



**European Region of the United Nations Committee of
Experts on Global Geospatial Information
Management
(UN-GGIM: Europe)**



Notes from the UN-GGIM: Europe inaugural meeting, held on 1st of October 2014 in Chisinau, Moldova (Version 2, 11 November 2014)

0. Agenda

1. Opening

Ms Vanessa Lawrence in her capacity as co-chair of the coordinating committee to set up UN-GGIM: Europe welcomed the delegates. More than 110 delegates including 7 National Statistical Institutes and 9 Observers were attending the meeting.

2. Confirmation of the Agenda and appointment of record keeper

The agenda was approved as it stood. Mr. Ekkehard Petri from Eurostat was appointed record keeper of the meeting.

3. Welcome speeches

On behalf of the Moldovan government, **Victor Bodi**, Minister of State welcomed the delegates. He underlined the great importance of geo-statistical information for sound policy making, in particular for finding a sustainable development path. He encouraged delegates to agree on common principles for geospatial information management and also to engage with the private sector which has to provide the necessary technologies.

Stefan Schweinfest, Director of United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) expressed his satisfaction with the progress made so far in setting up a global geospatial information management, supported by regional committees in most parts of the world, including now Europe. Meeting the information needs of governments for the achievement of the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals will require a solid statistical-geospatial information system. This system can only be provided in a joint effort of Statistical Offices and Mapping Authorities, who in turn rely on the support from their governments to have the





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means for building this system. The following statements should set the framework for the work of UN-GGIM: Europe:

1. Geospatial information has to improve the lives of people.
2. Statistical and geospatial information providers are a powerful couple.
3. The rest of the world needs a strong UN-GGIM: Europe but this should not be a one-way street.

Regarding the latter statement he pointed out that in Europe geospatial information management was already fairly advanced compared to other regions. This privileged situation comes with the common responsibility of European Member States to contribute to the global development and development in other regions.

Walter Radermacher, Director-General of Eurostat and co-chair of the coordinating committee in his opening video message also emphasised the importance of a joint geospatial-statistical information system that was needed to inform evidence-based decision making and the Europe 2020 strategy. He pointed out that demand for better information is bound to increase with increasingly difficult global and European issues to be solved. He also underlined that NSI and NMCA are natural partners in providing this information system and that UN-GGIM: Europe was a good place to improve the necessary cooperation. NSI and NMCA should also jointly speak to their governments and stress the importance of high quality, authoritative public sector information.

On behalf of the European Commission he emphasised that several important European initiatives already provide a framework to improve geospatial information management, to only name INSPIRE and Copernicus, and that these should form the basis for the common work of UN-GGIM: Europe and the European Commission.





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**4. Matters arising from the 4th meeting of the Committee of Experts on UN-GGIM
(Vanessa Lawrence)**

With a view to the review of UN-GGIM by ECOSOC, scheduled for 2016 Member States were reminded of the importance of a good turnout and active participation in the annual Committee of Experts meeting. These meetings also represent a good occasion to liaise with UN ambassadors who are likely to represent their country in the ECOSOC meeting. Several delegations observe that UN-GGIM is starting to have an effect on government agendas the efforts need to be continued. The Rio+20 final report “The Future We Want” has recognised the importance of geospatial information for informing the Sustainable Development Goals and thus the on-going development process of these goals represents a good opportunity for UN-GGIM to demonstrate its usefulness with a view to the ECOSOC decision.

The Global Forum on the integration of statistical and geospatial information was held in conjunction with the 4th Committee of Experts meeting. The main goal of the forum was to continue a discussion on the development of a global statistical-geospatial framework, and progress the work of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information. Particular attention was paid to the role of the population and housing censuses in achieving this. More information on the forum can be found at <http://ggim.un.org/Global%20Forum.html> .

One of the main outcomes of the 4th session of the Committee of Experts was the adoption of a draft resolution on a Global Geodetic Reference Frame for Sustainable Development and a decision to refer the resolution to ECOSOC for endorsement and further referral to the UN General Assembly. The plan is to establish a global geodetic reference through a multilateral collaboration under a UN mandate.

The Committee also discussed the definition of global fundamental geospatial data themes. This discussion is particularly relevant with a view to the draft program of work of UN-GGIM: Europe which aims at increasing data interoperability and harmonisation by





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proposing core geospatial data meeting essential user needs. The complete documentation of the 4th session can be found at http://ggim.un.org/ggim_committee.html.

The 5th meeting of the Committee of Experts is scheduled from 5-7 August 2015 in New York.

5. Approval of the Articles and Rules of Procedure (Ezio Bussoletti)

The Article and Rules of procedure of UN-GGIM: Europe provide the basis for its work and a form for its organisation. They should be regularly reviewed and adjusted if need be. Each UN body including UN-GGIM: Europe can within the UN framework establish its own rules.

In this initial phase the coordinating committee proposed transitional arrangements regarding the number of members of the Executive Committee and suggests extension of the Executive Committee to 2 Vice-Chairs, 8 ordinary Members and a Chair. This proposal was accepted by the delegates. The strict application of the rules was suspended until the number of members of the Executive Committee has reached the foreseen number due to Members leaving their function.

6. Election to Executive Committee

After the extension the Executive Committee comprises 11 seats; 1 Chair, 2 Vice Chairs, 8 Ordinary Members. Candidates are:

Chair: Bengt Kjellson (SE)

Vice-chair: Dorine Burmanje (NL) and Antonio Arozarena Villar (ES). Peter ter Haar had withdrawn his candidacy and ran for ordinary member.

Ordinary Members: Peter ter Haar (UK), Kristian Møller (DK), Pascal Berteaud (FR), Hansjörg Kutterer (DE), Ezio Bussoletti (IT), Jacek Jarzabek (PL), Tomaz Petek (SI), Andrii Tarnopolskiy (UA).

Members appointed all candidates to their positions without objections.





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In his acceptance speech, Bengt Kjellson thanked the two co-chairs of the coordinating committee Vanessa Lawrence and Walter Rademacher, for smoothly steering the establishment process. He also thanked all the other people involved in the establishment process. A special thank-you went to the Moldavian authorities for kindly hosting this special event. He explicitly encouraged National Statistical Offices to become involved and reminded delegates that a great deal of work was in front of them and that all efforts should be dedicated to a positive review by ECOSCO in 2016.

7. Proposal to grant Observer Status

Members granted Observer Status to the following organisations:

European Environment Agency, EuroGeographics, EuroSDR and Eurogi. The European Commission is granted permanent observer status in the Articles of UN-GGIM: Europe.

8. Proposal for the role of Secretariat

According to Article 6.1 of the statutes of UN-GGIM: Europe a member of UN-GGIM: Europe shall be granted responsibility for providing the secretariat to UN-GGIM-Europe by a majority vote of the members of the plenary meeting. In its letter of intent Kadaster Netherlands proposed to take responsibility of the secretariat by involving EuroGeographics. The costs for this set-up will be covered by EuroGeographics funds and hence no financial contributions from members will be asked.

Members approved the proposal by Kadaster Netherlands without objections.

9. Report of Working Group 1 (François Chirié, France)

The task of working group 1 and working group 2 was to make an inventory of the situation of geospatial information management in Europe and, within the framework set by the UN-GGIM inventory of issues and the derived European focus points, propose priority areas for work under UN-GGIM: Europe.





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The focus of working group 1 was on the definition of harmonised authoritative European geospatial core data. These data should form the basis for public decision making and the development of downstream services between countries and between the national and the European level. Today the necessary harmonisation is not always ensured. Efforts are needed from Member States and the European Institutions to achieve the necessary interoperability. INSPIRE is a step in the right direction but does not require the creation of new data and does not prescribe a minimum quality level. Also INSPIRE does not address the issue of funding of core data, e.g. to make available core data as open data. A business model for core data needs to be developed in cooperation between Member States and the European level.

Several attempts at creating harmonised core data exist (ELF, CORINE, EuroGeographics) but a more comprehensive strategy is needed. UN-GGIM: Europe is the right place for having a dialogue between data producers and users and between the national and the European level.

10. Report of Working Group 2 (Jörgen Hartnor, Sweden)

The focus of working group 2 was on linking geospatial information to statistics and the situation of interoperability of geospatial information, both within and with other thematic information. As a result the working group identified several key areas where the integration of geospatial information with other thematic information would reap benefits for the user. Among others the INSPIRE data infrastructure, multi-source and crowd sourced information and the development of an geospatial reference system for statistics are proposed.

11. Proposal for a work plan (Pascal Berteaud, France)

The work plan builds on the results of the two working groups established by the coordinating committee. The goal is to start working on the two most important issues of European geospatial information management:

1. Increasing data interoperability and harmonisation by proposing core geospatial data which meets essential user needs;





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2. Enabling integration of core geospatial data with statistical and other data in order to foster further usage;

This should be achieved by building as much as possible on existing actions, projects and legal frameworks. Also the goal is to stay focussed on technical, economic and selected legal issues and thus enable a quick start. It is not the ambition of this work plan to cover all aspects of geospatial information management.

In total six deliverables are planned. The planning has taken into consideration the anticipated 2016 ECOSOC review. This means that some of the deliverables of both working groups should be available by the end of 2015 but further adjustments might be necessary. It will be one of the first tasks of each working group to fine-tune the planning and the scope of the deliverables. Participation in both working groups is open to all interested parties, including Statistical Offices, and the working groups will manage the distribution of work and their own organisation.

France expressed its interest in leading working group A on core data while Germany is interested in leading working group B on integrating geospatial data with other data.

AT (NMCA and Statistical Office) and IT (Statistical Office) expressed their interest to participate in the working groups.

12. Discussion of the work plan

In the discussion the following points were raised by Member States:

- The concept of core data should not be restricted to topographic data but also include other types of geospatial data for instance on land management. The definition of core data should be carefully aligned with similar work at the global level and in other regions.





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- Further working groups could be established dealing with less technical and more with strategic issues e.g. capacity building in Europe and on communication on the relevance of geospatial information.
- Attention should be paid to remain open to non EU topics and regions, e.g. the Arctic.
- Coordination with existing activities and their findings such as from GEO/GEOSS and with the legal work under INSPIRE in Member States is vital.
- The technical aspects of geospatial information are worth exploring in a dialog with industry who are the drivers of technological progress.
- The overall framework for the work of the working groups should be the whole UN agenda and support for the sustainable development goals.

The Executive Committee took note of all the comments made but reminded that with a view to the 2016 deadline the working groups need to remain focussed to ensure a quick start and quick deliverables. This does not rule out the creation of further working groups covering other aspects at a later stage.

The working groups will build on existing work, collect and consolidate information and then propose the best way forward to achieve harmonisation and foster data integration.

Working groups are open to all member states and to all interested organisations and will work in a fully transparent manner. In addition Member States representatives are invited to participate on behalf of all their national stakeholders by collecting and synthesizing national user's needs and collecting feedback on the results of UN-GGIM: Europe from their national stakeholders, and this way ensure full consideration of all aspects of national geospatial information management by UN-GGIM: Europe.

Member States can be assured that UN-GGIM: Europe will not only look into EU aspects but will always consider the wider European perspective. Nevertheless INSPIRE represents a huge building block of European geospatial information management and as such has to be considered.





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The proposal to take the sustainable development goals as an overall framework will be considered, even more so due to their relevance for statistical work, suitable for stimulating interest among statistical offices.

With these points noted Members adopted the Work Plan.

