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Topics of common interest to statistical and geospatial communities

– joint session with the Regional Committee of United Nations Global

Geospatial Information Management for Europe:

Strategic directions in official statistics and in geospatial work

Strategy of the Europe Regional Committee of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Note by the Europe Regional Committee of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management

Summary

This document presents the new strategy of the Europe Regional Committee of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe) for the next five years starting from 2022. It was adopted by the Eighth Regional Plenary of UN-GGIM: Europe in October 2021.



I. Foreword

1. The aim of the Europe Regional Committee of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe) is to contribute to the more effective management and availability of geospatial information in Europe, aligning to the global UN-GGIM programme as approved annually by the Committee of Experts. The mission of UN-GGIM: Europe “to maximise the use of geospatial information in Europe for a safer and more sustainable world” has never been more apt as Europe emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic and prepares to contribute to a decade of action in respect of climate change and other major challenges that lie behind the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the motto leaving no one behind.

2. In October 2020, the UN-GGIM: Europe Executive Committee (ExCom) reviewed the many notable contributions that the Europe Region had made to the global agenda during the last decade. Noting the changing landscape, the ExCom felt that it was an appropriate time to set out a new forward-looking strategy to act as a framework and guide a collaborative work plan for the next 5 years, thereby aligning the strategy period with the wider UN ECOSOC review process.

3. UN-GGIM: Europe ExCom considered that the three main strategic pillars of Sharing Knowledge, Raising Awareness and Strategic Leadership form a helpful strategic framework around which the regional strategy and work plan may be informed. This strategy was adopted by the Eighth Regional Plenary of UN-GGIM: Europe in October 2021 for the next five years from 2022.

4. It is clear that the maximum success of the strategy is dependent on the widest participation from UN Member States across the Europe region and therefore encourage Member States and observers to explore ways in which to become involved and together, commit to a sustained programme of work through which we share best practice, learn from one another and continue to provide inspiration to colleagues on a global basis.

II. Preamble

5. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) is a formal intergovernmental mechanism to discuss, enhance and coordinate global geospatial information management activities by involving Member States of the United Nations. Since its inception in 2010, it has played a leading role in making joint decisions and setting the direction on the management of geospatial information in national and global policy frameworks.

6. UN-GGIM works with governments to improve policy, institutional arrangements, and legal frameworks. It also addresses global issues and contributes to collective knowledge as a community with shared interests and challenges and it develops effective strategies to build geospatial capacity in both developed and developing countries. UN-GGIM provides a forum to liaise and coordinate among and between Member States and International organizations.

7. The UN-GGIM: Europe is open to UN Member States in Europe and to UN Member States that are part of UN Economic Commission for Europe, and has, in this context, a collaboration agreement with UNECE. UN-GGIM: Europe also welcomes the participation from professional, research and academic organizations and associations, and private sector companies involved in geospatial and statistical information management either as Observers to UN-GGIM: Europe or through the Geospatial Societies, UN-GGIM Academic Network, and the UN-GGIM Private Sector Networks. The strategic leadership of UN-GGIM: Europe is provided by the Executive Committee.

III. Background

8. UN-GGIM: Europe is one of five regional recognised bodies of UN-GGIM, and was formally established in 2014, during the first plenary meeting held in Chisinau, Republic of

Moldova. Its strategy and activities are driven by the Executive Committee. A multi-year Work Plan is reviewed and approved by the Plenary Committee defining the operational activities and initiatives that Member States and Observers can contribute to. Member States and Observers are invited to join the UN-GGIM: Europe Working Groups which are aligned to the global UN-GGIM Programme.

9. According to the Articles of UN-GGIM: Europe, the Regional Committee *shall identify European issues relevant to geospatial information management and recommend necessary actions on them for the furtherance of the discussions in UN-GGIM so that the economic, social and environmental benefits of European geospatial information are maximized* (Article 2 of the Articles¹ of UN-GGIM: Europe).

10. From its creation the aim of UN-GGIM: Europe has been to contribute to the more effective management and availability of geospatial information in Europe. Since its formation it has promoted the collaboration between national mapping and cadastral authorities and national statistical institutes in the European Region, along with European Institutions and observer bodies. The Regional Committee operates in a mature and complex environment across the Region and actively works to maximise synergies, avoid duplication of effort, and reduce workloads and costs where practical. This includes improving the joint response to user needs and requirements, encouraging geospatial data interoperability, harmonisation and sharing, and optimising the overall management of geospatial information in Europe.

11. UN-GGIM: Europe takes a leading role in showing good practices in the use of reliable location-related reference data, the integration of data sources as well as developing contributions towards monitoring the SDGs. In 2020, UN-GGIM: Europe was granted the EO4SDG award² in the category of GEO observer, an important recognition for its work towards achieving the SDGs. UN-GGIM: Europe has also taken a leading role in the Global Fundamental Geospatial Data Themes and a driving force in setting up the global vision enshrined in the Future Trends in Geospatial Information Management Reports, the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), the Global Statistical Geospatial and Framework (GSGF), the Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence (GGCE) and Global Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) demonstrating UN-GGIM: Europe's active role in bringing different domains together.

12. UN-GGIM has continued to grow and change over the last ten years. This can be seen in the new areas of work that have been added to the Programme of Work and reflect a changing global community which focuses on geospatial data at individual national, regional and global levels. We have seen a paradigm shift in the importance of data, the latest edition of the Future Trends report talks about new information requirements and user data needs and emerging technological and digital communication platforms and tools. Whilst at the same time, issues related to data privacy, data confidentiality, and data ethics are at the top of the agenda. We have seen how strategies, frameworks, standards, and policy developments can be combined to harness, showcase, maximise and protect the value of data.

13. Now, more than ever, there is global awareness of the importance of having location-based data available to face the social, economic and environmental challenges to societies. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic have shown us the critical need for trusted and authoritative location-based data and information to be accessible, usable and time-relevant. The Covid-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the importance of digitisation to keep societies functioning and interconnected in a context of crisis. The EU vision for the 'digital decade' aims at empowering people and businesses based on a human-centred and sustainable approach. In Europe, the political programmes and the European Green Deal establish a green transformation in the light on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the European strategy for data adopted in early 2021, and its proposed Regulation on European data governance, has the ambition of a 'society empowered by data',

¹ <https://un-ggim-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UN-GGIM-Europe-Articles-and-Rules-v2-Adopted2014.pdf>

² https://earthobservations.org/geo_blog_obs.php?id=472

anchoring data as the basis for better decision making. The recently launched New EU Space Programme, with its initiatives like Copernicus and Galileo, will continue to enhance the contribution of Earth Observation to Europe's digital and green transitions priority policies. Policies and legislations that support open public sector data, common data spaces, data governance, the ethical use of artificial intelligence, and concepts towards a geospatially enabled 'knowledge infrastructure' have an impact on data integration and its provision throughout the region.

14. While the European Union is a subset of the region covered by UN-GGIM: Europe, its data policies and legislation have a broader regional impact. At a national and regional level, developments in policy frameworks continue to shape the way Member States collect, share, and use data. This can be seen through the emergence of data-centric legislation and strategies in the EU, and in non-EU Member States. In the context of the European Statistical System, it is also important to recognize the opportunities for the development of location-based information, at the level of infrastructure and technological development that census operations represent for Member States. The Population and Housing Censuses, due to the financial investment they entail, have been leveraging the foundation of point-based data and the constitution of national spatial data infrastructures.

15. This Strategy and associated Work Plan, complement the changing data scene across our region and reflect the expertise within and across Member States. It aligns with the changing focus of the UN-GGIM and ensures that UN-GGIM: Europe and its activities remain fit for purpose.

IV. Vision and mission statement

16. Building on the overarching vision of UN-GGIM of **positioning geospatial information to effectively address global challenges**, UN-GGIM: Europe mission is to **"maximise the use of geospatial information in Europe for a safer and more sustainable world"** through identifying opportunities, understanding and solving common challenges across the Europe Region and by collaborating with partners to enhance the use of geospatial data and its integration with statistics to inform and drive action.

V. The strategic pillars

17. Three main strategic pillars support UN-GGIM: Europe mission and shape its strategy for the next five years: Sharing Knowledge, Raising Awareness and Strategic Leadership (see Figure 1).

18. The strategic pillars provide a framework for strategic action and are translated into UN-GGIM: Europe work plan. The scope of action of each strategic pillar is not self-contained, but rather interdependent from one another, with linkages and interconnected actions supporting and contributing to the effective implementation of each strategic pillar. The strategic pillars hold a complementary nature and their combined actions drive the success of UN-GGIM: Europe. The results and outputs of the work plan should provide tangible outcomes to assess the strategic achievements.

Figure 1
The strategic pillars supporting UN-GGIM: Europe mission

	Sharing Knowledge	Raising Awareness	Strategic Leadership
AIM	<i>Providing the tools for society</i>	<i>Bringing everything and everyone together</i>	<i>Providing strategic alignment, and showcasing the added value</i>
FOCUS	<i>Prioritising contributions and informing the work plan to take action</i>	<i>Determining relevant partnerships and initiatives to leverage the work</i>	<i>Setting out the core areas of work focus</i>
GOALS	<p>Create and deliver a Work Plan that links global objectives to individual Member States priorities</p> <p>Consolidate the role of geospatial data in addressing SDG indicators</p> <p>Support the provision of geospatial pan-European datasets and derived products as a relevant input for the geospatial and statistical data integration</p> <p>Promote relevant frameworks and standards as tools for Member States</p> <p>Leverage the use of geospatial information and improving its national implementation</p> <p>Take advantage of EO to broaden the scope of thematic production</p>	<p>Encourage geospatial data harmonization and quality – official and authoritative geospatial data is key</p> <p>Actively contribute to the work and promote IGIF as an evaluation system and support Member States to implement the IGIF</p> <p>Promote engagement with relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure greater participation and bridge internal regional gaps</p> <p>Proactively display its work through initiatives and events on specific subjects showcasing the value of geospatial data</p> <p>Bring other data communities in terms of application and data combination and work on data interoperability</p>	<p>Support the development of UN-GGIM at all levels</p> <p>Promote the value of geospatial data and its integration with statistical data</p> <p>Leverage the value of geospatial data to support better decision-making processes to address critical socio-economic and environmental issues</p> <p>Support capacity building and development in geospatial data and promote cooperation between Member States</p> <p>Create an environment that develops initiatives to promote a clear governance of geospatial data in Europe</p> <p>Provide guidance to officially establish the cooperation between geospatial and statistical organisations in Member States</p>

TRANSLATED INTO UN-GGIM: EUROPE WORK PLAN

A. Sharing Knowledge

19. This pillar is focused on delivering activities that are relevant for European Members and aims to provide the tools for society to identify and realise the benefits of using geospatial information integrated with statistical information.

20. This pillar establishes the key areas of action and investment by UN-GGIM: Europe. It informs the main activities to be delivered by the Working Groups and is supported by an objective work plan with tangible results and outcomes.

21. In the context of this strategic pillar, work should be carried out in order to:

- Promote relevant policies and frameworks as tools for Member States, including the Integrated Geospatial Integrated Framework, the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, the Global Geodetic Reference Frame, and initiatives such as the Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence
- Consolidate the role of geospatial information in achieving international agreements such as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and continuing to identify methodologies and use of geospatial information for the SDG indicators
- Support the provision of geospatial pan-European datasets and derived products as a relevant input for the geospatial and statistical data integration
- Leverage the use of geospatial information and improving its national implementation
- Take advantage of Earth observation to broaden the scope of thematic production.

B. Raising Awareness

22. This pillar is centred on raising awareness of the value of geospatial data through identifying and building relevant partnerships and initiatives which support the Mission of UN-GGIM: Europe.

23. Raising awareness for UN-GGIM: Europe is crucial for ensuring greater levels of participation in the Work Plan and making sure that the outcomes from the Work Plan are adopted as widely as possible. Key to this is engaging with the regional audience, building bridges between different data communities, and establishing partnerships to showcase the value that geospatial and statistical information can bring.

24. In the context of this strategic pillar, work should be carried out in order to:

- Encourage geospatial data harmonization and quality, and promote the role of official and authoritative geospatial data, including leveraging the value of geospatial information and improving its sub-national implementation
- Actively promote the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework as an evaluation system for Member States, especially those that already have national frameworks in place. Linked to this is to contribute to the development and uptake of the IGIF
- Bridge the gap between different data communities, showcasing the work on data interoperability and application through combining data from different sources
- Promote engagement with relevant partners and stakeholders, including academia and the private sector, to ensure greater participation and bridge internal regional gaps
- Support Member States to develop their capabilities and build capacity in countries enabling them to evaluate and assess the relevance of the IGIF.

C. Strategic Leadership

25. The pillar on strategic leadership focuses on how UN-GGIM: Europe continues to be an active and relevant body within the European Region. Several organisations and initiatives within and across the Region are dealing with geospatial information, and this pillar is critical to developing and showcasing the added value the UN-GGIM: Europe brings. Whilst at the same time avoiding duplication of efforts.

26. Alongside the Articles of Association, this pillar sets out and shapes the strategic direction for UN-GGIM: Europe and acts as a guide to set out the core areas of work in the Work Plan.

27. Strategic Leadership drives UN-GGIM: Europe forward advocating and acting as a voice for regional activities, in existing as well as new and emerging domains where geospatial and statistical information have not traditionally been considered.

28. In the context of this strategic pillar, work should be carried out in order to:

- Support the establishment of UN-GGIM as independent functional and financially stable UN organization
- Promote the value of geospatial data and its integration with statistical data. Foster the collaboration between geospatial and statistical communities and work together with current and prospective partners and stakeholders
- Promote capacity building and development in geospatial information so that a wider range of communities make use and benefit from the value of this type of information. Support cooperation between Member States seeking to promote the sharing of experiences and the broad involvement of agencies and communities dealing with geospatial information
- Leverage the value of geospatial data to support better decision-making processes, and address critical socio-economic and environmental issues

- Contribute to discussions at member State level to officially establish cooperation and provide guidance between geospatial and statistical offices
 - Build an environment to promote a clearer multi-level model of governance on how geospatial data should be produced and managed within the European context.
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