Considerations and Rules
Concerning Data Collection and Data Exchange
As Agreed by the Inaugural Conference of the CCS

1. Survey Administration.

There are basically four alternative ways to administer a survey among political elites (plus combinations). The following tries to list some advantages and shortcomings of each of them.

Method	Advantages	Shortcomings
mail survey	rather inexpensive, several reminders possible, good return rates with interested and motivated respondents	Q may be filled in by another than the targeted person
face-to-face	motivation of respondent during the interview	rather expensive
telephone	much as face-to-face	could be difficult to get politicians on the phone
on-line	much as mail surveys	potential distortion of return by uneven distribution of internet use among targeted respondents

Each method may produce good quality data, and the choice among them will depend on the conditions of a particular research environment. However, given the good experiences with mail surveys in a number of countries, it is expected that this method will be chosen most often.

2. Data Quality.

This has at least three different aspects. Perhaps the most obvious is the return rate. Participants of the Inaugural Conference agreed that a survey with a return rate below 20 % of the target population (universe or sample) is not acceptable. It is expected that the average response rate will be well above 40 %.

If it is not possible to survey the universe, the quality of the sample will be a second aspect of data quality. It is suggested that representative samples of the universe of all candidates of relevant parties (relevant before or after the election) are drawn. When a stratified sample has to be drawn which over-samples the potentially successful candidates, a weighting factor will be provided that creates a representative sample of all candidates.

A third aspect of data quality is the integrity of the data file. For comparative analyses, it is imperative that the final core questionnaire is fully applied in the different electoral systems

under study. It is therefore suggested that a survey that excludes some of the CCS questions is not acceptable, while the addition of national specific questions does not harm data integrity.

A field report must be delivered together with the actual data file.

3. Data Structure.

A common codebook, with English language variable names and value labels, will be developed when the questionnaire is finalized. All national CCS data files need to apply this common codebook. It will facilitate comparative analyses until an integrated data file is put together.

The MZES intends to create such an integrated data file when a number of surveys have been made available, and update this integrated data file at the end of the project.

Data files will be made available via the project's webpage (currently under construction). The data section of this webpage will be password protected so that only authorized persons will be able to access the data.

4. Data Usage and Embargos.

It is suggested that a national study director who delivers good quality data receives all the other surveys that were deposited before and are deposited later. Reception of data is dependent upon actual delivery of data. Data are under embargo for researchers who do not participate in the CCS until 2012. This does not rule out the deposit of a national data file in a national data archive.