



Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

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Contribution of Europe Regional Committee of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information (UN-GGIM: Europe) to the global geospatial information agenda

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1. Summary

1. This report provides an overview of the activities carried out by the Europe Regional Committee of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information (UN-GGIM: Europe) in the past 12 months since the last meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information in August 2019.

2. Objectives, Introduction, background

2. UN-GGIM: Europe is one of five UN-mandated regional bodies established to facilitate regional development and discussion of the Committee of Experts within and across the European UN Member States. UN-GGIM: Europe aims to identify regional issues relevant to geospatial information management and recommend necessary actions on them.
3. UN-GGIM: Europe operates alongside existing European regional and national frameworks and capabilities in the context of European geospatial information management while encouraging the implementation of the recommendations of UN-GGIM. The Regional Committee supports capacity building, donor funding and other measures, for the development of geospatial information and spatial data infrastructure development in Europe.

3. Administrative arrangements

4. UN-GGIM: Europe is governed by the Articles and Rules which were adopted at the inaugural meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe, and subsequently reviewed and amended at the Fourth Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe held in June 2017 to include wider the UNECE Member States within UN-GGIM: Europe. The Articles and Rules of procedure are [publicly available](#).
5. UN-GGIM: Europe is coordinated and managed by an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee members are nominated and approved during plenary meetings of UN-GGIM: Europe. The current Committee was approved at the Seventh Regional Plenary Meeting in June of this year. The committee continues to be chaired by Tomaz Petek (Slovenia), with vice-chairs Francisco Vala (Portugal) and David Henderson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). Also on the Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe are Ingrid Vanden Berghe (Belgium), Paul Becker (Germany), Frank Tierolff (The Netherlands), Janusz Dygaszewicz (Poland) and Susanne Ås Sivborg (Sweden).
6. The Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe is assisted in carrying out its functions by a Secretariat. The Netherlands, represented by Kadaster, takes responsibility for the Secretariat, the function of which is funded and executed by EuroGeographics AISBL, the European Association of National mapping, cadastral and land registries, through a Service Level Agreement originally signed in January 2015, and which was extended in October 2018 for a further period of two years.

4. Contribution to UN-GGIM Activities

7. UN-GGIM: Europe has contributed to a number of the activities being undertaken by the committee of Experts. It should be noted that individually the members of the Europe region are very active and support and participate towards many items of the

Committee. This report only focuses on the work coordinated and/or carried out by the Executive Committee of the regional entity.

8. UN-GGIM: Europe continues with its active participation and contribution to Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicator Working Group on Geospatial Information (IAEG-SDGs WGGI). In addition to individual European members actively participate in the meetings of the group the tasks of the UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group on Data Integration are aligned towards providing a European input to the IAEG-SDGs WGGI.
9. UN-GGIM: Europe, through the annual EuroGeographics General Assembly in October 2019 in Manchester UK, provided the Heads and Directors of National Mapping and Cadastral Authorities of European Member States with an overview of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF). The Regional Committee also provided feedback in response to the global consultation the IGIF Implementation Guide.
10. UN-GGIM: Europe actively supported the Sixth High Level Forum, which for the first time was going to be held in our region, hosted by the United Kingdom. However, the global Covid-19 pandemic caused this to be convened as a virtual event instead of a physical one. The Regional Committee still provided its support by keeping Members informed of the programme of the virtual event.
11. At the ninth session of UN-GGIM Committee of Experts the Subcommittee on Geodesy (SCoG) tabled a draft position paper on governance arrangements for sustaining the Global Geodetic Reference Frame (GGRF). The Committee adopted decision 9/104, which included a request to explore the “establishment of a global geodetic centre of excellence in cooperation with UN-GGIM” to support the long-term sustainability of the GGRF. The Federal Republic of Germany has informed the Regionally Committee that it is offering to host the first Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence at the United Nations Campus in Bonn as part of the concept by the SCoG of a federated centre of excellence. The Regional Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe supports the application by Germany noting that it includes an invitation to the Member States to contribute to the Bonn GGCE.
12. Members of the Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe contribute to the Expanded Bureau Meetings, which are periodically organised over the intersessional period.

5. Regional and international collaboration and capacity development

13. During the intersessional period UN-GGIM: Europe has collaboration with regional partners to organise and contribute to a number of regional events. Some planned events were impacted by the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and were either cancelled or postponed, others were organised as virtual events.
14. More than 200 experts from 21 countries and 12 international organizations met in Vrdnik, Serbia in September 2019 at the international conference: [Digitally enabled development for a sustainable future in Eastern Europe](#), to explore and discuss regional opportunities in implementing digital technologies when tackling global issues. The event gave particular emphasis to the technological enablers of digital transformation, digital data, good tenure governance, and innovative services and applications. The conference was jointly organized by the Serbian Republic Geodetic Authority, the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre, the World

Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management in Europe and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

15. UN-GGIM: Europe actively promoted and raised awareness of the Integrated Geospatial Framework at the number of national and regional events. Some of which are listed in paragraph 18 of this report. The Regional Committee actively supported and contributed to the [Third International Workshop on Operationalizing the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework](#), November 2019, Minsk, Belarus. The International Workshop was jointly organised by the United Nations Secretariat for Global Geospatial Information Management, Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with the Statistics Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association and the United Nations Development Programme in Belarus, supported by the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Europe and the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus.
16. The [sixth edition of the Joint UN-GGIM: Europe – ESS – UNECE](#) meeting, traditionally hosted by Eurostat in Luxembourg City and planned for March 2020 was impacted by the disruption caused by the global pandemic. Instead it was organised as a virtual event. Representatives from European Statistical and Mapping Authorities gathered online to follow the progress of the work being carried out by the region’s statistical and geospatial communities. The meeting is jointly organised together with Eurostat and UNECE.
17. [UN-GGIM: Europe held its Seventh Plenary Meeting](#) on the 22 – 23 June 2020. The original intention was for this year’s annual regional session to be held in Geneva at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to overlap with the 68th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). However, due to travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic both events were convened as web-based events. The virtual nature of the events attracted a wider participation from more Member States together with a better ratio of geospatial and statistical organisations - 34 Member States and 11 international and observer organizations participated in the seventh plenary meeting on the 22 June 2020. The following day UN-GGIM: Europe and the CES held a common session which brought together, albeit virtually, senior representatives of the region’s National Statistical Organisations and National Mapping and Cadastral Authorities. It was agreed to repeat the experience of overlapping the organisation of the plenary sessions of UN-GGIM: Europe and the CES in two years’ time, in 2022.
18. Since the last session of the Committee of Experts, UN-GGIM: Europe has also actively participated in a number of regional events which include the following:
 - i. [Balkans Regional Conference](#), September 2019, Neum, Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - ii. EuroGeographics General Assembly, October 2019 Manchester, UK
 - iii. [European Forum for Geography and Statistics Conference](#), October 2019, Manchester
 - iv. 135th Board of Delegates EuroSDR, November 2019 Nicosia Cyprus
 - v. IGIF workshop in Western Balkans, February, Skopje, North Macedonia
 - vi. [ESA – Croatia EO Workshop 2020 - Space powering the Green Deal and the Digital Economy](#), March 2020, Zagreb Croatia
 - vii. [Joint Cadastre and Land Registry KEN and PCC workshop](#), June, Webinar

19. UN-GGIM: Europe has a broad collaboration agreement with UNECE, which includes as one of its objectives the capacity development within the region. Details of this collaboration are expanded in section 7 of this report.
20. In addition, UN-GGIM: Europe supports various initiatives that foster knowledge sharing and capacity development across and within the region. These initiatives are led, funded or initiated either through cooperation between Member States or formally funded programmes. Examples include: the [Eurostat \(the Statistical Office of the European Communities\) Grants Programme](#) which supports projects intended to contribute increased cooperation on the integration of statistics with geospatial information; the [Knowledge Exchange](#) activities carried out by EuroGeographics contributing to the capacity development of the European NMCAs; and the work of [European Forum for Geography and Statistics](#) and the GEOSTAT projects. The topics covered by these initiatives overlap with the areas of interest of the Committee of Experts.

6. Regional working Groups

21. The tasks of the Regional Committee are defined by a work plan that is annually updated to reflect the global developments and work of the Committee of Experts, together with additions agreed upon by the Member States of UN-GGIM: Europe at their last Plenary Meeting. It also takes into consideration the fact that the Regional Working Groups are continuously delivering and completing the work they tasked with. The [current work plan covers the period 2020 – 2023](#) and was approved by the Member States at the last regional plenary meeting in June 2020.
22. UN-GGIM: Europe has three regional working groups:
- i. [Working Group on Core Data](#) is focusing on increasing data interoperability and harmonisation by proposing core geospatial data which meets essential user needs. The group has delivered on its task to identify the users and their needs and requirements for core data. The group is now focusing on proposing recommendations of content of the core data themes through an extensive consultations with the wider geospatial community. [The latest report from the Working Group is available online](#). This Working Group is led by France.
 - ii. [Working Group Data Integration](#) works to ensure that the regional entity focuses on how geospatial data can enhance sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda in Europe. The working group was also set up with the intention that it will interact with the Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG) Working Group on Geospatial Information. The European working group works closely with the European Member States which have been nominated as experts to the IAEG-SDG Working Group on Geospatial Information. The Working Group on Data Integration has delivered all of the tasks outlined in the previous work plans and is now working on delivering the new tasks outlined in the updated work plan. These include data integration beyond just geospatial and statistical, to also include earth observations, environmental data and other themes. [The latest report from the Working Group is available online](#). This Working Group is led by Germany.
 - iii. [Working Group on Geodetic Reference Frame - Europe](#) is evaluating its role, tasks and relations to other entities. Development on the global level has been active, and this sets new demands at the regional level. Europe has a developed geodetic infrastructures and geodetic Core Sites. This, together with the establishment and on-going work of the Sub-Committee on Geodesy (SCoG), has had a bearing on the tasks GRF- Europe group agreed by UN-GGIM:

Europe at its Fourth Plenary in June 2017. For this reason, the Executive Committee and the Working group are considering ways in which to combine tasks to avoid duplication and overlap of the GRF- Europe Group and existing geodesy-related initiatives and entities in Europe. At the last Regional Plenary Meeting it was agreed to further explore how this can best be implemented in practice taking into consideration the progress of the work plan and roadmap of the SCoG.

7. Coordination for geospatial information management activities within the United Nations system

23. Recognising the mutual benefits of working together UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE have set up a [collaboration agreement](#) and to pursue the following collaboration activities in the period 2018-2020:
- i. Geospatial information for sustainable development
 - ii. Building networks and promoting communication
 - iii. Integration of geospatial, statistical and other information
 - iv. Capacity building
 - v. Involvement of other UNECE work programmes
 - vi. Cross-representation in the activities of the other body
 - vii. Reporting on progress / work accomplished
24. The above focuses on establishing reciprocity and participating in each other's regional meetings, organising joint events on topics of mutual interest, collaborating in producing outputs on relevant topics, collaborating on exchange of good practices, developing joint capacity building activities in member states, developing the concept of core data for geospatial and statistical communities, promoting easier access to data, and developing wider communication networks.
25. In the past 18 months a number of joint and collaborative events, capacity development activities and workshops have been organised, culminating in the common session of the CES and UN-GGIM in June of this year. This collaboration agreement will expire at the end of this calendar year, UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE have already agreed that the agreement will be renewed beyond 2020.

8. Priority Issues and Challenges

26. The Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe consider that some of the priority issues for the coming period include:
- i. The Sustainable Development Goals
 - ii. The Integrated Global Geospatial Framework
 - iii. Improved collaboration between the statistical and geospatial communities
 - iv. Capacity Development

9. Future plans and events

27. The regional Committee will continue with the work and delivery of the working group tasks as outlined in the Work Plan 2020 - 2023.
28. UN-GGIM: Europe plans to participate actively in the following future events:
- v. European Forum for Geography and Statistics Conference, October 2020 – virtual event

- vi. Seventh Joint UN-GGIM: Europe-UNECE-ESS Meeting, Spring 2021, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg – *dates to be confirmed*
- vii. INSPIRE Conference, 11-14 May 2021, Dubrovnik Croatia
- viii. Eight Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe, Spring 2021 (*details to be confirmed*)

10. Conclusion

29. The Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe will continue to actively contribute to and promote the work of the UN-GGIM, both at regional and global levels.