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**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Generations and Gender Programme Network of  
National Focal Points  
UNECE International Working Group**

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*UNECE*

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## Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and approval of the agenda</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Adoption of the Report from the 7th NNFP meeting</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Overview of GGP progress and current situation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Survey meta-data collection, weighting and data quality issues</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Proposals for improving data access for researchers</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Contextual database developments</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>New GGP survey design</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>GGP future and strategy for long-term sustainability</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Country presentations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Summary and conclusions</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Date and venue of the next meeting</b>	<b>12</b>

Focal points representing 18 GGP countries attended the meeting. Members of the Consortium Board (CB) and the coordinators of the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) expert working groups also attended, for a total of 31 participants (see final list of participants at [www.unece.org/index.php?id=18420](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=18420) for details).

## Abbreviations

CDB	Contextual database
GGP	Generations and Gender Programme
GGS	Generations and Gender Survey
IWG	International Working Group
MPIDR	Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research
NIDI	Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
NNFP	Network of National Focal Points
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

## **1. Welcome and approval of the agenda**

The Chair of the Consortium Board, John Hobcraft, and the chair of the IWG, Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich, welcomed participants to the meeting. The draft agenda was adopted without modification.

## **2. Adoption of the Report from the 7<sup>th</sup> NFP meeting**

The report of the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GGP network of national focal points (Marrakesh, September 2009) was approved without comment.

## **3. Overview of GGP progress and current situation**

Fiona Willis-Núñez of UNECE and Andrej Kveder of NIDI presented information on the current status of GGP programme implementation.

Information presented by UNECE included a summary of the status of data collection, submission and harmonization in each country; developments in new or potential GGP countries; progress with the contextual database; the bibliography of GGP-based research; and numbers of registered data users and projects.

Information presented by NIDI included a description of the coordination and managerial structure (including the new Advisory Board); details of progress with data harmonization processes; an overview of activities relating to data quality and meta-data collection; improvements in the contextual database; and an introduction to later agenda items on programme visibility, data access and programme development.

It was reported that development of wave 2 harmonization procedures is well underway and that the first wave 2 data set to be released would be Bulgaria, later this year.

## **4. Survey meta-data collection, weighting and data quality issues**

Tineke Fokkema of NIDI reported on the process of collecting and organizing detailed survey meta-data, assessing data quality and deriving post-stratification weights.

It was explained that meta-data are being sought from each GGS country and organized into the online NESSTAR interface so that researchers have easy access to such information. It is hoped that this will assist all users, from country teams wishing to compare procedures to researchers needing to provide such information in order for their work to be published. It was reported that 11 countries with wave 1 data had so far provided the requested meta-data.

Planned activities for the future were explained, including further dissemination of the meta-data across the website; creation of summary tables; techniques for retrospective validation of the data and use of this in formulating weights; and documentation and dissemination of the results of these activities.

The work being undertaken by NIDI in these areas was acknowledged and welcomed by participants, and was recognised as providing an important service to national teams and to researchers. The importance of centralizing these data at the GGP co-ordination centre was noted, since country teams will not remain the same indefinitely.

In response to a question about where users should direct their queries regarding survey data, it was explained that such queries are channelled through (and usually answered by) Nicole Hiekel at NIDI. It was added that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page will be added to the website soon.

It was remarked that production of the requested meta-data would be easier if the request were made at the time of survey implementation rather than *post facto*.

## **5. Proposals for improving data access for researchers**

Fiona Willis-Núñez of UNECE presented proposals, formulated jointly by UNECE and NIDI following discussions of the GGP Consortium Board, for streamlining the application process for data users.

It was emphasized that UNECE has the responsibility to seek an appropriate balance between the goals of widespread use of GGP data for policy-relevant research, and maintenance of confidentiality of survey respondents.

The existing data application system was outlined.

The application procedures for three other data sets were outlined: The European Social Survey, EU-SILC and SHARE.

Suggestions given for improving the procedure included rolling the statement of affiliation and pledge of confidentiality into one document; removing the requirement for an institutional cooperation agreement; and accepting completed documentation as scanned attachments to emails or by fax, rather than insisting on hard copy mailed forms.

It was stated that no changes would be made without formal agreement and each signatory country maintained the right to continue using existing procedures if they wished, although this might limit the frequency with which their data are used.

Participants were asked if they agreed on the need to simplify the access procedure. All participants agreed that a review was necessary.

Participants were asked if they agreed with the proposal that UNECE should draft a new application document modelled closely upon that used by SHARE, and circulate this, along with a draft amendment to the data transfer contracts, to existing signatories to these contracts. Existing signatories and focal points of other GGP countries (those which do not yet have contracts with UNECE) would be asked for their comments and approval. There were no objections to this proposal.

It was suggested that NIDI could produce a reduced data set with any potentially sensitive variables removed, for use in teaching. A separate application process could be put in place for this reduced data set. It was felt by NIDI that this would not entail significant extra work and would therefore be feasible.

## **6. Contextual database developments**

Arianna Caporali of MPIDR gave a presentation on behalf of the team working on the CDB.

The main developments since the last meeting were outlined, including addition of new data sets; a new web interface; improved data preparation and checking procedures; and developments in support from national GGP teams.

Planned future activities were explained. These include addition of new country data sets; an increase in the number of harmonized indicators (with a goal of 110 by the end of 2011); and second wave updates.

A plea was made for those countries which have not made or are not working on CDB submissions to make efforts to become involved in this area, as it is an important complement to the GGS data.

Participants acknowledged the work being done on the CDB and discussed the need to ensure the CDB is more widely used. It was suggested that

some examples of work that makes use of the CDB would be helpful in this regard. It was noted that the CDB is useful in its own right, even independently of the survey data, and that it could be especially useful for teaching purposes where micro data are not necessary.

## **7. New GGP survey design**

Aart Liefbroer of NIDI presented information about the design of the new GGS questionnaire and the forthcoming pilot study in Slovenia.

Work on development of the questionnaire was described. This development took place in consultation with the Measurement Working Group of the GGP, as well as with the members of the Consortium Board. It was emphasized that the major principle had been to avoid changes unless there were compelling substantive or methodological reasons for them.

The major proposed deviations from the existing questionnaire were:

- i. Reworking the social network module to conform to current theory and practice
- ii. New items on perceived control in the batteries on Theory of Planned Behaviour
- iii. Addition of personality questions
- iv. Small reductions to each module to shorten the overall questionnaire
- v. Incorporation of elements of the optional sub-modules into the core questionnaire and removal of the optional elements.

The pilot study will test the new survey elements and will also be used to explore possibilities for cheaper alternatives to face-to-face interviewing.

The redesign will also explore questions of sample size, sample refreshment after attrition, and spacing of survey waves. Guidelines on each of these will be developed.

A timetable for completion of the redesign study was given. The pilot will take place in autumn of 2011, followed by analysis of its outcomes. The questionnaire will be redrafted accordingly and discussed by the Consortium Board in spring of 2012. The final blueprint (questionnaire and accompanying guidelines) will be prepared as the final deliverable for the FP7 project by the end of 2012.

Detailed discussions took place regarding the nature and extent of changes to the questionnaire. There was discussion of particular questions which

had been changed, dropped, or rescaled. Some participants expressed concerns over the effects these changes would have both on quality of responses and comparability with earlier rounds of the surveys. The Swedish focal point offered to have an expert member of the Swedish GGP team review the Fishbein-Ajzen (Theory of Planned Behaviour) module and/or to provide contacts in the University of Wisconsin who could help to improve it. There were also suggestions that some of the gender-role questions, especially those pertaining to men's roles, should be tested.

Other participants were concerned that consultation with national focal points was occurring at a late stage in development of the redesigned questionnaire, and asked when and how their input would be considered if the pilot was already planned. Some felt that comments and information submitted earlier did not appear to have been acknowledged.

The co-ordination team stressed that suggestions and comments were very welcome, and that the questionnaire as presented was a 'pre-pilot' for testing the effects of the changes. It was emphasized that the presence or absence of questions in the pilot did not mean they would certainly be included or dropped; instead the questionnaire specifically includes those aspects thought to require testing. While suggested changes could not be incorporated into the Slovenia pilot at this stage, they would definitely be taken on board. It was noted that there is still a year and a half before the final questionnaire will be completed. It was also reiterated that the changes made so far had been developed with expert consultations and that the documentation of these processes is in the public domain.

There was some discussion about the rationale for choosing Slovenia as the location for the pilot study. It was explained that this was due to the presence in Slovenia of collaborating experts in different survey modes and their effects. Since the funding received for the pilot is conditional upon it taking place in Slovenia, there is no opportunity to change this—but that does not rule out the possibility of other pilots taking place in other countries if they are willing to provide funding.

Questions were asked about the strategy for new entrants into the GGP and which questionnaire they should use.

## **8. GGP future and strategy for long-term sustainability**

John Hobcraft of the University of York (and chair of the GGP Consortium Board) and Aart Liefbroer of NIDI presented information on goals for the development of the GGP and possible means for achieving them.

Goals include raising the profile of the GGP, securing political and financial support, making it sustainable in the long term, and ensuring that it continues to be innovative and relevant.

One step towards achieving these goals has been the instigation of an Advisory Board to assist with strategic matters.

The FP7 project has enabled much progress on these goals and on ensuring the quality of the GGP design and data.

Suggested activities for increasing the visibility of the programme include research and policy briefs and/or digests of key findings; collaboration with the European Population Partnership (Population Europe); and targeting key events including the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing and related research and NGO forum (Vienna, 19-20 September 2012 on the theme of Quality of Life and Active Ageing) and the European Year of Active Ageing 2012.

Several possibilities were presented for increasing political and financial support, all of which had been discussed in detail by the Consortium Board, such as – amongst others – inclusion in the ESFRI Road Map (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) or formation of an ERIC (European Research Infrastructure Consortium).

The importance of differentiation from ‘competitor’ or overlapping projects was mentioned.

Participants provided information from recent meetings of some of the European research infrastructure possibilities, although it was noted that the ESFRI road map, for example, would not open for new calls until 2015.

Those due to attend a forthcoming meeting of Population Europe agreed to make efforts to convey the message of the importance of the GGP.

Pearl Dykstra of Erasmus University stressed that the most important message that the IWG needs to spread about the use of GGP in ageing-related research is that ageing is not only about current older persons. The GGP is unique in covering a full age-range of respondents, and considering issues that arise *in ageing societies* rather than only for older persons. This should be stressed as a key feature differentiating the GGP from SHARE, for example.

It was added that another ‘unique selling point’ of the programme is the inclusion of Eastern and Central European longitudinal data.

Much discussion took place about the content of the ggp-i website and its potential role in improving the GGP’s visibility. While many constructive suggestions were made, it was emphasized that the limited staffing

capacities of the co-ordinators mean that substantive contributions from others would be essential.

## **9. Country presentations**

### **1. Poland**

Irena Kotowska and Anita Abramowska-Kmon reported on the implementation of wave 1 in Poland. The field work was completed in February of this year and data cleaning is in progress, scheduled to be completed by the end of July. CDB preparation is underway and meta-data has just been provided to NIDI. They reported on the degree to which the Polish GGS corresponds to the core GGS questionnaire; it was shortened somewhat, and some new questions were added.

### **2. Russian Federation**

Alla Tyndik presented information on all three waves of the Russian GGS. The third wave is to be conducted this summer, and a timetable for forthcoming activities was presented showing that data will be cleaned in spring 2012 but will probably not be released for public use until at least 2014. Sampling details including panel refreshment were explained, as well as adaptations to the questionnaires for those in the additional sample. Financial issues and support requirements were outlined. In particular they requested technical assistance with data pre-harmonization.

### **3. Spain**

Sixto Muriel de la Riva gave a short report on the planned activities of the National Statistical Institute of Spain. They are increasingly noticing the need for data that permit causal analysis. They are planning to improve household survey methodologies following the 2011 census, with a continuous household survey using a short questionnaire. This might be an opportunity for starting the GGS in Spain as it would allow easy identification of a sample for the survey. However, there is as yet no precise information and implementation would be at the very earliest 2012.

### **4. Australia**

Anna Reimondos (in lieu of Peter McDonald who was unable to attend) reported on the implementation of the GGS in Australia, explaining that it was 'piggybacking' on the survey of Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA). Similarities and differences between HILDA and GGS were explained; in particular, HILDA is a household survey so household rosters and partner characteristics had to be reconstructed for the GGS. HILDA wave 11 will be equivalent to GGS wave 3 and will be conducted in August 2011, with data release

following by the end of 2012. A fourth wave is on the agenda but unconfirmed. Harmonization of waves 1 and 2 is underway in conjunction with NIDI and data release is imminent. While this harmonization is the first priority, Australia also intends to prepare a contribution for the CDB. It may also be possible to make the full household version of the data available on the GGP website.

#### 5. Austria

Norbert Neuwirth reported on the status in Austria. It was noted that the GGS is Austria's first panel survey. Deep regret was expressed that the age range had had to be restricted to 18-45 to avoid overlap with SHARE in order to obtain support. Confirmation of wave 2 funding was received during the meeting.

#### 6. Belgium

Karel Neels reported that Belgian wave 1 data had been collected and pre-harmonized, and the conditions for their release to UNECE were being discussed with Statistics Belgium. The Belgian CBD contribution will become the focus from September 2011. Details of the data collected, sampling, and panel maintenance were presented. It was noted that due to privacy laws the Belgian survey had to ask permission about re-contacting but that they had worded it carefully so as to ask permission to get in touch again, not necessarily to conduct another interview, so that people still had the chance to refuse later on if they wished.

#### 7. Georgia

Irina Badurashvili reported that the third wave of data collection will take place in Georgia in 2012. The first two waves were financed by INED and UNFPA but they will require confirmation of further funding from UNFPA in order to fulfil the plans for wave 3.

#### 8. Hungary

Zsolt Spéder reported that third wave data had been collected in Hungary. It seems likely that harmonization of the second wave will take place in the second half of 2011, and therefore it will hopefully be sent to NIDI by the end of the year, with wave 3 following during 2012. Hungary is keen to keep going with as many waves as possible given the extent of investment they have made in the GGP. It was reported that they are starting to become more comfortable with the idea of using mixed modes and will be pleased to see the outcomes of the new pilot in this regard. They are planning to make GGS-related documentation available on their website.

#### 9. Japan

Nobutaka Fukuda reported that bureaucratic hurdles had hindered the release of the wave 1 data set for some time (*note: since the meeting it*

has been transferred, along with CDB data and standard tables). The second wave data are now being cleaned. Conducting the third wave is now the biggest challenge since the earthquake in Japan had resulted in large cuts to research funding.

#### 10. Lithuania

Vlada Stankūnienė reported on the status of waves 1 and 2 in Lithuania. The principal message was that panel maintenance had proved exceptionally difficult due to the combination of economic crisis and emigration, leaving extremely small numbers agreeing to take part in a third wave. Details of the sample design and of funding were given, and a list of publications arising from the datasets was presented.

#### 11. The Netherlands

Aat Liefbroer (in lieu of Pearl Dykstra) gave an update on the Dutch GGS. Three waves have been collected. The third wave used mixed modes. Panel maintenance was successful and overall 52 per cent of wave 1 respondents continued into wave 3. They will not continue further with this sample, however, since it is now small and the questionnaire has not been very compliant with the core GGS. Therefore a fresh sample will be used for a fourth wave with much higher compliance. Wave 1 data are available online, wave 2 data are being harmonized, and public release of wave 3 is envisaged for late 2011.

#### 12. Sweden

Gerda Neyer reported on progress made in starting up the GGP in Sweden (noting that she was also representing Betty Thomson and Gunnar Andersson). Funding has been secured for wave 1 which will be conducted this year or early next year, following a pilot which it is hoped will take place in August or September (it was intended to take place in June but the review by the ethics board has led to delays). The survey will have a register-based component following the example of Norway. The ethics board must review the intended register selection in detail. It is planned that 12,000 respondents will be selected so that wave 3 will remain sufficiently large even after attrition.

#### 13. Switzerland

Yvon Csonka reported that Switzerland will conduct a Family and Generations survey in 2013 as part of the new rolling census system. They will be using the GGS questionnaire as a model, with perhaps around 50 per cent of the questions directly borrowed or adapted from the core GGS questionnaire. It will take place in five-yearly waves indefinitely (since it is written into the new census laws). When asked whether it will be a panel, Mr Csonka suggested that it is still a possibility, especially if mixed modes are to be an option in the future of the GGS.

#### 14. Turkey

Sinan Türkyılmaz reported on a number of bureaucratic obstacles that had so far prevented Turkish involvement in the GGP. The State Planning Organization is interested in conducting a survey on ageing, although there is nothing concrete yet. It is intended that external funding be sought from UNFPA or the EU. A DHS will take place in Turkey in 2013 so it is not likely that funding for the GGP will be obtained before this, although the GGP is now potentially more interesting than another DHS.

#### 15. Written updates had been provided by France and Denmark.

France has just completed the pilot for the third wave, and the survey is scheduled for September to November 2011. No new respondents will be added to the sample. Interviews will be face-to-face/CAPI and where possible will be conducted by the same interviewer as in previous waves.

Denmark has formed a working group consisting of representatives from three universities (Aalborg, Roskilde and Copenhagen) and the Danish National Center for Social Research. This group is working on funding applications. The outcome of one such application, submitted in February to the Danish Council for Independent Research, is expected in the autumn but it will not be large enough to be sufficient on its own. Hence the Danish team is actively seeking other funding possibilities.

## 10. Summary and conclusions

John Hobcraft and Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich thanked participants and summarized the discussions and decisions of the meeting. They highlighted the fact that the GGP is the first panel survey in many of the implementing countries, so new lessons are constantly being learned.

## 11. Date and venue of the next meeting

The next meeting of the network of national focal points was not discussed. The Consortium board will meet in Spring 2012 in Ljubljana and will decide upon a date and venue for the NNFP at that time.