



Generations &
Gender Programme



Report

**17th Meeting of the
Generations and Gender Programme
Council of Partners
UNECE International Working Group**

Online

24 June 2020



UNECE

Participation

There were GGP team representatives from 32 countries (Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay). Together with representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) the meeting had a total of 36 participants (see list of participants on: <https://unece.org/population/events/seventeenth-meeting-ggp-council-partners>). In addition, more than 100 persons followed the live streaming of the meeting on the YouTube.

1. Opening

The Council of Partners (CoP) meeting took place online on 24 June 2020 (13:00 - 15:00 CET), and was both live-streamed and recorded on YouTube.¹ The meeting was chaired by Zsolt Spéder (Hungarian Demographic Research Institute), the Chair of the Council of Partners, and moderated by Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Following the welcoming remarks by the UNECE, the Chair of the Council of Partners, and the GGP Director, Anne Gauthier, of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), the meeting participants adopted the proposed agenda and the minutes of the last meeting.² Meeting participants were reminded that on the UNECE Population Unit website - <https://unece.org/population> - they can access the reports and presentations of all the GGP Council of Partners meetings (previously International Working Group) since its establishment in 2000.

2. Report from the GGP Coordination Team

The Central Coordination Team (CCT) is based in the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) and works closely with the German Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB), the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), that acts as secretariat to the Council of Partners.

GGP Director, Anne Gauthier, provided an overview of the current CCT structure and scope of work. The main streams of activities of the CCT were presented along the following three categories:

New and expanded data products

- a. *New releases GGS-I*: The CCT has been working to catch up on the data release from wave 1, as well as the recently available wave 3 data, which is almost ready for release. This signifies that some countries may now benefit from three waves

¹ The recording can be found at <https://youtu.be/gevI6wFNRK4>

² The report of the 2019 meeting (in Paris) may be found at:
<https://unece.org/population/events/sixteenth-meeting-ggp-council-partners>

of the GGS. Agreements have been made with some countries to make the original dataset available, as it may contain more information than the harmonised version. The CCT welcomes a dialogue with other countries which may be interested in doing the same.

- b. *Harmonised Histories*: Harmonised Histories is one of GGP most popular datasets, and it continues to be expanded geographically and historically. Attempts are being made to locate older datasets from the 1970s, with plans to include this data in the Harmonised Histories.
- c. *Contextual database*: The contextual database now has a new platform.

Preparation for GGS - II

Data collection: Preparations for a new round of data collection are underway. There is a technical guideline document available, outlining a step-by-step guide for fieldwork. The number of countries going to the field continues to increase.

Other developments

- a. *Consortium agreement/sustainability/ethics*: The new consortium agreement represents an important milestone in this project. Not only does it reflect an agreement to pool knowledge, but it also represents a financial contribution in support of the central hub. This financial contribution is key to GGP sustainability efforts and provides basis to satisfy a key requirement of the ESFRI (European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructure) application.

Additionally, GGP now has an ethics board, composed of international members. The board has reviewed the entire fieldwork operation, including the questionnaire. The board requested amendments, and subsequently officially approved the GGP fieldwork application. It is possible that countries may be subject to additional ethical approvals.
- b. *Application ESFRI 2021 Roadmap*: The application should have been submitted in March 2020, but submission deadline has been delayed to September due to the Covid-19 pandemic. CCT thanks country teams who have provided official letters of support from their respective governments. With the application deadline postponed, the CCT would welcome others who are interested in working together to obtain a letter of support from their government.
- c. *Follow-up questionnaire*: Development of this questionnaire is under way and the CCT will return to this in a future meeting.
- d. *GGP 2000-2020*: the CCT would like to reflect on this year as GGP's 20th anniversary and on rewarding conversations and reconnections with the initial founders of the GGS.

3. Country progress reports

Netherlands

The Netherlands team received funding for wave 1 of the GGS in May 2020, provided by ODISSEI (Open Data Infrastructure for Social Sciences and Economics Innovation). The funding is not sufficient for face-to-face survey completion; thus the focus will be on an

entirely web-based survey. Currently the team is planning fieldwork in collaboration with Statistics Netherlands and NIDI with an anticipated start date in February 2021. The sample covers population aged 18-59 years (N=7,000).

Sweden

Sweden's survey design is similar to the Netherlands in terms of sample size and age range. Funding was received last year and Sweden is now in an advanced stage of preparations. The team have completed the additional questionnaire items and is finalizing the Swedish translation. The GGS will be carried in collaboration with Statistics Sweden and it will be also online. The plan is to launch the survey in October - December 2020, depending on pandemic situation. Swedish team will also draw some responses from the Swedish registers and incorporate, like last time, a register-based follow-up.

Finland

Finland is a new GGP member, and though the Finnish researchers have not participated in GGP previously, some similar research has been done previously. Finnish team has secured funding for the survey, defined the sample size, and has begun translating the survey into Finnish and Swedish. This will be completed in June or July of 2020. Finland acknowledges GGP North support and guidance in undertaking GGS. Fieldwork will most likely begin January 2021.

Germany

The German team also reported that funding is secured and is looking to hire three or four new team members in the next few months. Germany also has a SHARE and has thus reduced the age ranges in GGS sample to 18-59 years. The funding received (EUR 12.6 million over 5 years) is provided by two ministries and is to be used to set up a data infrastructure on family and demography (FReDA), of which GGS is one part. If this project is successful, it will become a permanent project funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior Affairs.

The team will conduct also partner interviews for respondents who have steady partners. Two collaborating institutions are assisting with this: GESIS in Mannheim, and the Pairfam consortium (University of Cologne), whose funding is running out in two years, and whose sample the GGP team will inherit and continue with. The start of fieldwork was postponed from November this year to February 2021 due to the pandemic. The data collection mode will be mixed, with an expected 8,000 face-to-face respondents and another 7,000 online.

Norway

Norway plans to go into the field with GGS in November, with a purely online survey covering ages 18-59, although this decision is not yet final. Questionnaire translation begins soon.

Austria

Due to technical difficulties, Austria was unable to present its report. The team is hoping to conduct the GGS in Austria in 2021, but due to COVID, raising of funds remains uncertain.

Belarus

The Belarus team is currently preparing for the second wave of GGS, and through its partners at UNFPA office received co-funding from the Government of the Russian Federation. The second wave has a planned launch date at the end of 2020, pending the Ministry of Labour registration of the project at the Belarusian Council of Ministers. This registration is a requirement by the National legislation on International Technical Assistance. Once the project is registered, the team will commence with questionnaire translation, and verification and correction of the sample.

Czechia

The Czech team has secured funding and the GGS project has received strong support from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which plans to use the GGS data as a major source of data to update the country's family policy. The funding is not fully sufficient, and debates related to logistics of the fieldwork continue. The current focus is on translation and design of the questionnaire. The initial plan was to split the sample between face-to-face and online interviews, with around 10 per cent of the interviews being online, but the exact share has not been determined yet. COVID-19 has introduced the possibility to expand the share of online interviews. The target population is 18-79 years old, fieldwork is scheduled to start in October 2020.

Estonia

Estonia's GGS is only partially funded, hence it needs be conducted only online. The team plans to run a pilot survey in August 2020, with the full-fledged survey planned for October 2021. The planned sample population age range is 18-49 years not to overlap with SHARE. The team informed that they have tried to modify the long survey and have adapted it slightly; in addition, and similar to Sweden, they included some questions on uncertainty.

Hungary

Hungary does not yet have funding for the new GGS wave (though is currently applying), instead they are focusing on working with already available data. Plan is to make the full dataset available: altogether, five waves of the GGS were conducted in Hungary, which spans over 15 years. Almost 40 per cent of the original sample was retained by wave 5, and the team is preparing a user guide and documentation. In the 4th and 5th waves there was a supplementary sample, which will be included in the English dataset later. These data can be merged with Harmonised Histories as well.

Republic of Moldova

This is Moldova's first wave of the GGS survey – the team joined GGP in August 2018. The project is implemented by the UNFPA country office together with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, National Bureau of Statistics, and NIDI; it is supported by the India-UN Development Partnership Fund. Since the project's inception, Moldova has developed a sample using a geospatial-related technology (September-December 2019), trained 220 field operators (January 2020 and planned July 2020), and launched the data collection process (February 2020). Data collection ran between January - March 2020 (3,000 interviews conducted), but was interrupted due to COVID-19, and thus has another 7,000 respondents to be interviewed between July-September 2020. In Moldova, online data collection was not considered to be representative and thus priority is for a face-to-face

survey. However, due to Covid-19, those respondents who refuse to participate in face-to-face interview will have an online alternative.

Moldova now plans to incorporate a new COVID-19 section into the questionnaire and has been working to develop a guidance pertaining to this. Fieldworkers have been trained in COVID-19 protective measures, and steps have been taken to ensure all field operators will have personal protective equipment. The communication campaign will be redesigned to primarily focus on social media channels. New data collection will begin 1 July in rural communities with low COVID-19 spread.

Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, the next GGS wave is planned for 2023, and the team will be looking for learning experiences from countries currently conducting the survey. In the meantime, the work on GGS wave 1 data analysis continues; team has published a report which was presented to the policymakers and members of Parliament. The team plans to be in touch with NIDI and UNECE further on this.

Poland

Poland has not yet secured funding for the new GGS round. Team remains in an uncertain situation with the current government not actively supporting project efforts. Polish team has established a research infrastructure on life-course studies including both SHARE and GGP, accepted just before the pandemic, and hopes to get it running in autumn 2020. The expectation is to proceed with infrastructure project and apply for funding towards the end of the year. The team has also asked for the government's letter of political support for the GGP, was interviewed in February, but the ministry has not yet responded with an outcome.

France

France reported on early experiences with a pilot study and informed that GGP is now on the French Roadmap for Research Infrastructures and the team has received a letter of support from the French Ministry for Research for GGP to enter the 2021 ESFRI Roadmap. Translation of the questionnaire is almost complete, and the French team is collaborating with the Canadian team on this. The team wants to test different combinations of web and telephone interviews, and various financial incentives, to identify which approach is most efficient for use in the real survey. Multiple applications for funding are underway and results are expected in 2021.

Canada

Canada still plans to run the GGS before the end of the year. Entirely online. Age groups more likely to go beyond 59, though still to be discussed. Translations with GGP team in France have started.

Hong Kong

Presently, there are broad efforts to introduce the GGP to Asia, and there has been some work in Japan already. It would be valuable if South Korea joins GGP as well. The Hong Kong team has been working to raise interest for this survey in Taiwan and Thailand, and is working to find funding support, and forming collaborations. The goal would be to start up with pilot/experimental work. In Hong Kong, the pilot testing will begin in Summer 2020. Questionnaire translation, localisation and beta-testing are underway, and the ages will be 18-

59, with a fully online survey. Over the summer, some experimenting with incentives to find the best response rate will be carried out. The team also is exploring opportunities for a “Greater Bay Area” GGS -- Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau, hoping to get some support for this idea within the next year or so.

Uruguay

This is Uruguay’s first experience with conducting the GGS, and before the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the process was well under way. The questionnaire is almost ready, and team aims to include a sample of full age range, and have face-to-face interviews. Due to COVID-19 the funding is no longer fully secured. The situation looks good, but the funding must be reconfirmed next year. Funders include the Social Security Institute in Uruguay, UNICEF, UNFPA, Inter-American Development Bank. Two of these need to confirm their support next year, which likely will not be known before February - March 2021.

United Kingdom

An application to fund the GGS in the UK is now being crafted, and the plan is to position the GGS as complementary to the survey “Understanding Society”, and make the case that this age group and these topics are not yet covered by existing surveys in the UK. Team is very open to input and advice from other countries on understanding to what extent teams are submitting applications that are specifically embedded within research questions/answering a research topic. Also, any advice on how to balance the research questions along with the data collection, and how to make the case that more data is needed in this context would be appreciated. The UK team’s goal would be to have a survey of ages 18-59, entirely online, with around 7,000 participants.

United States

This is the first GGS in the US and would be online only with the potential for telephone interviews. The team is in the very early stages of planning and have not yet decided on the sample age range. Would like to expand in two areas: 1. Social networks -- to gather more information and follow-up on these people and 2. Expand the module on household division of labour, with detailed time-use on tasks within the household and how this is broken down between the partners. Team is interested to hearing from partners who are also interested in these topics.

4. Summary of Q&A and general discussions (including the online chat):

During this online meeting, questions, answers and general discussions occurred in both verbal and written formats, given the availability of the Webex chat function. This section offers a brief summary of the discussions that took place across both of these formats. The discussions were centred on three main themes:

COVID-19

The discussion on COVID-19 related aspects developed in the chat. Anne Gauthier , GGP Director, briefly summarised it and provided some comments/responses. There was great interest by many countries to include questions pertaining to COVID-19 in the GGS questionnaire, and many have already begun this process. Anne Gauthier emphasized that the CCT has been compiling their own suggestions for additional questions and can provide guidance on this. Countries are encouraged to include COVID-19 questions and to get in

touch with the CCT about this. These questions would fit within the country specific questions section. A GGP memo on COVID-19 questions will be available on the GPP website shortly.

Age-ranges & harmonisation

Another central theme of the discussion, both within the chat and the main meeting pertained to discrepancies between the age ranges covered by the GGS in different countries. Anne Gauthier clarified that generally the GGS covers those aged 18-79 years, but in countries where special surveys on ageing, like SHARE, are conducted, the age cut-off can be at 59 years old. She clarified that age 59 has been chosen as the cut-off because it provides for an overlap of 50-59 with SHARE. This overlap allows for comparisons and benchmarking with the ageing survey.

The conversation on age ranges developed into a discussion on harmonisation and the challenges which arise when countries begin to make their own changes and adaptations to the surveys. This was particularly salient to making GGS the online survey, which many feel is too long. Both the CCT and the Chair of the Council of Partners emphasized the importance of consulting with the NIDI on any changes that countries wish to make, to ensure that all changes are made in a way that does not compromise standardization and comparability.

Modes of data collection

In response to the varied approaches to modes of data collection by countries, and to some apparent confusion around this matter, Anne Gauthier highlighted that online data collection is becoming the new standard in the GPP. Over the past few years there have been declining response rates and increasing costs associated with face-to-face surveys. This is what led to the three country mixed mode pilots few years ago, to enable the testing of the feasibility of new online modes. Now, COVID-19 has forced countries to go one of two ways: 1. “The Moldova way”, with PPE, safety measures, and training for fieldworkers during the pandemic or 2. “The online way”. However, an online survey is not right for all countries. The GGP Task Force is currently reflecting on what it means to appropriately design the online survey, and what the length of questionnaire should be. These conclusions are being finalized and will be communicated through official GGP channels soon, though the implications of new online surveys on operations are a matter of concern.

Entirely online surveys: Zsolt Speder, Chair of the CoP, discussed the potential risks of a shift to an entirely web-based survey, and underscored that mixed-mode is important for representativity. On this, he sought thoughts from the Nordic countries which have plans for entirely web-based surveys. Sweden clarified that a paper version will be sent to those who do not respond to the web-based version, and it is estimated that around half will request a paper version. Estonia commented that the team cannot afford a postal survey, but if the person cannot complete the online survey, then perhaps there's a possibility to opt for a CATI survey. This may require further shortening of questionnaire, and it would be problematic to have two surveys. The CoP chair echoed these concerns and emphasized that there is a need to reach an agreement on how best to approach this.

Mixed mode surveys: Further questions were directed from the UK team to the Swedish team on ensuring a non-complicated paper version given the “skips” in the online version and

ensuring comparability between paper and online surveys for those pursuing mixed modes. Sweden agrees that it may be more complicated and expensive, but that it is possible.

It was generally agreed that the question of mode is highly country-specific, as Moldovan representative reminded the group that online survey is could not be seen as representative in Moldova, and therefore a face-to-face has to be the primary mode. It was suggested by Germany to estimate mode effects on the findings and discuss it within the consortium, to ensure all teams know how much their findings may have differed if they had used a different mode. Hong Kong echoed the importance of this and the importance of running pilots to find out what drives people to complete the survey online, and in that way to gain the insights to inform our mode choices.

Anne Gauthier closed out the discussion on mode by remarking that CCT welcomes this discussion, and that it is fascinating to observe the shift from the face-to-face as the “gold standard” from just few years ago. The GGP as other research infrastructures are in a state of big transition and CCT plan to work hard with countries in which face-to-face is the primary mode, on how to invest in online versions for the future.

Closing of the meeting

The date and venue for the next CoP meeting will be agreed later. The CCT will be sending updates to the COP informing about ongoing developments and work done by the various Task Forces. UNECE will upload the presentations and the report on the meeting’s webpage (http://www.unece.org/ggp_council_partners.html).

In their closing remarks Zsolt Spéder (CoP Chair) and Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich, UNECE, thanked the GGP Coordination team and the country teams for the work done in the last year.