

CHAPTER 9

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference on How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change was held from 14 to 16 May 2008 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.
2. Ministers and representatives from 32 UNECE member States participated in the Conference. The following member States were represented : Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uzbekistan.
3. The European Commission was also represented.
4. Holy See participated as an observer State.
5. Representatives from the United Nations Population Fund, the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research participated.
6. Representatives of six non-governmental organizations and experts from 37 institutions participated in the Conference. The total number of participants was 157. The full list is available on the Conference website at: <http://www.unece.org/pau/ggp/conf>.

I. OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. Mr. M. Belka, Executive Secretary, UNECE, Ms. U. Palo, Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs, Estonia, Ms. L. Denisova, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Ukraine and Mr. K. Barka, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Albania made opening statements. The Conference elected Ms. J. Gottely-Fayet, France as Chairperson of the Conference. The Conference approved its agenda as contained in the document ECE/AC.31/2008/1.

II. POLICY DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH ON GENERATIONS AND GENDER

8. UNECE coordinates the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), which is designed to improve understanding of causes and consequences of demographic developments. It comprises: (a) a survey covering a broad range of influences on demographic behaviour; (b) a related contextual database of national and regional trends and policies on these issues; and (c) analyses of these data. All research contributions to the Conference were based on data collected through GGP. The secretariat presented the concept of the Programme and its current stage of implementation. Representatives of the United Nations Population Fund, the European Commission and the Council of Europe presented overviews of activities of these organizations that address generations and gender issues.

III. PANEL DISCUSSIONS

9. Seven panel discussions were held on a broad range of issues related to the Conference topic:
 - (a) Very low birth rates;
 - (b) Realities of parenthood and childbearing;
 - (c) Walking the tightrope of career and family;
 - (d) Breaking down barriers by integrating young people;
 - (e) In the age of old age;
 - (f) Solidarity between and within generations;
 - (g) Moving towards gender equality.
10. The composition of panels is provided in annex II.

IV. CONCLUDING SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE

11. The Rapporteur, Mr. R. Beaujot, University of Western Ontario, Canada, presented the Conference summary (see annex I).
12. In two short interventions, the secretariat informed participants about the linkage of the Conference theme to the intergovernmental processes on population and development (Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994), ageing (Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy, 2002) and gender (Beijing Platform of Action, 1997).
13. After several interventions from the floor, Ms. C. von Schweinichen, Acting Director, Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, UNECE, summarized the session and encouraged participants to communicate to the secretariat suggestions on further steps to promote dialogue between researchers and policymakers.
14. The Chairperson thanked the participants and closed the Conference.

ANNEX I

Rapporteur's summary

1. This Conference has been placed in the context of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and its approaching fifteenth anniversary. While the Cairo Conference was a watershed, it also had certain difficulties. One of these difficulties was an inability to say much about families in the Programme of Action, since supporting families would have meant supporting traditional families, which limit women's opportunities. We see from the present Conference that much progress has been made in our thinking about families. The theoretical and empirical work has shown that we can support diversity in families. We now almost take it for granted that women's participation in the labour force and increased opportunities for women support rather than undermine families, including family formation and childbearing. Research using the Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS) is confirming that under the right circumstances women's participation in the labour force has a positive relation to childbearing.
2. Recently adopted final documents of the UNECE Ministerial Conferences on Ageing (Berlin, 2002 and León, Spain, 2007) contain much of value regarding accommodations to an aging population and in particular the welfare of the older persons. Discussion of ageing-related questions also laid in the foundation of the Generations and Gender Programme. It was particularly insightful, on the part of the organizers of GGP to extend the preoccupation with ageing to an interest in generations, where in effect surveys on caregiving and care-receiving have been married to a modern family survey, with a clear mainstreaming of gender in the whole project. Thus, the life-course perspective and inter-generational relations have been put front and centre in our thinking about well-being and achieving the full potential of individuals, communities and societies.
3. This Conference also made an advance by bringing policy people into the discussions around the first results of the GGP. This advance has given researchers a much deeper appreciation of the complexities of the policy world, and it has in turn allowed those in the policy sector to help define the research questions to be pursued.
4. I feel that the Conference has advanced our thinking on "happiness" and "loneliness". It was ingenious of the GGS to tackle the measurement of these concepts that represent important realities for individuals and societies. Some 25 years ago, I was asking respondents in Tunisia, "Why do people have children?" The answers came fairly readily; people have children for (a) support in old age, and (b) because "children are the joy of life". When I have since asked Canadian respondents about this, the answers are not so readily available, but in some ways one gets to the same ideas: people have children because it is enjoyable to interact with children, and to have someone who will be close to you for your whole life. It seems that this can be translated into the concepts of happiness and loneliness.
5. It is easy to think of barriers to having children, but our theoretical thinking will be incomplete if it does not speak to why people have children. Our research is often too focused on an economic perspective that highlights the barriers and the costs, while giving inadequate attention to values and attitudes.
6. We need both, of course, but I feel that the Conference has advanced our thinking on the cultural side of determinants of demographic behaviour, and for that matter on the cultural side of determinants of gender equity and intergenerational solidarity. Background documents for this Conference speak about "subjective dimensions such as norms, values and attitudes." It would follow better from this Conference on "How generations and gender shape demographic change" to speak not of "subjective dimensions" but of cultural norms as expressed and measured through values and attitudes. A subtle difference, but a recognition that norms are not purely a subjective dimension; they are part of the society.
7. From this perspective on norms, it becomes possible to think of a society and various groups of people evolving norms of behaviour and interaction. Thus our norms can move in the direction

of promoting equal opportunity; gender equity; family diversity; cultural pluralism and equity; intergenerational solidarity and equity; childbearing and work as normal parts of adult life for both women and men; men's participation in caring activities; and partnerships based on choice, mutuality and equality.

8. I will not try to address all the issues brought up in this Conference. The sheer quantity of ministries and policies that deal with these questions across our societies is impressive. I suspect that researchers are often too quick in jumping to policy conclusions. When proposing policies, we need to study the competing priorities, the trade-offs and the possible fall-outs. This speaks to a need for a horizontal view, where policies from various domains are discussed in terms of their interactions; again, this speaks to the benefits of a life-course perspective.

9. We have seen through the presentations of policymakers that other things are important, for instance sustainability; leveraging partnerships including with employers, worker's representatives, the private sector and civil society groups; and the variety of policy histories across societies that complicates learning from the best practices of others.

10. By having so many of the players around the table, we are reminded of the trade-offs. We hear that the middle generation should not be ignored, that the older and youth generations have their unique things to bring to the table. This forces us to look seriously at possible trade-offs and fall-outs. For instance, does the promotion of active aging undermine the opportunities of youth to have secure jobs? As an example, does active aging mean that older people stay longer in policymaking positions, thus preventing younger generations from being similarly involved? Young people have waited a long time for the baby boomers to retire and opportunities to open up. Now it seems that the baby boomers are staying on. This is but one example of potential conflict that needs to be recognized, and we must find ways to work things out in the direction of cohesion rather than conflict.

11. It is very premature to try to summarize where this Conference has brought us. All presenters must be admired for having shared their insights into the rich potential of the data. Nevertheless, we have yet to show how the data can give us new and different insights into society and social policy. The job is not done, but the instruments are there and the challenge remains before us.

12. As very well demonstrated by the Conference sessions, GGP is particularly useful in its ability to analyse central interrelated questions affecting the demographics of our societies, in particular aging, low fertility, delayed early life transitions, changing family forms, the work-life balance, labour force participation, care of dependents and intergenerational relations. With the help of the micro and macro data from GGP, we are able to better understand the relative role of individual and social factors, ranging from economic and normative questions to institutional and policy contexts.

13. Let me identify two specific questions among many where GGP is playing a central role. First, what is the optimal parental leave time – and how it should be shared by women and men – that would maximize both childbearing and labour market contributions of a maximum number of people over the life course? Second, what are the conditions that would encourage people to have children in below-replacement populations, including the policy context associated with transfers, child care, parental leave and the work-life balance? Central to these questions is their placement in a life-course framework, with considerations of gender and generations at the centre of our preoccupation. This requires data for individuals over the various segments of the life course, and it requires a prospective look at the evolving dynamics of individual behaviour and its micro- and macro-level determinants. It requires the forethought to gather these data in various countries as our societies evolve, to maximize the potential for comparisons over time and across populations. In effect, GGP is a formidable laboratory for research and policy discussions of the central questions of our societies.

14. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of the session rapporteurs and the UNECE secretariat in preparing the summaries of each session, and also my colleagues from Canada who have greatly helped me in fulfilling this task: Ms. J. Keefe, Mr. J. Légaré, Ms. K. O'Hara, Ms. L. Paquette and Mr. S. Tupper.

ANNEX II

List of speakers

Opening

Mr. Marek Belka, Executive Secretary, UNECE

Ms. Urve Palo, Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs, Estonia

Ms. Liudmila Denisova, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Ukraine

Mr. Koço Barka, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Albania

Policy discussion and research on generations and gender

Chair: Ms. Jacqueline Gottely-Fayet, Responsable de la mission des études, de la recherche et des statistiques, Service des droits des femmes et de l'égalité, France

Speakers: Mr. Andres Vikat, Chief, Population Unit, UNECE
Ms. Siri Tellier, Director, Geneva Office, United Nations Population Fund
Mr. Julius op de Beke, Socio-Economic Analyst, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission
Ms. Agnes von Maravić, Head, Family Policies Section, Council of Europe

Panel (a): Very low birth rates

Chair and moderator: Ms. Janina Józwiak, Director, Institute of Statistics and Demography, Warsaw School of Economics, Poland

Keynote speaker: Mr. Francesco C. Billari, Director and Professor, Carlo F. Dondena Centre for Research on Social Dynamics, Bocconi University, Italy

Policy statements: Ms. Mare Ainsaar, Counsellor to the Minister, Ministry of Population and Ethnic Affairs, Estonia
Mr. Janez Malačič, Professor, Faculty of Economics, Statistical Institute, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Research contributions: Mr. Dimiter Philipov, Leader of Research Group on Comparative European Demography, Vienna Institute of Demography, Austria
Ms. Inge Pasteels, Research Centre for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Rapporteur: Ms. Duška Knežević Hočevar, Senior Research Fellow, Sociomedical Institute, Scientific Research Centre at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Panel (b): Realities of parenthood and childbearing

Chair and moderator: Ms. Siri Tellier, Director, United Nations Population Fund Geneva Office

Keynote speaker: Ms. Michaela Kreyenfeld, Professor, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research / Rostock University, Germany

Policy statements: Ms. Ileana Carmen Manu, Director, Directorate of social services and social assistance rights, Specialist in geriatrics and gerontology, Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities, Romania
Ms. Majda Erzar, Director General, Directorate for Family Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Slovenia

- Research contributions: Mr. Sergei V. Zakharov, Deputy Director, Institute of Demography, State University – Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation
Mr. Gijs Beets, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
- Rapporteur: Mr. Jürgen Dorbritz, Senior Researcher, Federal Institute for Population Research, Germany

Panel (c): Walking the tightrope of career and family

- Chair and moderator: Mr. Werner Haug, Director, Population Studies and Household Surveys, Swiss Federal Statistical Office
- Keynote speaker: Ms. Ariane Pailhé, Head, Unit of Economic Demography, Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, France
- Policy statements: Ms. Jacqueline Gottely-Fayet, Responsable de la mission des études, de la recherche et des statistiques, Service des droits des femmes et de l'égalité, France
Ms. Nina Parra, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany
Ms. Violeta Murauskaite, Secretary, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania
- Research contributions: Mr. Zsolt Spéder, Director, Demographic Research Institute, Hungarian Central Statistical Office
Ms. Oxana Sinyavskaya, Deputy Director, Independent Institute for Social Policy, Russian Federation
- Rapporteur: Ms. Martine Corijn, Research Centre of the Flemish Government, Belgium

Panel (d): Breaking down barriers by integrating young people

- Chair and moderator: Mr. Helge Brunborg, Senior Researcher, Division for Social and Demographic Research, Statistics Norway
- Keynote speaker: Mr. John Hobcraft, Professor, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York, United Kingdom
- Policy statements: Mr. Christopher Grollman, Youth policy researcher, CST Bratislava, United Nations Population Fund
- Research contributions: Ms. Sylva Höhne, Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic
Ms. Aiva Jasilioniene, Laboratory of Demographic Data, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany
- Rapporteur: Mr. Arnstein Aassve, Professor, C.F. Dondena Centre for Research on Social Dynamics, Bocconi University, Italy

Panel (e): In the age of old age

- Chair and moderator: Ms. Pearl A. Dykstra, Professor, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
- Keynote speaker: Ms. Jenny Gierveld, Professor Emeritus, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
- Policy statements: Ms. Kathy O'Hara, Senior Associate Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Social Development Canada

- Ms. Päivi Voutilainen, Development Manager, Department for Family and Social Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland
- Research contributions: Ms. Kim Boudiny, Research Centre for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies, University of Antwerp, Belgium
- Mr. Jacques Légaré, Professor Emeritus, Department of Demography, University of Montreal, Canada
- Rapporteur: Mr. Patrick Deboosere, Research Associate, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

Panel (f): Solidarity between and within generations

- Chair and moderator: Ms. Marja-Liisa Parjanne, Ministerial Counsellor, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland
- Keynote speaker: Mr. Svein Olav Daatland, Research Professor, NOVA – Norwegian Social Research
- Policy statements: Ms. Galina Poghosyan, Chief Specialist, Family, Children and Women Issues Department Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, Armenia
- Ms. Kallirroï Nicolis, Expert in Geriatric Issues, Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, Greece
- Mr. Ian Moss, Head of Strategy Unit, Strategy Directorate, Department for Work and Pensions, United Kingdom
- Research contributions: Ms. Pearl A. Dykstra, Professor, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
- Mr. Robert Naderi, Federal Institute for Population Research, Germany
- Rapporteur: Ms. Oxana Sinyavskaya, Deputy Director, Independent Institute for Social Policy, Russian Federation

Panel (g): Moving towards gender equality

- Chair and moderator: Ms. Jacqueline Gottely-Fayet, Responsable de la mission des études, de la recherche et des statistiques, Service des droits des femmes et de l'égalité, France
- Keynote speaker: Ms. Gerda Neyer, Head of the Laboratory of Population and Policy, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany
- Policy statements: Ms. Katerina Příhodová, Head of Family Policy Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic
- Mr. Christian Hoenisch, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany
- Mr. Sergiu Sainciuc, Deputy Minister of Economy and Trade, Moldova
- Research contributions: Ms. Jitka Rychtaříková, Professor, Department of Demography and Geodemography, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic
- Ms. Britt Slagsvold, Senior Researcher, NOVA – Norwegian Social Research
- Ms. Irina Badurashvili, Director, Georgian Centre of Population Research
- Rapporteur: Ms. Romina Fraboni, Researcher, Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, Italy

Summary and concluding discussion

- Chair: Ms. Jacqueline Gottely-Fayet, Responsable de la mission des études, de la recherche et des statistiques, Service des droits des femmes et de l'égalité, France
- Rapporteur: Mr. Roderic Beaujot, Professor of Sociology, University of Western Ontario, Canada
- Speakers: Mr. Andres Vikat, Chief, Population Unit, UNECE
Ms. Ewa Zimny, Senior Social Affairs Officer, UNECE
Ms. Christina von Schweinichen, Acting Director, Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, UNECE