that later on the institutions which traditionally monitor economic developments will start collecting information, but especially at the initial stages of the crisis, surveys will be a major tool. In that context, the survey capacity of employers' organisations, to engage their members, gives them an important competitive edge to collect and distribute new information and to obtain high public profiles via the information which is published.

Research via surveys is not a one shot operation. The credibility, but mainly the added value of surveys, is linked with the capacity to draw trends over a certain period. Especially in this context, employers' organisations should prepare for a regular system of surveys with their members.

Speed in collecting and reporting is important, because this crisis evolves in an unpredicted and rapid way. The survey may achieve results rapidly, if the sample is not too big and members are willing and motivated to reply quickly. Also the survey design of course will impact the response rate and rapidity of collection and reporting.

Credibility of the information which is collected is key. Surveys have hence to be transparent on representativeness – on questions- on methods of extrapolation. Some support of external specialists, especially when launching the first survey, may be appropriate. But it should also be reminded that the best may be the enemy of the good.

Find a good example here:

<https://www.ibec.ie/employer-hub/covid-19/policy-advocacy/new-ibec-survey-reveals-extent-of-business-uncertainty-from-covid-19>