

EssenCES[®]

Essen Climate Evaluation Schema Basic Information

The Essen Climate Evaluation Schema – EssenCES - is a 15 (+ 2) item questionnaire, originally developed for assessing essential traits of the social and therapeutic atmosphere of forensic psychiatric wards. Climate dimensions measured are **Therapeutic Hold**, **Patients' Cohesion** and **Mutual Support** and Experienced **Safety** (vs. threat of aggression and violence).

A validation study was conducted in 17 forensic mental hospitals in Germany. Patients and staff completed the EssenCES and other questionnaires, among them the 'Ward Atmosphere Scale' (Moos) and a 'Good Milieu Index'. Problematic occurrences were listed and counted over a period of 3 weeks on each ward. On 46 wards, 333 staff and 327 patients were included. The intended 3 factor structure of the instrument was clearly confirmed. High coefficients of correlation supported the subscales' validity. The coefficients were somewhat lower for "Safety", but this scale correlated strongly with the number of problematic occurrences and displays strong face validity.

From the homepage of the Institute of Forensic Psychiatry in Essen/Germany (www.forensik-essen.de), a comprehensive German project report can be downloaded. Two major articles on the questionnaire and the validation study have appeared in 2008:

Schalast N, Redies M, Collins M, Stacey J, Howells K (2008) EssenCES, a short questionnaire for assessing the social climate of forensic psychiatric wards. Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 18(1), 49-58. DOI: 10.1002/cbm.677

Schalast N (2008) A short questionnaire for assessing the social climate on forensic psychiatric wards. Psychiatrische Praxis, 35, 175-181. DOI 10.1055/s-2007-970960 [Article in German with English abstract]

The questionnaire is protected by copyright law, but it is available free of charge in the public domain. There are English, German, Dutch, Japanese and Finnish versions as well as German and English versions for correctional (prison) settings until now. If you want to apply the instrument, please use the standard layout. Have also a look at the [Instruction for Use and Translation Copyright](#). Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or want to use the questionnaire in a research project.

Representative normative data for non-German versions do not exist until now. Kewin Howells and Matt Tonkin (Rampton Hospital / University of Nottingham) are starting a broad project aiming at the validation of the English EssenCES in forensic hospitals and correctional settings in England. A handbook and norms shall be an outcome of this project. In 2009, Kewin, Matt and colleagues are going to publish preliminary findings from DSPD-wards at Rampton Hospital.

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A statistical evaluation of the preliminary data indicated, that the intended trait structure of the questionnaire was not perfectly confirmed. One item of the English version (Patients Cohesion 3) didn't load sufficiently on the right factor. We decided to reword it slightly by phrasing it positively, like the other items of the subscale (now: "Patients care about their fellow patients' problems"). The adjusted version of the questionnaire – EssenCES 2009 resp. EssenCES Prison Version 2009 – is available on this homepage.

The small revision will hardly change the distribution on the "Patients' Cohesion"-scale significantly. Findings with the "old" and the "new" version of the questionnaire remain largely comparable. It is suggested to use the 2009–version from now on.

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