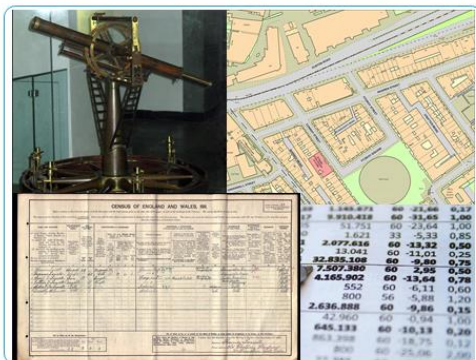


## Together now for a better future? No, together is better for a future now



Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and thanks to my narrator Ekkehard Petri, unfortunately strike action means that I cannot be with you in person.

As a surveyor I am honoured and humbled to be speaking to a meeting containing distinguished experts in the field of statistics. And, given that my own attempts to gain a qualification in statistics failed at the age of sixteen in secondary school examinations I should probably avoid talking about the subject!



The first modern UK census was carried out 173 years ago. As I am sure you all know each householder was required to complete a return which contained the household address and the names, ages, sexes, occupations and places of birth of each individual living at the address.

Just 58 years before that the French Academy of Sciences suggested it would be useful to astronomy to connect the royal observatories of London and Paris through the scientific method of triangulation. The subsequent work relied upon accurately measuring in a straight line, both vertically and horizontally, a distance of just over 27,400 feet, (8351.52 metres) , and on a theodolite, which for the first time was capable of dividing angular scales accurately to within a second of arc.

In fact statistics have been collected for thousands of years, geographical information too, the Imago Mundi map of the world for example is dated at 600 BC.

A great deal has changed in both the statistical and geo-spatial worlds since then. Some things haven't even though they are given new names and presented as though the latest fashion. Crowd sourcing for example is not new, Mercator had only travelled in a small part of Europe but he produced some of the most accurate world maps of his day using 'crowd sourced data' albeit from a small crowd.

The sciences of surveying and statistics have come a long way since their inception as important sciences to support economies and defence. Regrettably, for most of the time they have travelled on separate paths. Each has served society in its own way but it is now clear that it is time to work closely together to better serve society now and in the future.



If, in the future, the two communities are to travel together we will need to choose the right vehicle and be clear about the destination for our journey. In choosing both we must answer a number of questions.

What is the focus of our cooperation?

Where do we want it to take us?

What is the route we should follow?

And when do we start?

At least in the case of the latter the answer is fairly clear, we must 'for a better future **start now!**



Although the full magnitude of it isn't realised yet, and may not be for a number of years, the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2014 could and in my view should be seen as a significant step on that journey. Significant because on this day the European regional committee for UN Global Geospatial Information Management, or UN-GGIM: Europe as it is more easily referred to, was established.

At this first meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe, representatives from the European UN Member States heard from speakers with a National, a Regional and a Global perspective.



In his welcome speech, Mr Victor Bodiu, Secretary General from the Government of the Republic of Moldova said: ***“The use of geo-statistical data will improve the abilities of governments to examine, monitor, manage, propose and predict development and growth options for a sustainable future.”***

Walter Radermacher, well known to everyone here I imagine and the Director General of Eurostat and Chief Statistician of the European Union made clear in his video message that: ***“the need for a committee on geospatial information management in Europe has been very evident, and by creating UN-GGIM: Europe we are closing a significant gap in European public information management”*** He went on to give clear reasons why the European Commission wanted to be part of UN-GGIM: Europe ***and why he wanted Statistical Offices be part of it.*** ***“In our complex and fast evolving societies, public decisions need to be well-informed and taken on the basis of strong and objective***

**evidence. Official statistics are one of the most important components of this evidence and are absolutely essential to underpin EU policies from the European down to the local level.**

**As statisticians, he observed a growing demand from decision makers to develop statistics with increasing geographical detail. Only with the right level of detail, they can understand the size and nature of the issues, and take the necessary actions”**

And Stefan Schweinfest, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division Department of Economic And Social Affairs used his address to share three simple messages:

- (i) In an increasingly global world, geospatial information has to play an important role to support policy decision making and to improve the life of people,**
- (ii) Geospatial Information and Statistics are a powerful couple, and**
- (iii) the rest of the world needs an active UN-GGIM: Europe community, but it is certainly not a one-way street “**



The meeting was attended by more than 110 delegates, by any standard this should be judged as a success. It certainly is a start, a good start in fact. This meeting was organised to follow immediately after the annual meeting of the heads of Europe's national mapping and cadastral authorities and so whilst it is commendable that it was, inevitably, attended by so many, most were from the national mapping and cadastral authorities and whilst we can be very encouraged that representatives from 6 National Statistical Institutes attended, that's not nearly enough.



Although the Articles of UN-GGIM: Europe stipulate an Executive Committee of nine people, including a chair and vice chair, the fact is that senior people from eleven UN Member States presented themselves as candidates. Given this 'exuberance' of enthusiasm a committee of all eleven was established.

But where is the statistical community in this committee?

The meeting adopted a Work Plan which will focus in two main areas: 1. **Core Data:** particularly **increasing data interoperability and harmonisation by proposing core geospatial data which meets essential user needs** and 2. **Data Integration: Enabling integration of core geospatial data with statistical and other data in order to foster further usage.**



The work plan was extrapolated from reports written by three working groups during the preparatory phase for the now established UN-GGIM: Europe. In the report of Working Group 2 led by Sweden we read:

***Linking statistics and geospatial information has been a focus of UN-GGIM since the outset. This is reflected in the inventory of issues document where linking statistics to geospatial information is one of the nine thematic groups.***





**The European Location Framework is a technical infrastructure which delivers authoritative, interoperable, cross-border geospatial reference data for analysing and understanding information connected to places and features.**

*'Infrastructure is the basic physical and organizational structure needed for the operation of a society or enterprise, or the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function'*



2015 is I believe an interesting time for this closer cooperation to commence at European level. Interesting because 2015 is the mid-point in the three year project to establish an infrastructure, or 'on-line platform' which will, eventually, provide the European Location Framework - One Reference Geo-Information Source for Europe.




### The ELF Project

- ★ Started 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013
- ★ 36 month project
- ★ 30 partners
  - ★ EuroGeographics
  - ★ 15 national/regional data providers
  - ★ 3 service integrators
  - ★ 6 application developers and domain experts
  - ★ 2 universities
  - ★ 3 user community representatives
  - ★ 13 million euro investment part funded by the European Commission

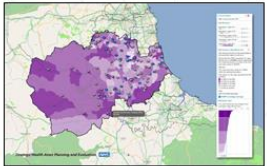





The project involves 30 partners, including 14 national mapping and cadastral authorities, and represents a 13 million euro investment which is part funded by the European Commission's ICT PSP programme.



### Thematic data to be included

- ★ Socio economic
- ★ Health statistics
- ★ Hazards data
- ★ Addresses
- ★ Postal codes
- ★ Real Estate Registry (EULIS)
- ★ Open Data Depots
- ★ Spatial Planning and Regional Data
- ★ Land Use / Land Cover
- ★ Orthophotos

Already in the project work is being done to make use of the available geo-spatial information and national services to link important statistical themes such as health and property transaction statistics and use these in market applications, so supporting INSPIRE and the re-use of Public Sector Information.

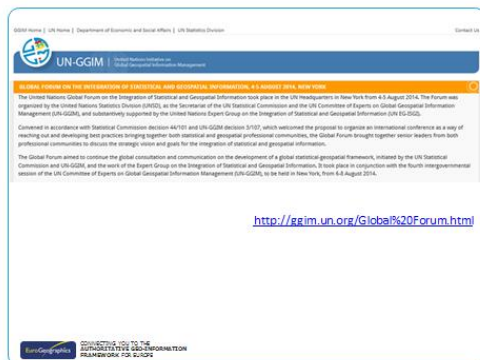
But much more could and should be done in the project to demonstrate the power and importance of linking reference information and statistics in Europe.



More information is available at [elfproject.eu](http://elfproject.eu)

So, at European level we have a mechanism in UN-GGIM: Europe to discuss the issues and decide on necessary action. In the ELF project we have a vehicle to demonstrate the potential from linking geo-spatial information and statistics.

At the global level we can find a good summary of the 'current state of the art in integrating geospatial and statistical information in the Preliminary report for the Global Forum on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information and in the report from the International Workshop on Integrating Geospatial and Statistical Information held 9-12 June 2014, in Beijing. Both are readily available from the UN-GGIM web site.



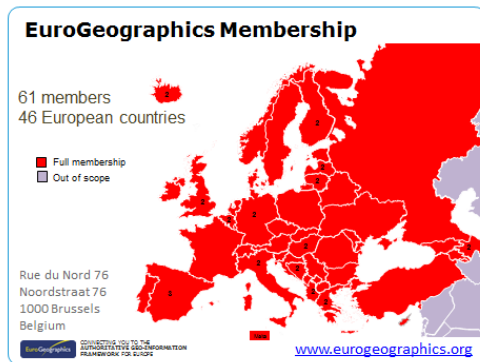
In drawing this short presentation to a conclusion I have to say as Executive Director of EuroGeographics, and secretariat to UN-GGIM: Europe that on the evidence I have seen so far there are other questions which we must answer:

Do we already have the geographical information that is needed for European, National, Regional and Local statistics?

Is the problem that we don't have enough geospatial information or that we have the geospatial information we need but we don't like the terms under which it is available?



Do national statistics serve the needs of the state or the needs of its citizens?



Although the global and European professional and political community has not yet agreed on what in concrete terms we wish to use the opportunities I have described for it is accepted that our futures should be founded on a much closer integration of geographical and (spatial) statistical datasets.

As you know, the national mapping and cadastral authorities have traditionally focussed on the spatial and temporal descriptions of the physical environment and the statistical institutes have traditionally focussed on spatial and temporal descriptions of human societies.

These responsibilities provide the basis for a symbiotic relationship. I agree with Lars Backer when he said during this year's GISCO meeting that the relationship has to be based on a partnership of equals. We each need the other!

We need to identify "win-win" possibilities and to translate this into practical projects which sees EuroGeographics, the European Location Framework, the European Statistical Service, the European Forum for Geography and Statistics working together because **the future is better together.**



In closing ladies and gentlemen I would like to draw on the words of the Dalai Lama who recently said "Peace does not come through prayer, we human beings must create peace." For my part I would observe that progress does not come from Power Point presentations at

conferences and meetings but from people working together. Let's work together and let's get started, NOW!