



Generations &
Gender Programme



Report

**18th Meeting of the
Generations and Gender Programme
Council of Partners**

Online

9 June 2021



UNECE

Participation

There were GGP team representatives from 27 countries (Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Uruguay) and team representatives from the Balkan region and Hong Kong (China). Together with representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the GGP central Hub, the meeting had a total of 57 participants.

1. Opening

The Council of Partners (CoP) meeting took place online on 9 June 2021 (13:00 - 15:00 CEST) on the Zoom platform. 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, the meeting participants adopted the proposed agenda and the minutes of the last meeting.¹

2. Report from the GGP Central Hub

Anne Gauthier, Director of the Central Hub at the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) provided an overview of what was done in the past 12 month and priorities for the coming months.

Anne Gauthier informed the participants that the Central hub and nodes are divided into three sub-groups:

- Management, liaison and dissemination: Anne Gauthier, Vytenis Deimantas, Maaike Hornstra;
- Fieldwork operation: Arieke Rijken, Pascale Beaupre, Wojciech Jablonski;
- Data development and documentation: Judith Koops, Nadia Sturm, Arianna Caporali (INED)², Almut Schumann (BiB)³.

The main streams of activities were presented along the following three categories:

The new round of data collection

1. GGS-II represents a new stage in the development of the GGP: with new countries involved, fresh samples, new baseline questionnaire with the newly emerging scientific question (still commonalities with the previous version are preserved to provide continuity of the project); mixed mode of data collection (CAWI becoming the dominant, but also CAPI); centralised fieldwork operation system based on Blaise; more global geographical perspective.
2. GGS-II data collection will cover 20 countries or more. It was already done in Belarus (2017) and Kazakhstan (2019), these two countries being at the front line of the

¹ Accessible on the UNECE web site: <https://unece.org/population/events/seventeenth-meeting-ggp-council-partners>

² Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED)

³ German Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

centralised operating system with CAPI and tablets for the interviewers; Republic of Moldova (2020), Denmark (2021), Norway (2020), Sweden (2021), Czechia (2020-1), Estonia (pilot, 2021), Hong Kong (China) (pilot, 2021). Pilots were used for checking the web-based sampling, contact protocol and incentives. The preparation is going on in Finland (2021), France (2021/3), Germany (2021), Netherlands (2021) and Uruguay (2021).

Additionally, there is a group of countries that submitted the funding applications or are in the preparation stage: the UK (funding secured), Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Iceland, Lithuania, Poland, Taiwan; and a group of countries that are preparing the funding applications: Canada, USA, Brazil, Balkan region.

Recent data releases

1. There is still catch-up ongoing with the releases of the data from wave 3 of the first round of data collection (GGS I) for the Netherlands, France, Hungary. Expected to be finalised in the next several weeks.
2. Concerning GGS-II, some new data were released or expected to be released shortly:
 - a. 3-country push-to-web pilot that was done a few years ago. Anne Gauthier noted that currently, the attempt is to provide data for the users as soon as possible, and such long periods of delay are not expected to recur;
 - b. data collected in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Norway (and user-written harmonisation syntaxes for Belarus and Kazakhstan);
 - c. data from Czechia COVID-19 pilot.
3. Harmonised histories collected in Uruguay and Canada.
Brienna Perelli-Harris added that the UK Harmonized Histories from the UKHLS would also be available soon.
4. A new Colectica platform to look at the metadata online and browse the data will be launched soon. The providers discontinue the previously used NESSTAR platform. Colectica meets the requirements, and migration is on the go with the help of INED. However, online analyses will not be possible on that platform (no tables, graphs, basic regression) only the frequency of each variable along with the DDI-compliant documentation.

Impact and infrastructure developments

Central Hub informed about the submitted application to enter the 2021 ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure) Roadmap. The outcomes will be known by the end of the month. It will provide GGS with the recognition as research infrastructure, on a par with ESS (European Social Survey) and SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe). It will also ensure longer-term stability in term of financial resilience (via consortium membership fee and GGS survey service fee) and data storage according to FAIR principles (findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability) with persistent identifier DOI.

In general, the priorities of GGP as a research infrastructure lies in increased visibility and impact (e.g. via the inclusion into the global and the national roadmaps), financial stability (provided by political support, increased number of consortium boards members, a steady number of surveys), on-going transition to the web (based on drawing lessons and sharing best

practices), accessing the quality of new round of data and instrument (special funding and special working groups will address it).

Arieje Rijken from the fieldwork operation team presented the fieldwork report of the new round of GGS. There is a considerable variety in the design of the GGS in different countries, primarily in the survey mode combinations and chosen sampling frames. The brief sum-up of the country-specific information is presented in Table 1:

Table 1:

Country or territory	Mode	Sampling	Population
Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova	CAPI only	Areal, household and building sampling frames	18-79
Denmark, Estonia (pilot), Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Hong Kong (China) (pilot)	CAWI only	Individual sampling frame Household sampling frame (HK)	18-49 (DK) 18-54 (NO, FI) 18-59 (EE, HK)
Czechia, Uruguay	CAWI and CAPI	Household sampling frame	18-79
Sweden, Germany (run the survey, not through the centralised system)	CAWI and PAPI	Individual (SE) and household (DE) sampling frames	18-59(SE) 18-49(DE)
France (pilot)	CAWI and CATI	Individual sampling frame	18-79 (corrected by Milan Bouchet-Valat)

The contacting strategy of the countries, the number of reminders and the used incentives also differed considerably. For the presented analyses, only countries that used CAWI in the GGS-II round were investigated. The response rates also vary significantly, although a direct comparison between response rates is not possible. Details on mentioned parameters are provided in Table 2.

Table 2 (selected countries conducting CAWI):

Country+survey agency	Contacting respondents	Number of reminders (after the invitation)	Incentives	Response rate (completed the survey)
Norway (Statistics Norway)	E-mail and SMS Easy login: ID in the link	4 (up to 5-6)	Conditional lottery: 65 x €100	30%
Denmark (Statistics Denmark)	E-mail ⁴ + URL + separate code	2	Conditional lottery: 2 x €100	17%

⁴ Denmark did not use e-mail –digital official mailboxes were used, which automatically prompts an email, App and SMS reminder as pointed by Peter Fallesen

Czechia (SC&C)	Knocking on the doors, birthday methods Postal letters before survey (didn't work out well)	NA	€20 conditional incentive	?
Estonia (Kantar Earmor)	E-mail Easy log-in: ID in the link	3 (2 sent)	Conditional, experiment with three conditions (2-month access to magazines; lottery with €50 prize + charity; lottery with €50 prize)	17%
Hong Kong (University)	Postal letter to household, birthday method	3 (2 sent)	Experimental: 10 conditions (unconditional + conditional)	Top group: 40%

The combination of unconditional and conditional incentives appeared to be the best for reaching the respondents online, based on three pilots in 2018 and the Hong Kong (China) experiment. The incentive costs disprove the assumption that CAWI surveys are relatively cheap.

Aat Liefbroer added that in the Netherlands, the fieldwork would be started with 1000 respondents getting a 5€ unconditional + 10€ conditional incentive and another 1000 respondents getting a 15€ conditional incentive (and NO unconditional one). Then the decision will be made which incentive scheme to use for the remainder of the respondents based on response rate and representativity of these first 2000.

No experiments comparing lotteries with conditional or unconditional initiatives were conducted. No special investigations of the effect of reminders were done (both in terms of timing and number of reminders). Still, in general, the comparison between countries is complicated. But the impact should be investigated further in details, with the distinction by types of reminders as letters can be perceived differently from SMS or e-mails, and the cost of reminders differs considerably.

The break-offs were analysed for Hong Kong (China), Estonia (Russian and Estonian questionnaires separately), Norway, and Czechia regarding five-time points: after logging in, in the intro page (for Norway and Estonia – also consent page); after the first five questions; when finished demographical section (1st section, about 40 questions); when finished life-history section (2 sections) and completed (9th section).⁵

Observations show that a considerable number of potential respondents is lost already after the introduction text/consent form; the reasons should be investigated further. And in the last seven sections, the drop off is the smallest. So, the length doesn't seem to be the problem. But as Peter Fallesen suggested, the length's expectation can lead to breakoffs as well.

⁵ The detailed picture of participants' withdrawal at each time point is presented in the Fieldwork report, slide 6, GGP_COP_National reports

Some investigation can address the first questions of the survey, but the problem is spread across the first part in general. Anne Gauthier reminded the participants that it is not the right time to change the questionnaire as it can affect the cross-country comparability. Still, changes to the consent form and/or the invitation letter could be considered to increase the log-in ratio and prevent the breakoffs (probably including additional motivation inside the questionnaire to encourage respondents to continue). Other issues that should be addressed and investigated include easiness of clicking/ logging in, layout display on different devices, general "web fatigue" due to the pandemic, how do alternative methods of data collection work, and the respondents' selection in case of the household sample (can respondents do it themselves like in Hong Kong (China)), representativity (especially with lower response rates). ESS is also investigating what works best with CAWI, and the insights can be mutually exchanged.⁶ The Central Hub is trying to investigate what motivates participants and what makes a difference, although as not many countries conduct experiments, the conclusions are not statistically robust.

3. Country progress reports

Countries and territories which are in the active fieldwork or preparation phase:

Hong Kong (China)

The survey is conducted in two languages – Chinese and English (with reverse translations), including extensive beta-testing. In Hong Kong (China), there were legal issues with incentives (prohibition to send money). The team therefore used registered mail to send supermarket vouchers to potential participants (7891 invites). Also, some colours could not be used for the logo due to cultural reasons.

Ten experimental groups were used with different combination of conditional/ unconditional and mixed incentives. The best response rate was shown by unconditional HK\$ 50 and conditional HK\$ 100 (40.2% against 6.9% for the controlled group). The unconditional HK\$ 50 and conditional HK\$ 150 gave the same results of about 23%. The lowest response rate was received from the lottery with 3 iPads (11.7%). Cultural nuances can explain the relatively high response rate: surveys are rare, and people are interested in someone interested in their life. Breakoffs by incentives could be analysed, but that wasn't done so far. The pilot ends in 5 weeks and later is expected to be rolled into the first wave. If assumptions from the pilot are correct, the budget is nearly enough to conduct the survey. The SHARE-type survey is planned on the territory later on.

Czechia

The fieldwork started in November 2020. Since then, the procedure was changed several times depending on the pandemic situation (CAWI first, CAPI became available during last month), resulting in few hundred completed questionnaires so far. The country team is recruiting and training the interviewers now (before the regulation allowed only six people to meet in one room; 50 interviewers are fully trained). The survey is expected to reach the target of 6000 respondents by the end of the year. For the next waves, additional funding needs to be secured. The application to include GGS in the national roadmap was submitted last year; in mid-July,

⁶ Arieke Rijken shared a link to a paper on mixed mode 'pilots' in the EVS: https://pure.uvt.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/45659643/SOC_Luijckx_the_european_value_study_2017_ESR_2020.pdf and a link to a webinar by the ESS on their push to web pilot: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zyS3WU3tjE>

the application process results will be known (7 years of additional funding, enough for 2 waves).

Estonia

The pilot started on 7 April and lasted nine weeks till 9 June. The team used the individual sampling frame of the population aged 18-59 with regard to age, sex and language. The sample consists of two batches: 4000 (invitation sent on 7 April) and 8000 (invitation sent on 6 May). Three groups of initiatives were investigated:

- Unconditional: access to 12 magazines (1 magazine was in Russian) for two months for up to 5 persons. It costs €4.08 per respondent.
- Conditional: lottery (55 x €50 shopping card).
- Conditional + unconditional: lottery (32 x €50) + everybody participated in joint donation of €500 to NGO dealing with mental health issues and €800 to NGO Children and Youth Crisis Programme.

The team conducted massive media campaign and advertised on Facebook. All participants received three email reminders, the first batch with the same text, same days and the second batch – the same text on different dates. 2*300 respondents for subgroups with lower response rates were approached by the telephone (success rate 10%). All the participants received the last short reminder with different wording for male and female participants. The preliminary response rate is 17.7%, with the difference between language and sex groups. The response rate also differs for two batches: 21% for batch one and 15.7% for batch two (the expected response rate was 25%). The reason should be massive media campaign and the difference in a pandemic situation. The response rate between the incentives groups is relatively similar.

Republic of Moldova

In Moldova face to face interviews were conducted (during summer it was possible to conduct in an open-air environment), online data collection didn't work out, the total response rate reached 50%. In total, 20 000 households were visited, with over 10 000 persons interviewed. The data collection was conducted by 150 field operators and took 200 days. The social media campaign was focused on security, protective measures during the interviews. The management team developed the dissemination and communication plan – a memorandum of understanding with the biggest university was signed. Besides, selected parts of GGS will be used in the national curriculum. The team cooperates with civil society organisations and think tanks in using GGS data for policy development. Currently, several documents are under development: action plan on demography and policy document on family-related policies, including fathers' engagement and development of alternative childcare services and active ageing. National & international level dissemination will start in July.

Denmark

The survey was conducted online (CAWI), the final responses are coming in. The response rate was lower than expected – 17.1% for the two batches (7214 respondents in total, aged 18-49, as SHARE data are also collected). Sample appears representative on age, second batch stratified by gender. The low response rate can be explained by the length of the survey and survey fatigue (daily surveys are a part of Danish COVID-19 response with the same sample framework).

Finland

The CAWI-only sample included 20 600 individuals aged 18-54 (also because of SHARE) living permanently in Finland, with the oversampling of the Swedish speaking Finns (20% in

the sample vs 5.3% in the population). The oversampling is needed due to differences in fertility patterns and attitude to relation statuses between the two groups. The sampling is random but stratified by region for Swedish speaking population, and there is a possibility to target groups with low-response rates when sending reminders.

The fieldwork will start in September (as the summer is a period of massive holidays) and last approximately two months with the same agency that conducts SHARE. The invitation will be sent as a postal invitation letter with a QR code/ link to the survey, followed by one postal reminder. The second reminder will be in the form of a phone call, where an experienced interviewer will highlight the advantages and importance of GGS, followed by an email/SMS with the link to the survey. Three further rounds of e-mail/SMS reminders are expected. For the respondents with no valid phone number, the second reminder will be sent by post. No incentives are planned so far, as it seems that only unconditional seem to work in the Finnish context. Finland included some country-specific items into the questionnaire: additional questions about languages spoken at home and with the partner and mother tongue language and uncertainty module.

There is the possibility of linking the data to the administrative records (register) by Statistics Finland to combine answers with register data from 2000-2026 and provide information on longer trajectories, e.g. on unemployment or child plans, partner status etc.

Sweden

The fieldwork with Statistics Sweden is about to be finished. The survey is conducted by CAWI with the possibility of a PAPI version. The questionnaire contains some shortening of and additions (COVID-19 and uncertainty related) to the standard GGS. The results are linked to register data to reduce the questionnaire's length and conduct the follow-up on economic and demographic indicators. No incentives were used (as they should be really big ones, which would lead to too high costs). Still, the sample size was increased to the gross sample of 30000 individuals living in Sweden and aged 18-59 with an extra immigrant-GGS sample of 20000 individuals born in Poland, Former Yugoslavia, Iran, Iraq and Syria. For the immigrant groups, questionnaires in Swedish and English were available.

Four reminders were sent, the second and fourth containing the full paper version, with the visible increase in responses after each notification. The total response rate was less than 30%, even less for the foreign-born respondents (2 out of 5 immigrant groups). The survey will remain open during the summer, as Statistics Sweden goes on a summer break and will deliver the results after it.

Uruguay

Funding for the GGS is ready, the questionnaire is 99% ready (with COVID-19 related questions being included), fieldwork prepared, pilot of 100 respondents will be started soon. The sample will be constructed of 8000 respondents from the population aged 18-79 years, conducted by CAPI or CAWI. Still, the proportion between the modes of data collection is still under negotiation. Incentive options are also uncertain at the current stage: lottery options, probably shopping cards, are likely to be used. No communication campaign, as well as invitation and motivation letters, are defined by now. The exact timing of the launch of fieldwork will depend on the COVID-19 situation (August-September is expected).

France

Funding from a grant for Large Research Infrastructures from the French government was received, thus funding for pilot and two waves are almost surely secured. Additionally, application is submitted for the funding within the Taiwan-France project.

A pilot is foreseen in October-December 2021 to define the survey mode (CAWI and/or CATI, as CAPI is too expensive) and investigating the impact of incentives on response rates and drop-offs, as well as to test the standard questionnaire in French plus country-specific questions to allow the comparison with GGS-I.

Nine scenarios will be investigated:

- Four scenarios starting with CATI (250), four with CAWI (300) and mode-switch in case of non-response;
- One base scenario with CAWI only (1000 persons);
- Pre- and post-questionnaire incentives (up to €15).

The individual tax lists will be used for the pilot. The tax lists contain names, telephone numbers, and e-mails. An announcement letter with the additional e-mail announcement for individuals with the known e-mail addresses will be sent.

French GGS is expected to be conducted in 2023, 2026 and 2029, with at least 10000 respondents aged 18-79 in the first wave. The GGS (in its full version) will be carried out in parallel to the Family and Employers survey (which will include around 3/4 of the GGS questions).

Countries that are currently not in the active phase of the survey:

Austria

The country team works in collaboration with the Ministry, the financing is almost secured, and the survey is planned this year. The sample will cover a population aged 18-49 years; the survey mode is CAWI (CATI, CAPI for some groups). Conditional incentives are planned.

Belarus

GGs wave two is planned for early 2022 (the first wave was conducted in 2017-2018). The national partners are motivated to have the GGS process finalised by the end of 2022 because 2023 is the year for legislation change, and the evidence base of GGS is planned to be used. Next week the steering committee will decide about the survey format - the longitudinal framework is expected (50-70%) by CAPI, sampling 18-79 years.

Poland

The uncertainty related to the government and changes in the Ministry remains. Last year the survey was accepted into the national roadmap, but there is no dedicated funding schemes related to research infrastructures so far. Plans are expected to be clarified later this month. Alternative sources are investigated, but no results so far are achieved.

UK

GGs in the UK has been accepted for funding by the ESRC. The survey will be conducted in CAWI mode with the sample based on postal code register with potential usage of birthday method, aiming to achieve 7000 respondent aged 18-59 years. The initial plan is to contact 65000 households with an expected response rate of 10-30%.

The survey will include the uncertainty module (as in Sweden and Norway) and the TDIB (Miller) fertility module. The questionnaire may need to be shortened, given the time constraints.

Incentive experiment is planned: in the first phase, 9600 households will be contacted, the control group will receive a £10 unconditional voucher, the treatment groups £5 unconditional + £10 conditional and £10 unconditional + £10 conditional. The incentive in the form of the gift bag is considered.

In phase two, the best practices learned in the first phase will be implemented. Additionally, it will be examined how incentives differ by sub-groups to target deprived areas or those with high per cent of nonmarital birth etc.

A quota experiment will be additionally conducted: the use of online quota samples has proliferated, especially during COVID-19. A sample of 1000 from survey organisations registers or other sampling frameworks will be drawn. The aim is to compare push-to-web and quota samples with official statistics (e.g. birth registers) to define the biases. Advertising through social media is discussed to encourage participation and motivate participants to finish the questionnaire.

Lithuania

The research council recommended GGS to the national road map. Still, the Ministry of Education postponed the acceptance of the national road map, so the legal acceptance is pending.

Germany's comment on migrants and languages:

Martin Bujard informed the participants that the questionnaire was translated to Russian, Turkish and Arabic languages to capture the migrants in Germany. However, the response rate for those is low, resulting in the rise from 9.2 to 9.9, while it is high for the rest. Still, no special sample for the migrants was conducted.

4. Conclusion remarks

Anne Gauthier thanked the participants for sharing the experience during the meeting and also at the GGP connect webinars initiated by the Central Hub. She addressed five key messages about the development of GGP and GGS:

- The community experiences a tremendous moment – there is a big interest in investigating fertility, family relations, and life courses, especially during the pandemic.
- Still, there are also important challenges: the traditional face-to-face method is becoming more uncertain, primarily because of the high costs. The pandemic accelerated the transition to web surveys.
- Three countries conducted pilots on web methods a few years ago. However, the situation is still very complex, and uncertainty remains about best strategies of contacting respondents, re-contacting, motivating to log in, explaining, motivating, keeping from drop-offs.
- All these create tremendous opportunities for methodological papers to emerge, including the need to look at representativity, as CAWI mode working not perfectly with low education groups and migrants and hard to reach populations, quality, selection effects, mode effects.

- Transitioning to the web takes place at a different pace. Central Hub aims to help countries that planned only CAPI to include the web component, as the future looks mixed mode.

Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich thanked the Central Hub team for the work done and congratulated with the success of the GGP Connect webinar series, which connected people and enabled experience sharing. She also reminded that national presentations as well as those from the Central Hub will be uploaded on the UNECE web page.

Zsolt Spéder emphasised the need to summarise the experience on incentives, trials, new ways of approaching people. It is important to make such information open and integrate into the main GGP programme in the future. He also stressed the competitive advantage of the GGP: comparable data and comparable frameworks are the main strength. The basic core questionnaire needs to be preserved in addition to national specificity. Next waves should also come up with innovations and approaches but preserve comparability of the whole project. Zsolt Spéder also underlined the importance of representativity and thanked the Central Hub for coordinating the national efforts and answering arising questions.

The follow-up questions were focused on the potential GGS in the Balkan region: the possibility of conducting a pan-Balkan GGS for 6-7 countries by using a shorter version of the questionnaire to cut the cost. Anne Gauthier informed that the concept paper for Balkan GGS is under preparation. There is room for discussion on some questions, but the longitudinal sample frame should be preserved as the core of the project. The requirement is not to compromise the comparability. The possibility of engaging some private enterprise to conduct the survey instead of statistical offices was discussed as well as in how many languages the pan-Balkan survey should be conducted and how to ensure that coding of answers is consistent across of all languages used.

5. 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 ZOOM chat function. Figure 1 offers a summary of the main point arising during the discussion.

Figure 1

