

Meeting of the 2020/2021 Bureau
Geneva (virtual), 15-16 October 2020

For decision

Item III (b) of the Provisional
Agenda

NEW ROLES FOR STATISTICAL AND GEOSPATIAL AGENCIES IN EMERGING NATIONAL DATA ECOSYSTEMS - PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER WORK

Note by the Secretariat

*The joint CES and UN-GGIM: Europe plenary session on 23 June 2020 proposed several follow-up activities from the seminar on new roles for statistical and geospatial agencies in emerging national data ecosystems. **The Bureau discussed and approved the next steps in this area.***

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The CES and UN-GGIM: Europe held a joint plenary session on 23 June 2020. This was the first time that these two bodies have come together in this way. One of the main topics was “New roles for statistical and geospatial agencies in emerging national data ecosystems”. The CES Chair’s Summary of Discussions and Conclusions identified four areas for future work, and concluded that “The outcome of the discussion will be reported to the CES Bureau. The CES Bureau may discuss possible follow-up activities at its next meeting.”

2. This paper summarises the proposed areas for future work, to provide the basis for the Bureau to decide on concrete and practical steps forward in this area.

II. AREAS IDENTIFIED FOR FUTURE WORK

3. CES and UN-GGIM: Europe recognised the need for future work in the following areas:

- Renewal of the collaboration agreement between UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE;
- A joint task team to determine where geospatial and statistical standards need to be better aligned to ensure greater interoperability;
- Coordinated capacity development activities, e.g. on implementing international standards and promoting data integration;
- Another joint plenary session to be held in June 2022.

The following paragraphs consider each of these proposals in more detail.

4. The UNECE Secretariat and UN-GGIM: Europe have already started discussing a new collaboration agreement, with the aim of completing it by the end of 2020. The current draft is similar to the existing agreement for 2018-2020, and will cover the period 2021-2023. A

summary of the outcomes (so far) of the 2018-2020 agreement is presented in the Annex to this paper.

5. The UNECE Secretariat supports the creation of a joint task team to determine where geospatial and statistical standards need to be better aligned to ensure greater interoperability, subject to the agreement of the CES Bureau.

6. Whilst many capacity development activities are currently on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic, both the UNECE and UN-GGIM: Europe remain committed to develop new activities when conditions become more favourable. Capacity development activities will be conducted in partnership with, or in coordination with, key partners in this area, particularly Eurostat and UNSD.

7. The UNECE Secretariat supports the proposal for a second joint CES / UN-GGIM: Europe plenary session in 2022, subject to the agreement of the Bureau. This joint plenary session is expected to take place in Geneva.

III. ACTION REQUESTED FROM THE BUREAU

8. The Bureau is invited to discuss the outcomes of the joint CES and UN-GGIM: Europe session, and endorse the areas identified for future work. In particular, the Bureau is requested to decide on:

- **The renewal of the collaboration agreement between UNECE and UN-GGIM: Europe;**
- **The creation of a joint task team to determine where geospatial and statistical standards need to be better aligned to ensure greater interoperability;**
- **The proposal to hold a second joint plenary session in June 2022.**

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Annex: Summary of the Outcomes of the 2018-2020 Collaboration Agreement between UNECE and UN-GGIM: Europe

The UNECE Secretariat and the Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe agreed to pursue the following collaboration activities in the period 2018-2020. This Annex reports (in **bold text**) on progress at the end of September 2020.

1. Geospatial information for sustainable development:
 - Involve representatives of UN-GGIM: Europe in the work of the CES Steering Group on statistics for SDGs.
A summary of UN-GGIM: Europe activities (prepared by Portugal) was presented at the 2019 UNECE meeting on Statistics for SDGs
 - Identify activities where the CES activities could contribute to the UN-GGIM: Europe work plan related to SDGs
UNECE and UN-GGIM: Europe shared progress and ideas on SDG-related activities at various events, notably at the Joint Workshop on Data Integration: Realising the Potential of Statistical and Geospatial Data, held in Belgrade in May 2019.
2. Building networks and promoting communication:
 - Promote dialogue between national bodies responsible for geospatial and statistical information, including Earth observations. A joint high-level seminar will bring together heads of national statistical, mapping and geospatial agencies to explore areas for building collaboration at the strategic level, and to share good practices.
A joint High-Level Seminar on Strategic Partnerships was held in Geneva in April 2018, as well as a Joint Plenary Session of UN-GGIM: Europe and the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2020. Both explored good practices in selected countries, and discussed how to expand these to other countries.
 - Reduce obstacles to greater data sharing and more open data access, taking account of privacy and confidentiality requirements.
The Joint Workshop on Data Integration in May 2019 and the Joint Plenary Session in 2020 identified the main obstacles to greater data sharing. In both cases, the lack of common standards was seen as a major barrier. A joint task team is proposed to consider how to reduce this obstacle.
 - Develop wider communication networks based on the existing ones established by the geospatial and statistical communities.
Wider communication networks have been established by sharing information on contacts and pooling mailing lists.
3. Integration of geospatial, statistical and other information:
 - UN-GGIM: Europe currently has activities on the integration of geospatial and statistical information, whilst a project under the Conference of European Statisticians has been investigating how to more effectively link these sources with administrative registers, private data holdings, so-called “Big Data”, and other sources for more efficient production of all types of official statistics. Activities should be more closely coordinated and aligned, also taking into account other related global and regional initiatives.

The Joint Workshop on Data Integration: Realising the Potential of Statistical and Geospatial Data, held in Belgrade in May 2019, provided an opportunity to share information on progress and ideas for future work. Since 2018, UNECE, UN-GGIM: Europe and Eurostat have also organized annual meetings on the integration of statistical and geospatial information, to promote greater coordination of activities.

- Supporting the 2020 round of population and housing censuses: Population and housing censuses are traditionally seen as statistical exercises, but they use and produce a lot of geospatial information. Determining the precise location of residences and workplaces is essential for local and national infrastructure and service delivery planning. UN-GGIM: Europe experts will be invited to the regular UNECE meetings on population censuses. Future work could include the elaboration of guidelines for implementing geocoding in censuses

A member of the UN-GGIM: Europe Executive Committee attended the UNECE meetings on population censuses in 2018 and 2019, and presented ideas and experiences in applying geospatial information in the context of censuses.

- Linking geospatial data to all phases of statistical production, particularly the presentation and dissemination of statistics.

In 2020, a UNECE virtual task team started work on creating a geospatial view of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model. This was also discussed during the UNECE presentations at the 2019 and 2020 Plenary Sessions of UN-GGIM: Europe.

4. Capacity development:

- Following the joint UNECE / UN-GGIM: Europe Workshop on the Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Standards (October 2017, in Stockholm, Sweden) the scope for further joint events in specific technical areas will be considered. This will take into account national priorities and capacity building requirements of both bodies, particularly in the context of SDGs, and will leverage existing UNECE capacity building tools and platforms. The possibility of joint development of recommendations and manuals will be considered, as well as activities to develop the concept of geospatial core data across the statistical and geospatial communities.

UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE have worked together to promote international standards and share experiences. Examples include the Joint Workshop on Data Integration in Serbia (May 2019) and the Joint Workshop on Implementing the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework in Belarus (November 2019).

5. Involvement of other UNECE work programmes:

- Establish an internal UNECE network on geospatial information management, with representatives from all interested work programmes. This network would engage with the UN-GGIM: Europe Executive Committee to identify activities that would bring mutual benefits.

An informal UNECE network on geospatial information has been established and will provide inputs to the planned activities in the 2021-2023 collaboration agreement.

6. Cross-representation in the activities of the other body:
 - Establish formal mechanisms for involvement in the activities of the other body, to improve understanding and to learn from each other. For example, this would include granting UN-GGIM: Europe observer status in the Conference of European Statisticians, and UNECE observer status in UN-GGIM: Europe meetings. The possibility of organising a joint meeting of the UN-GGIM: Europe Executive Committee and the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians would be explored.
Members of the UN-GGIM: Europe Executive Committee met with members of the CES Bureau on the margins of the High-Level Seminar on Strategic Partnerships in April 2018. Since then, there have been an increasing number of joint events, culminating in the Joint Plenary Session of UN-GGIM: Europe and the CES in June 2020.
7. Reporting on progress / work accomplished:
 - The UNECE Secretariat and UN-GGIM: Europe will prepare annual reports on collaboration activities, to be presented to the annual plenary sessions of UN-GGIM: Europe and the Conference of European Statisticians. Those bodies will be invited to comment on the activities reported, and to propose new ones.
Reports
Reports on collaboration activities were presented at the 2018 and 2019 Plenary Sessions of the CES and UN-GGIM: Europe. The 2020 Joint Plenary Session provided the opportunity to discuss progress so far and identify new areas for future collaboration.