



Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Eleventh session

August 2021

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

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

Submitted: 13 July 2021
Prepared by: Carol Agius, UN-GGIM: Europe Secretariat

* [E/C.20/2021/1.](#)

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 2020.

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 2020. The committee is chaired by a representative from Slovenia, with vice-chairs from Portugal and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Also on the Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe are Members from Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Poland and 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 December 2020 for a further period of two years.

4. Contribution to UN-GGIM Activities

4.1. Sustainable development

7. At a regional level the UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group on Data Integration is providing methodological, operational and technical guidance in the use of geospatial data and statistics to compute SDG indicators. The regional working group is analysing SDG indicators 11.2.1 (access to public transport), 11.3.1 (land use efficiency), 15.1.1 (forest area), and 15.3.1 (land degradation), compiling and reviewing solutions and summarising the outcomes for guidance. The outcomes and findings are on track to be finalised by the end of 2021. In autumn this work was awarded a 2020 GEO Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Award for the Sectoral category, GEO Participating Organization in recognition of remarkable efforts to analyse the contribution of geospatial data and its integration with statistical data to calculate SDG indicators.
8. UN-GGIM: Europe continues with its contribution to Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicator Working Group on Geospatial Information (IAEG-SDGs WGGI) by ensuring that the tasks of the UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group

on Data Integration are aligned towards providing a European input to the IAEG-SDGs WGGI.

4.2. The Integrated Geospatial Information Framework

9. Over the course of the past twelve months UN-GGIM: Europe has taken the opportunity to provide Members and stakeholders with information about the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) by presenting at various virtual events. These included the EuroGeographics General Assembly in October 2020 and the Joint Permanent Committee on Cadastre and Cadastre and Land Registry KEN Conference May 2021.
10. The Regional Committee nominated four members from UN-GGIM: Europe to represent the region at the High-Level Group of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF). The nominees from Europe are from Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. This selection was made following an open call to all European Member States. The Members on the HLG-IGIF keep the Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe updated on the work of the High-Level Group.

4.3. Integration of statistical and geospatial information

11. UN-GGIM: Europe actively participated in virtual meetings between the UN Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information (EG-ISGI) Steering Group and Regional Focal Points. The aim of the meetings were the coordination and coherence of regional integration activities, the promotion and implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF) and support in the dissemination of Global Survey on GSGF Readiness to regional contacts in statistical and geospatial agencies.
12. The UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group on Data Integration is focusing on an analysis of data integration methods used across Europe. The regional working group is also evaluating the links to the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF) and GSGF-Europe and how these connect with regional [GEOSTAT-4 project](#). Work is also being carried out to collect national and European best practice examples for data integration and describing methods in the context of European strategies and developments (Data spaces, Geospatial Knowledge Infrastructure). A deliverable on data integration methods for senior adviser/managers is expected to be completed by October 2021 for the UN-GGIM: Europe Plenary Meeting.
13. The UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group on Core Data is continuing to provide recommendations for content for core data for Europe, based on the regional user needs and requirements, especially those related to SDGs, and on INSPIRE data specifications, making use of the outcomes and specifications of other initiatives, such as the European Location Services project. The working group is carrying out an extended consultation with the geo-statistical community to finalise the work on the selected core data themes.

4.4. Global geodetic reference frame

14. The UN-GGIM: Europe and the UN-GGIM Subcommittee on Geodesy, convened the [European Geodesy Forum](#) which was held as a virtual event on 23 June 2021. Titled “Towards a sustainable Global Geodetic Reference Frame: European Contribution”, and with a panel from UN-GGIM: Europe and members of the UN-GGIM Subcommittee on Geodesy, the main focus of the forum was to seek feedback from European Member States, as part of the regional consultation on the two papers prepared by the Subcommittee on Geodesy. These are the ‘Position Paper on Sustaining the Global Geodetic Reference Frame’ and the ‘Concept Paper on Establishing a Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence’.
15. The aim of the forum was to generate further support for the work of the Subcommittee on Geodesy and the forthcoming establishment of the UN Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence in Bonn, Germany. This webinar was intended for European participants as part of the regional consultation on the two papers prepared by the Subcommittee on Geodesy. More than 45 experts participated in the virtual event.

5. Regional and international collaboration and capacity development

16. As expected, regional events were impacted by the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, however a number of events were still organised mainly as virtual events, which had the advantage of allowing a larger number of Members to participate in the events. During the intersessional period UN-GGIM: Europe collaborated with regional partners to organise, or contribute to a number of regional events. A selection is highlighted below.
17. The UN-GGIM: Europe Working Groups, the one on Data Integration and the other on Core Data both actively participated and presented at the 2020 edition of [European Forum for Geography and Statistics Conference](#). The event was organised as a virtual event in October 2020. The event explored five sections of the GSGF principles, which formed the main thematic sessions of the event.
18. The [seventh edition of the Joint UN-GGIM: Europe – ESS – UNECE](#) meeting, traditionally hosted by Eurostat in Luxembourg City was organised, for the second time, as a virtual event in March 2021. 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 was jointly organised together with Eurostat and UNECE.
19. [Joint Permanent Committee on Cadastre and EuroGeographics Cadastre and Land Registry KEN Conference and Plenary under the Presidency of Portugal](#) was held as a virtual event in May 2021. Main topic of the conference was ‘Cadastre – contributions for a low-carbon economy and society’ integrated into a broader theme of one of the strategic axes of the Portuguese Presidency, ‘Building a green, carbon and neutral Europe’.
20. 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. 11th Iberian Spatial Data Infrastructure Conference, October 2020
 - ii. EuroGeographics General Assembly, May 2021
 - iii. EUREF 2021 Symposium, Ljubljana, Slovenia, May 2021
 - iv. UN HABITAT/EC DG REGIO meeting, June 2021
 - v. [European Geodesy Forum](#) ‘Towards a sustainable Global Geodetic Reference Frame: European Contribution’, June 2021
21. UN-GGIM: Europe has a collaboration agreement with UNECE which includes, as one of its objectives, capacity development within the region. Details of this collaboration are expanded in Section 6 of this report.
22. UN-GGIM: Europe has two active regional working groups which lead and deliver the annual work plan of the Regional Committee. The [current work plan covers the period 2020 – 2023](#) and was approved by the Member States at the Seventh UN-GGIM: Europe Plenary Meeting in June 2020. The activities of the working groups bring together participants from Member States and stakeholders in regional collaboration and capacity development activities while delivering on tasks and work of the Committee of Experts as expanded in earlier in Section 4 of this document.
 - i. [Working Group on Core Data](#) is focusing on increasing data interoperability and harmonisation proposing recommendations of content of the core data themes through consultations with the wider geospatial community. 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. This Working Group is led by Germany.
23. In addition, UN-GGIM: Europe supports and participates in initiatives that foster knowledge sharing and capacity development across and within the region. This is done to avoid duplication of efforts and resources in the region. These initiatives are led, funded or initiated

either through cooperation between Member States, regional stakeholders or formally funded programmes. The topics covered by these initiatives overlap with the areas of interest of the Committee of Experts.

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

24. Recognising the mutual benefits of working together UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE set up a collaboration agreement to pursue the collaboration activities in the period 2018-2020. The collaboration focused 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. This collaboration agreement between UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE concluded at the end of 2020, collaboration has been successful, producing tangible results. Over the two years a number of joint and collaborative events, capacity development activities and workshops were been organised, culminating in the common session of the CES and UN-GGIM in June of 2020.
26. In December 2020 the collaboration agreement between UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE was renewed for a further two years until the end of 2022. The following have been identified as the strategic areas as priorities for future collaboration, which are in line with the latest directions of work from the UN-GGIM Committee at global level:
 - i. Geospatial information for Sustainable Development
 - ii. Building networks and promoting communication
 - iii. Integration of geospatial, statistical and other information, including capacity
 - iv. Development
 - v. Involvement of other UNECE work programmes

7. Priority Issues and Challenges

27. The Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe consider the following as priority issues:
 - i. The Sustainable Development Goals
 - ii. The Integrated Global Geospatial Framework
 - iii. Improved collaboration between the statistical and geospatial communities
 - iv. Capacity Development
28. These priority issues and challenges were identified at the Seventh Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe in June 2020, they may be updated following the next Regional Meeting in October of this year.

8. Future plans and events

28. The Regional Committee currently works and delivers against a multi-year work plan that is reviewed and approved by the Regional Committee at the annual UN-GGIM: Europe Plenary Meeting. This workplan defines the operational activities and initiatives that Member States, Observers and stakeholders in Europe contribute to. Since the establishment of UN-GGIM: Europe in 2014 the work of the Committee of Experts has grown, as has the awareness of the importance of having location-based data available to face the social, economic and environmental challenges that societies face. In Europe geospatial and statistical renewed data policies, legislation and systems have emerged and evolved. The Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe believes that now is an appropriate time to take stock of the changing landscape, and align the future work accordingly. The current strategy and work plan of the Regional Committee are being reviewed and aligned with the focus of UN-GGIM and the

regional landscape to ensure that UN-GGIM: Europe and its activities remain fit for purpose. These will be presented at the Eight Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe.

29. The Eight Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe, originally planned for June 2021 was postponed to October 2021. This decision was taken in light of the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Having organised the seventh edition as a virtual event, the hope was that by postponing the event to the autumn of 2021 a physical meeting would be possible because Covid-19 travel restrictions would have eased. This is looking increasingly unlikely, the Eight Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe will be organised as a virtual event on the 13-14 October 2021.
30. UN-GGIM: Europe plans to organise/participate actively in the following future events:
 - i. European Forum for Geography and Statistics Conference, 7-8 September 2021 – virtual event
 - ii. EuroGEO Week, 20 – 22 September 2021 – virtual event
 - iii. UN world Data Forum, 3-6 October, 2021, Bern Switzerland
 - iv. Eight Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe, 13-14 October 2021 – virtual event
 - v. Eight Joint UN-GGIM: Europe-UNECE-ESS Meeting, Spring 2022, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg – *dates to be confirmed*

9. Conclusion

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