

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF

INFORMAL WORKING GROUP OF THE GENERATIONS AND GENDER PROGRAMME



Budapest, Hungary
24-25 September 2001

Information and documentation

1. Mr. M. Macura, chief of the PAU at UNECE, opened the meeting. Mr. T. Mellàr, President of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, welcomed the participants of the meeting. Mr. M. Macura recalled the role of the HCSO in the Regional Population Meeting in 1998 and of several Hungarian colleagues in UNECE projects, including the Generations and Gender Programme.
2. Ms. G. Vukovich, Deputy Director of the HCSO, was appointed Chair of the meeting. Ms. C. Hoehn, Mr. R. Lesthaeghe and Mr. L. Østby acted as Vice-chairs. Mr. J. Hobcraft was the Rapporteur of the meeting.
3. The meeting was attended by 57 participants from 27 different countries of the UNECE region. Several Hungarian colleagues attended the meeting as observers. The final list of participants is available at the website of the meeting (www.unece.org/ead/pau/ggp/fmiwg)
4. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss, modify and endorse the proposals prepared by the GGP Consortium Board regarding GGP objectives, research aims and requisite data and to agree on plans and arrangements for the future.
5. The three main documents prepared for the meeting (available at the website) are:
 - Generations and Gender Programme: Goal, Framework, Requisite Data and Research Aims, by M. Macura;
 - Generations and Gender Survey: Design and Content, by G. Beets, F. Billari, M. Corijn, J. Hoem and A. Tölke;
 - Designing a Macro-context for Generations and Gender Individual Data, by P. Festy.

Two other documents were distributed at the meeting (available at the website):

- General motivation for launching a new round of European family surveys: the Generations and Gender Programme, by J. Hoem;
- Arguments for also interviewing older persons in GGP, by G. Beets.

Handouts on 'Goal, Framework, Data and Aims' and on 'Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) suggested design and content' were distributed at the meeting. Handouts on the plans for the future were also distributed.

6. Mr. M. Macura and Mr. J. Hobcraft, Chair of the GGP Consortium Board, sketched the developments since the Generations and Gender Meeting on 35 July 2000 in Geneva, including:
 - The recommendations of the Geneva meeting;
 - The unsuccessful application of the GGP Consortium for funds of DG Research of the European Commission in 2000;
 - The continued commitment and efforts of the GGP Consortium to further develop the GGP, by providing staff time and financial assistance;
 - The four meetings of Consortium Board over the last year;
 - The decision of the Consortium Board not to apply in 2001 for funds of DG Research of the European Commission.
7. The final programme of the meeting (available at the website) included four major sessions:
 - Generations and Gender Programme: Goal, Framework, Requisite Data and Research Aims, with a focus on Gender and Generations issues;
 - Generations and Gender Survey: Design and Content;
 - Designing a Macro-context for Generations and Gender Individual Data;
 - Summary of Discussions, Plans and Arrangements for the Future and Conclusions of the Meeting.

Summary of the discussions

Goal and framework

8. Mr. M. Macura introduced his paper on the 'Goal, Framework, Requisite Data and Research Aims'. Mrs. A. Pinnelli highlighted the gender issues in the GGP and Mr. G. Beets elaborated on the generation issues. Further to the presentations, the IWG asked for further justifications of the GGP in general and of some issues in particular. Participants also made a number of suggestions and comments.
9. It was suggested to have a more elaborated justification of a new round of data collection, given the available existing and upcoming data sources. It was emphasised that GGP has to meet in the first place the national needs and that the international comparability can only be considered as an additional benefit.
10. Participants also asked a more elaborated justification of GGP in the context of the previous international comparative studies on fertility and ageing issues. The IWG was informed that lessons will be drawn for the FFS project, in particular from the report of the Evaluation of the FFS project, prepared by F. Festy and F. Prioux of INED (Paris, France) (available at the FFS website). A project at INED will in the

near future evaluate the previous international comparative studies on fertility in the UNECE-region: the UNECE CFS, the WFS in Europe and the FFS in the UNECE region. Lessons will be drawn from this evaluation also. Knowledge on the past, in particular on the 1990s, will be obtained from the retrospective data collected in the GGS and the contextual data.

11. Participants expressed also a need for a further justification of the policy relevance of GGP. In particular, with help from the GGP Consortium, national statistical offices and national population institutes should make a convincing case in favour of investing resources in GGP by demonstrating how GGP data and analysis can be useful to policy makers. It was agreed that it would be highly desirable to discuss with policy makers their needs for data and knowledge.
12. It was agreed that the gender issues will be further elaborated in the GGP conceptual paper.
13. It was suggested to pay greater attention to a series of issues that are of policy relevance including: very low fertility, population ageing, care, poverty, social exclusion, reproductive health, in particular abortion, and time use. However, it was made clear that the GGP is not a migration, ageing or health survey. These and other issues are in the GGP as far as they are part of a context of the partner-partner and parent-child issues.
14. The importance of collecting information on care giving to and care receiving from both parents and children was emphasised. Any bias in one or the other direction should be avoided.
15. The IWG thought that further consideration should be given to the issue of migration, in particular to the representation of foreign populations in the samples; collection of migration data and the relation between the change of the population composition and the values of a society.
16. Several IWG members mentioned issues relevant for countries in transition. The distinction between long-term demographic developments versus temporary changes due to the transition has to be covered more extensively. Regional and urban/rural differences may play a particular role in countries of central and eastern Europe, especially in diverse countries such as the Russian Federation.
17. In the discussion on the relation between subjective dimensions (values, norms, attitudes) and behaviour both the selection and adaptation effects were emphasized. The question of the validation of values across different countries/cultures was raised. It was pointed out that empirical evidence from, for example, the European Value Study shows similar value structures across countries.

Requisite data

18. In the context of the GGP the census data can be used as a sampling frame and as a source of contextual information. Getting access to individual census information may prove more difficult.
19. In order to obtain and/or strengthen the involvement of national statistical offices in the GGP, there was a general request to justify more extensively the need for a new round of data collection within the statistical system of countries, especially in countries with existing and upcoming surveys.
20. Given the complexity and costs of a panel survey, IWG members asked for further and more elaborated justifications for the panel design. It will be necessary to emphasise that the panel design will enable a study of the dynamics of child-parent and partner-partner relations as these unfold and the measurement of several key groups of time-varying covariates, such as earnings, transfers, subjective and gender dimensions, which cannot be measured retrospectively.
21. The proposed time between two waves of the panel should be justified by stressing a balance between the need for enough demographic events between two consecutive waves and the risks of panel mortality.
22. The problem of the selective drop-out between panel waves was acknowledged. In some countries employment and migration histories may change very rapidly within three years, which could make panel attrition larger than what would be acceptable.
23. For several countries the proposed sample size of the GGS seemed to be a problem. However, in order to cover both males and females and the proposed age range of 18-79, the sample size of 10 000 is an absolute minimum as this will yield only 400 respondents per five-year age group. This sample size is required, irrespective of the population size of a country.
24. The issue was discussed whether information on other generations, e.g. older persons, could be obtained indirectly through an anchor generation. Some participants regretted that respondents aged 80 and over are excluded in the proposed age range. The position was that one needs direct information on the generational and gender positions of persons in the different age groups. Only for persons under age 18 and for persons age 80 and over, information on their involvement in generational and gender issues will be obtained indirectly as they will be respectively children and parents of the persons in the age groups involved.
25. Discussions on the sample composition suggested that under- and over-sampling of specific groups at the national level should be allowed for.
26. In countries where register data and administrative records are available, the combination of these data sources and an additional new survey in the context of GGS has to be considered carefully. An important issue is whether and to which extent data from the registers and administrative records are comparable with similar

data obtained through a survey. For example, complete register data on education and employment are probably not available for older persons. It was proposed that participants from the Nordic countries collaborate in order to consider possibilities and limitations of the use and combination of different data sources.

27. There was an extensive discussion on an operational need for data that can be directly obtained from a second person (partner of anchor, but also parent or child of anchor) and the problems associated with the collection of such data. There was a mixture of scepticism about and positive experiences with returns from data collection from a second person. Trade-offs between needs for and difficulties associated with the collection of data from a second person will be inevitable.
28. The proposals for a panel design with a heavy retrospective part in the first (and second wave) raised several questions. Further clarifications were requested on the balance between retrospective and prospective data in the GGP. One reason to collect retrospective data is to be able to document the developments during the 1990s. Another reason is that the behavioural changes between two panel waves may be related to past behaviour and to characteristics of the past. Characteristics of the past can also be considered as a kind of social transfer.
29. Ideas were exchanged on whether the welfare regime is the appropriate context for the macro-contextual information. It was proposed to broaden the welfare regime notion by its links and interactions with generations and gender issues. As the entry into and exit from partnership and parenthood are regulated differently within the welfare regimes, gender and generation issues are very much affected. Data on the welfare regimes must also include data on the legal framework and administrative regulations as well as information on labour and housing markets. The need for further conceptual and operational work on the contextual information was acknowledged.
30. The relevance of the national and the subnational levels and of the regions was discussed. Some regional differences increase, others diminish. One position was that the variance within countries can be large, often reflecting historical developments. Regions seem to bind people to a common culture. Regional differences operate within a similar welfare regime. Another position was that the source of the regional differences is not really the region but aspects of the labour market, housing market, neighbourhood characteristics.
31. The question was raised whether at the sub-national level regions are the appropriate level of dis-aggregation. Another type of dis-aggregation could be social class with a description on how a social class participates in the welfare state.
32. Contextual data for the GGP also concern the legal framework and the behaviours regarding different contexts: the demographic context, the divorce context, the lone-parenthood context, the labour market context, the cultural context.

GGS survey design and questionnaire

33. Further considerations were given to the proposed time interval between two panel waves. The problems of panel attrition and the difficulties of maintaining a panel over time were discussed.
34. The general idea was that countries would have the freedom to include additionally in their sample, respondents aged 80 and over and respondents of foreign nationalities. Over- and under-sampling of particular groups could also be an option.
35. Many times, the concern was expressed that the proposed number of issues could hardly be dealt with in a 60 minutes interview. In order not to overload the first wave, it was proposed to collect the biographical data on employment and migration in the second wave only.
36. Some positive experiences with mail-back questionnaire were mentioned. Countries interested in obtaining additional data directly from the partner and on specific issues by mail-back questionnaire could consider this possibility.
37. The collection of a complete migration history is only required if one wants to perform multi-level analysis on the retrospective data. The time needed for collecting a full migration history has to be balanced with the expected returns from any link with contextual data.

Contextual data

38. The types of required contextual data and their appropriate level were discussed. The importance of the appropriate sub-national level was emphasized. Countries should decide on their suitable sub-national level, which may include multiple subdivisions in a given country, such as province and region.
39. At the national level the need for extending the available contextual data to include central and eastern Europe was acknowledged. The availability of contextual data at the regional level could be very much at variance. The more one is interested in the subnational level, the more there is a need for a complete migration history
40. The European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family, at the Austrian Institute for Family Studies in Vienna, proposed to use their databank for the contextual database of GGP. It includes data on five domains of family police and time series across 15 years.

Financial issues

41. Several countries mentioned that their statistical offices and sometimes also their population and/or demographic institutes will have to invest (most of) their financial

and human resources in the next three to five years in the data collection and data analysis of the Population and Housing Census and the Agriculture Census.

42. Many concerns were expressed about the financial costs of the GGP related to the proposed sample size. Two panel waves are considered to be more expensive than two cross-sectional surveys.
43. The information was given that development agencies of some Western countries may financially support other countries.

Conclusions of the meeting

44. There was a broad endorsement of the GGP, of the proposed design and content of the GGS and of the contextual database with an emphasis on welfare regimes, provided that it is broadened to include, among others, generations and gender dimensions.
45. An executive summary of the conceptual framework of GGP will be prepared by the GGP Consortium Board. This summary will include a stronger motivation of the policy relevance of GGP and of the added value of a panel design. It will also justify the added value of the contextual database.
46. The GGP will be presented to the participating countries as an approach that is neither a laissez-faire approach nor a very restrictive approach. Countries will have to find a balance between meeting national needs and aiming at international comparability. The GGP will propose to streamline this balance. It will present a survey design and a questionnaire with a common core. Optional components will be allowed to meet the national needs.
47. The GGS will have a panel design with three years among the consecutive waves. The sample unit will be individuals, men and women in the age range of 18 to 79.
48. The first wave of the panel will balance retrospective information, information on current status and information on the intentions for the future. The interview time at the first wave will be limited to 60 minutes.
49. It was proposed to form national GGP committees as it was clear that in many countries several offices/institutes will have to collaborate in order to mobilize national and complementary financial and human sources. The aims of these committees will be to promote GGP at the national level; to build bridges between researchers, policy makers and statisticians; to mobilize financial and human resources and to make institutional arrangements for launching the GGP, including the GGS.

50. In order to launch a programme on comparative analyses, it was proposed that standardized national data sets will be centrally archived at the PAU-UNECE. Bilateral agreements between PAU-UNECE and national institutes on the use of the database will be reached. The harmonized comparable data will be made available to the research community.

Plans for the future

51. All invited persons to the first meeting of the IWG will receive the report of the meeting. Moreover they will receive an executive summary of the conceptual framework of GGP, justifying the policy relevance of GGP and providing a rationale for the panel design.
52. At the meeting the plans for the further work on the GGS were proposed:
 - March 2002: Draft survey design and draft questionnaire with supporting rationale for various modules;
 - May-June 2002: IWG comments on these drafts;
 - September 2002: First revision of the survey design and questionnaire;
 - October 2002: Second meeting of the Informal Working Group to review the revised design and questionnaire;
 - December 2002: Second revision of the survey design and questionnaire;
 - March 2003: Translation, adaptation, validation of the questionnaire and pre-tests in four countries;
 - As of September 2003: Translation, national pre-tests and adaptation of the questionnaire in the participating countries;
 - As of November 2003: First wave.
53. At the meeting the plans for the further work on the contextual database were proposed:
 - November 2001: Forming a group in charge of the design of the contextual database
 - June 2002: Inventory of national and international databases
 - June 2002: Design of a conceptual framework for contextual data and analysis
 - March 2003: Evaluation of the need for data harmonisation
54. Proposals for national-level arrangements and activities were made. They concerned the creation of national GGP committees and the inputs of national representatives into future GGP work.
55. The national GGP committees would be multi-institutional, where necessary, including National Statistical Offices, population institutes, other agencies and academia.
56. The expected inputs from national representatives into future GGP work will include: further comments on the conceptual paper, relevant national survey

instruments; information on national experiences with similar programmes and surveys; comments on the content of the survey design and questionnaire and on the contextual database. In particular, members of the IWG were invited to provide their specific expertise on any of the GGP topics. Members of the IWG will be invited to comment on the first draft of the GGS design and questionnaire.

57. The GGP Consortium Board will further develop the conceptual paper, the design and content of the questionnaire, the ideas on the contextual database. The work will include further justifications and operationalizations.
58. The GGP Consortium Board will meet in April 2002 to study the first draft of the design and draft questionnaire of the GGS.
59. The PAU will promote GGP at the annual session of the Conference of European Statisticians. On request, the PAU will visit countries to promote the GGP. The PAU will send out occasional communications to heads and senior staff of national institutions (NSOs, population institutes, university departments). PAU will provide information on progress made through a GGP Newsletter, which will be posted on the GGP-website.
60. The IWG will have its second meeting in September 2002.