

## **Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management**

### **Thirteenth session**

August 2023

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: 27 June 2023  
Prepared by: Carol Agius, UN-GGIM: Europe Secretariat  
Contributions: Jeffrey Verbeurgt, Belgium  
Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu, Germany  
Ewa Surma, Poland  
James Norris, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

---

\* [E/C.20/2023/1](#)

## 1. Executive 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 2022.
2. It outlines the UN-GGIM: Europe work carried out to implement its strategy and work plan, collaboration activities, the impact of the Regional Committee's work and its future plans. UN-GGIM: Europe is committed to ensuring that its work and actions remain aligned with the broad UN-GGIM programme and that its regional activities remain fit for purpose.

## 2. Regional Committee annual meetings

3. The annual meetings of the Regional Committee aim to bring together senior executives from national geospatial information and statistical authorities within Member States and international geospatial experts from relevant stakeholders from across the region. While the ninth plenary meeting was held in June 2022 with a report of the meeting outcomes submitted to the Committee at its twelfth session, this year's annual meeting is scheduled for November 2023. This means that UN-GGIM: Europe has not yet organised a plenary meeting during this intersessional period.
4. The tenth plenary meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe, will be hosted by the European Commission (Eurostat), and will be held on the 22 – 23 November 2023 in the Berlaymont Building, Brussels Belgium. A report on the outcomes of the anniversary session of UN-GGIM: Europe will be submitted to the Committee of Experts at its fourteenth session.
5. While the dates and venue of the eleventh Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe are not yet confirmed, the intention is to hold the 2024 annual meeting overlapping with the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). This will be the third occasion where the annual Regional Committee meeting will be held together with the CES, taking the opportunity to discuss topics, opportunities and challenges which are common to both communities.

## 3. Achievements

### Implementing the regional strategy and workplan

6. The vision of UN-GGIM: Europe is *“building on the overarching vision of UN-GGIM of positioning geospatial information to effectively address global challenges.”* And its mission is to *“maximise the use of geospatial information in Europe for a safer and more sustainable world.”* In order to help fulfil the vision and mission of UN-GGIM: Europe, the Regional Committee has a strategy and work plan that complement the rapidly changing global and regional societal, policy and digital landscape.
7. The strategy and work plan, adopted and approved by UN-GGIM: Europe at the eighth and ninth plenary meetings, were developed to remain aligned to the global UN-GGIM programme, while also resonating with the specific needs and requirements of the regional context. As a result, UN-GGIM: Europe identified five key priority areas as the main focus of its work plan: Data Integration, Sustainable Development Goals, the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the Geodetic Reference Frames, and Data Strategy and Policy. All these lines of work have been active during the intersessional period, an overview of the progress and activities follows.

### Lines of Work Data Integration and Sustainable Development Goals

8. At its inception UN-GGIM: Europe created the Working Group on Data Integration which successfully fulfilled the tasks mandated to it in past work plans. Since the lines of work on Data Integration and the Sustainable Development Goals are related and Working Group on Data Integration provided an already well-established forum it was assigned the coordination role of these two lines of work. Both lines of work are building on past deliverables and outputs of the Working Group on Data Integration. The overall coordination role and the line

of work Data Integration are led by Germany, while the Sustainable Development Goals line of work is led by Portugal.

9. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) line of work is centred around showcasing the added value of integrating geospatial data with other data to address SDG indicators, focussing on common problems and technical and methodological solutions. The main aim of the Data Integration (DI) line of work is to highlight the added value of integrating geospatial data with other data, and further exploring requirements and practices on the use and integration of earth observation data.
10. Both the SDGs and DI lines of work provide a relevant context for establishing bridges between geospatial and other communities. The aims of the two lines of work are to raise awareness, reach a larger audience, improve the dissemination of outcomes and findings and to avoid duplication of work against other organisations and fora. To this end a webinar series has been organised for both lines of work, working in collaboration with other stakeholders and making use of the EuroGeographics webinar infrastructure to deliver the events. Seven webinars (four on SDGs, three on DI) are planned until the end of the year 2023. By the end of June, four webinars have been conducted on the following topics: Data integration in Europe – A perspective on challenges, findings, added value and cost savings in the EU context; Showcasing the added value of geospatial and statistical data integration to compute SDG indicators; Earth Observation and SDGs: use cases and workflows; and the way towards a Geospatial Knowledge Infrastructure, GSGF-IGIF recommendations.
11. The online webinar series supports capacity building and aims at identifying requirements, gaps and cross-cutting issues. The webinars are open to everyone; information and invitations to the webinars are sent to UN-GGIM: Europe members, various European stakeholders including UNECE, European Statistical System, EuroGeographics and European Commission Units. The webinar invitations are also forwarded to the secretariats of the other four Regional Committees and also the UN-GGIM Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, and the IAEG-SDGs Working Group on Geospatial Information. This broad mailing list has attracted, for the four webinars organised so far, a total participation of almost 500, from 70 countries, including from outside Europe.
12. Three remaining webinars are planned until the end of 2023, information about the upcoming webinars can be accessed on the Regional Committee's website<sup>1</sup>. Material from past webinars, including the recordings, is also available on the UN-GGIM: Europe website<sup>2</sup>.
13. Each online webinar has been framed by a concept note and is followed by an assessment and evaluation report to identify common issues, outcomes and findings, gaps and requirements which have not been tackled yet by other stakeholders. The assessment of the webinar series will frame the follow-up work programme of these two lines of work.

#### **Line of work Integrated Geospatial Information Framework**

14. The intention of setting up a line of work on the UN-GGIM Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) is for it to be a support group and not to duplicate existing efforts. To this end the aims of this line of work are to: Contribute to global tasks of the HLG-IGIF, making sure regional concerns and issues are raised and addressed; Understand the issues and obstacle that Regional Members may face when looking to implement the IGIF and develop regionally focused outputs; Provide support and input to the European Members of the HLG-IGIF, as and when required. This line of work is led by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
15. It is encouraging to report that the IGIF line of work has attracted the interest of a wide number of Members from across the Europe region. Although only just formed, the line of work is starting to identify and deliver important outcomes. For example, collaborating with the HLG-IGIF Capacity Development Working Group to support their activities to develop

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://un-ggim-europe.org/events/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://un-ggim-europe.org/un-ggim-europe-webinar-series/>

training and capacity development materials, specifically looking to assist with the development and completion of training and capacity development materials associated with the IGIF. This line of work is also planning to shortly launching a webinar series to raise awareness of the IGIF within European Member States, to share experiences and lessons learnt in the development of Country-level Action Plans. The organisation and logistics of the webinars will follow those already successfully employed for other lines of work. Information about the webinars will be made available on the UN-GGIM: Europe website and communicated to a broad regional and global audience.

### **Line of work Geodetic Reference Frames**

16. The aim of UN-GGIM: Europe is always to avoid duplication of effort and work, so for the line of work on Geodetic Reference Frames (GRF) it was decided to adopt a light-touch version of a working group, a Community of Interest (CoI) rather than a working group. This decision is motivated by the presence of an active and high performing technical organisation within Europe called EUREF, the Regional Reference Frame Sub-Commission for Europe of the International Association of Geodesy (IAG). This community of interest is led by Belgium and its first meeting took place just before the opening of the Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence (GGCE) in earlier this year in March. During the EUREF23 conference in May of this year, a presentation was given by the lead of the CoI to promote the UN-GGIM activities on Geodesy and invite European geodesists to join the community of interest. It is encouraging to report that by June, the number of active participants is 23, representing 13 European Member States.
17. The main aim of the community of interest is to bring together European geodesists and act as a coordination body liaising between the European experts and the experts working on the global level within the Subcommittee on Geodesy (SCoG) and the Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence. As a secondary aim, this community of interest will investigate how it can contribute to sustaining and growing the geodetic profession. This is also one of the focus areas of the GGCE.
18. The CoI is currently exploring the format of an online event to promote the added value to geodesy of UN-GGIM, the SCoG and the GGCE. During this event, participants will be invited to actively participate in one of the working groups of the SCoG (Global Geodesy Needs Assessment; State of Geodesy Report; Education, Training and Capacity Development). The concept of this event will be described and outlined in a concept note which will be made available on the UN-GGIM: Europe website and communicated to a broad audience.

### **Line of work Data Strategy and Policy**

19. Within UN-GGIM activities related to data strategy and policy include the IGIF strategic pathways on Policy and Legal, Data and Standards, and the Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management. In addition, the Europe region has a wide-ranging raft of data strategies, policies and legislation that have broad regional impact. Therefore, the line of work focussing on Data Strategy and Policy has to operate within this framework and arena while as always avoiding duplication.
20. To this end the aims of this line of work are to: coordinate and liaise with agencies and stakeholders to bring the relevant actors together; provide expertise and consultation to the activities of UN-GGIM: Europe and to its Executive Committee; establish a forum for exchange of expertise and experiences; and support and promote capacity building and development initiatives. This line of work has formulated draft terms of reference, its work programme depends on the progress of the policies and is anticipated to progress later in the year.

### **Collaboration and impact**

21. In fulfilling past workplans, the regional Working Group on Core Data identified and proposed recommendations of content for fourteen core data themes through extensive consultations with the wider European geospatial community<sup>3</sup>. These recommendations for content are

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://un-ggim-europe.org/working-groups/working-group-core-data/>

now being implemented and adopted in a practical context, as the bases for the data model for the Open Maps for Europe 2 (OME2) project currently underway. The project, which is coordinated by EuroGeographics and co-funded by the European Union, is developing a new production process and technical specification for free-to-use- high-value data from multiple European countries under a single open licence<sup>4</sup>.

22. Together with the Statistical Division of the UNECE, UN-GGIM: Europe presented on the international cooperation in a dedicated session at the annual Working Group on Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information (WGGISCO) organised by Eurostat at their offices in Luxemburg in March. This was an information session organised to make up for the fact that the Joint UN-GGIM: Europe –UNECE – ESS meeting which is usually held back-to-back with the annual WGGISCO meeting was postponed. The ninth edition of this joint and collaborative meeting is now scheduled to coincide with the Joint UNECE, Eurostat, UN-GGIM Europe Workshop on Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Data planned to be organised in Belgrade, Serbia in the autumn of this year.
23. UNGGIM-Europe organised a panel session at the Geospatial World Forum 2023 in May in Rotterdam. The panel session, under the stream of GEO4SDGs: Relevance to the Digital Age, focussed on the SDGs Mid-Term Review - The Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Data to Meet the SDGs. The session brought together leaders from geospatial and statistical agencies together with panellists with expertise in the UN-GGIM IGIF and communications. The points of discussion included: how data integration can progress of the 2023 Development Agenda, address data gaps in monitoring the SDGs and how the IGIF can impact the progress of reporting on the SDSs.

#### **4. Challenges and solutions**

24. A collaboration agreement exists between UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE, initially put in place in 2018 and renewed in 2021, to pursue the collaboration activities 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. The current collaboration agreement will come to an end in December of this year, UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE are planning to renew this for a further three years at the end of 2023.
25. This collaboration agreement is producing tangible results. Over the years a number of joint and collaborative events, capacity development activities and workshops were been organised. This year a Joint UNECE, Eurostat, UN-GGIM Europe Workshop on Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Data will take place in September 2023 in Belgrade, Serbia. The workshop will focus on sharing innovative practices and lessons learned, fostering collaboration between national statistical and geospatial agencies and on promoting international collaboration and use of common standards as well as identifying areas for future work. It will be structured around three themes: Effective Governance, Data and Technology, and People and Partnerships.
26. Believing that the five Regional Committees of UN-GGIM can improve their collaborative efforts and share knowledge and experiences across the regions, the secretariat of UN-GGIM: Europe worked closely with the secretariats of UN-GGIM Africa and UN-GGIM Americas to organise a side-event on the knowledge exchange across the Regional Committees during the Twelfth Session of the Committee of Experts. The aim of the meeting was to bring the Regional Committees together to discuss and explore ways to cooperate and coordinate to support each other and also to sustain the Committee. This was the first time the Regional Committees came together, and the conversation highlighted common issues and challenges facing all the regions, together with opportunities to help build sufficient geospatial capacities in Member States to address these challenges.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://eurogeographics.org/open-maps-for-europe/ome2-progress/>

27. As an outcome of the side event the Regional Committees noted that stronger inter-regional collaboration will benefit Member States. These actions include but are not limited to, sharing experiences applying the IGIF, sharing business cases for funding, closer collaboration between Regional Committee working groups, and sharing tools and technical solutions. These actions could be delivered through joint webinars or other channels. UN-GGIM: Europe is happy to note and to contribute to the second meeting for the Regional Committees of UN-GGIM which will be held during the week of the thirteenth session of the Committee of Experts.
28. UN-GGIM: Europe participated with pleasure in the Second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress held in Hyderabad, India in October 2022. The Regional Committee benefited from the global conversations on how geospatial information supports sustainable development, addresses global challenges and contributes positively to the economy and the wellbeing of society.
29. UN-GGIM: Europe participated in this event by providing the regional experiences to the global conversations, discussions and exchange in all areas of the programme of the congress. Members from the Executive Committee and secretariat of the Regional Committee and members of the regional working groups presented on the work of UN-GGIM: Europe; sharing the experiences with the broader global community on developing the regional strategy and work plan, on the core data for Europe, and on the findings, challenges and obstacles of data integration.
30. UN-GGIM: Europe also contributed to a side event organised during the Congress week titled Geo-enabling the global village through the celebration of multi-faceted diversity and inclusion approaches. This side event covered the different ways the geospatial community can consider diversity and inclusion: from accessibility to and inclusivity of the under-represented to geospatial data and services to ensuring a diverse representation in the geospatial workforce.

## **5. Future Plans**

31. The Regional Committee is planning to organise, contribute or participate in various events in the coming months. These include:
  - Thirteenth Session UN-GGIM, New York, 31 July – 4 August
  - Joint UN-GGIM: Europe-ESS-UNECE Meeting Belgrade, Serbia, 6 September
  - Joint UN-GGIM: Europe-ESS-UNECE Workshop on Data Integration, Belgrade, Serbia, September/October date tbc
  - Tenth Plenary UN-GGIM: Europe, Brussels, Belgium 22 – 23 November
  - INSPIRE Conference, Brussels, Belgium, 28 – 29 November

## **6. Administrative arrangements**

32. 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.
33. 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 ninth Regional Plenary Meeting in June 2022. 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, Serbia and Sweden.
34. 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 2022 for a further period of two years.

## **7. Points for discussion**

35. The Regional Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe would like the Committee of Experts to:

- i. Note the dates of the Tenth Plenary UN-GGIM: Europe which will be held in Brussels, Belgium on the 22 – 23 November;
- ii. Note the series of webinars that are being organised by UN-GGIM: Europe as part of its work plan, which are open to a global audience, welcoming the participation from all UN-GGIM Regional Committees, Function Groups, Thematic Networks and other stakeholders; and
- iii. Note that, as indicated at the twelfth session the Regional Committees look forward to working with the UN-GGIM Secretariat, within available resources, to implement closer working relationships across our respective regions