



**Scientific report of the third EHPS-Net meeting, 24 September 2014, San Francesco
Conference room, via Carlo Alberto 46, Alghero, Sardinia**

Summary

As the two previous meetings, this meeting had the character of a management meeting evaluating the results of the Working Groups and the planning of the near future of the network. The network is not scientific in the real sense, but a kind of platform to discuss all kind of data issues regarding historical population samples. At the launching meeting of the European Historical Population Samples Network (EHPS-Net) in Strasbourg (June 2011) six Working Groups were installed, tackling diverse aspects of the goals of the EHPS-Net. At the meeting in Amsterdam (January 2012) three additional Working Groups were formed. At the meeting in Budapest (September 2012), one new group was formed, while two others merged.

Main goal of the meeting in Alghero was to decide on the proposals and results so far of the several Working Groups, enlarging the groups with new persons and, if necessary, installing new Working Groups. Invited were all the databases from the original list (from the proposal, including the Europeans who do not participate financially) and databases from countries participating in the Steering Group. In total, 35 people attended the meeting.

At the meeting the Working Groups reported on their activities and made proposals how to continue in the near future. The first Working Group (WG) , Development of the Portal (Chair: Kees Mandemakers), gave a demonstration of the portal. This year a technical writer will start to make the database section of the website up-to-date and to write documentation for the extraction software. The second WG, Development E-journal (Chair: Koen Matthijs), gave an overview of the state of art of the e-journal, called Historical Life Course Studies. Two articles already appeared online, two are under review. The third group (IDS Clearing Committee), fourth (Extraction Software for IDS) and tenth group (Extended IDS) merged (Chair: Anders Brändström). The latest release of the IDS-metadata, 4.01, was issued with the article on IDS that appeared in the E-journal. The group is working on extraction software. The fifth group, Looking into European and national call structures, developing proposals for historical micro data infrastructure (Chair: Kees Mandemakers), reported on the applications they have been working on to ensure the continuation of the network. The group developing new databases (Chair: Gunnar Thorvaldsen) gave an overview of applications that were funded. Furthermore the group drew attention to the problems with digitally born archives. Working Group 7, Education (Chair: Ioan Bolovan), gave an overview of the current state of affairs on courses. It was decided that the group will organise a meeting at the end of 2014 to talk about the entrance and output levels of the various courses. Working Group 8, Standards for documentation about databases (Chair: Nanna Floor Clausen), gave a presentation on their work done so far. The group will continue to work on the development of a new questionnaire. And finally, Working Group 9 on Geographical Information Systems (Chair: Diego Ramiro) gave a report of their workshop on GIS in Vienna. The group will organize a workshop to discuss how to proceed.

Scientific content and discussions at the event

Opening by the chair of EHPS-net, Kees Mandemakers

Kees Mandemakers opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. In Budapest the decision was made to skip a year (2013) and to concentrate all energy on the working group meetings. As a result, most working groups are well on their way. At the current meeting, the working groups will report on the progress they made. There were no questions or remarks about the minutes of the previous meeting, in Budapest 2012.

Presentation and discussion Working Group 1 - Development Portal

See the report of the Working Group (Report_WG1) and the PowerPoint presentation WG1

Chair WG 1: Kees Mandemakers; Members WG 1: Annika Westberg, Gunnar Thorvaldsen and Dalia Leinartė Marcinkeviciene

One of the tasks for the working group for the next two years is to make the database section up to date. A technical writer has been hired for this purpose, Tatjana Doorn-Moisseenko. She is also going to write documentation of the extraction software. Although it is not feasible to put all data from databases on the EHPS-Net website, there is some space for small databases that otherwise won't be available by way of their own website. Kees invited everyone to come forward if they have an 'orphan' database. For the next two years another important task will be to fill the repository with software. The collaboratory is not used very often at the moment and Kees invited everyone to make more use of it.

Diego Ramiro Fariñas asked if it would be possible to get notifications about new topics. Kees explained that this is already possible by way of the collaboratory. An email will be sent out to remind people of the collaboratory and to point out that one can subscribe to get notification of changes in one or more of the categories on the collaboratory.

Presentation and discussion Working Group 2 - E-journal Editorial Board

See the report of the Working Group (Report_WG2) and PowerPoint WG2

Chair WG 2: Koen Matthijs; Members WG 2: Mikolaj Szoltysek, Lionel Kesztenbaum, Marko Lamberg, Michel Oris and Paul Puschmann

Currently two articles appeared, and two are under review. Other authors promised to submit articles. The group faced some challenges in the beginning concerning changes in the staff, technical issues (development infrastructure, the program InDesign, etc.) and the shortage of manuscripts. The journal intends to concentrate on technical issues as a niche in the market and publish innovative research. The journal intends to encourage interaction between readers and authors. The group has made a folder and distribute it as much as possible (SSHA, ESSHC, meet the editor session at ESHD, etc.). The group invited all participants to the meeting and all members of EHPS-Net to publish one paper per year in the journal.

Gunnar Thorvaldsen wondered if there was any progress on coverage in *Web of Science*. Ioan Bolovan proposed to set up a section for reviews. Paul would want to reserve some space for it, but thinks this shouldn't dominate the substantial articles. Jan Kok asked to add statistics on downloads and citations and links to articles. Anders Brändström added that there is a lot of free software for statistics, but citations might be difficult. Koen replied that the group will work on the mentioned issues.

Presentation and discussion Working Group 8 – Standards for documentation about databases

See report of the Working Group (Report_WG8) and PowerPoint WG8

Chair WG 8: Nanna Floor Clausen; Members WG 8: Gunnar Thorvaldsen, Richard Paping and Helder Adegar Fonseca

January 2014 Nanna Floor Clausen replaced Ólöf Garðarsdóttir as chair. In May 2014 the WG held a workshop in Copenhagen. At this workshop they discussed what kind of information will be documented and what their target group is (for receiving that information). Nanna gave an overview of the elements of the outline (for the overview see the PowerPoint WG8). In the near future, the group intends to make a new questionnaire. The group plans to update the website every three year. In 2015 (or 2016, if this appear to be too ambitious) the group wants to make a special issue of the e-journal with a presentation of the databases (follow up of P. K. Hall, R. McKaa, G. Thorvaldsen (eds), *Handbook of International Historical Micro-data for Population Research*, Minnesota Population Center 2000).

Koen Matthijs wondered if the WG has thought about issues of privacy. Kees Mandemakers suggested to include issues on privacy in the documentation. Gunnar Thorvaldsen proposed to invite a

legal expert to write an article in the e-journal about this. Tommy Bengtsson says that there is no problem with privacy because the questionnaire is sent to databases that can be shared. Paul Puschmann proposed to make a tool to fill in some variables to make the databases searchable. Kees proposed to use keywords instead. Anders proposed to use the extraction software for this purpose. Nanna will discuss this problem in the upcoming workshop, beginning of 2015.

Presentation and discussion Working Groups 3 (IDS Clearing Committee), 4 (Extraction Software for IDS) and 10 (Extended IDS) on IDS

See report of the Working Group (Report_WG4) and PowerPoint WG4

Chair WG 3/4/10: Anders Brändström; Members WG 3/4/10: George Alter, Annika Westberg, Kees Mandemakers, Nanna Floor Clausen, *Tommy Bengtsson and Ólöf Garðarsdóttir*

Anders Brändström gave an overview of the activities of the working groups. He mentioned that working group 1 is also involved in the work done by the groups 3, 4 and 10.

Working Group 3 The latest release of the metadata of IDS, 4.01, is issued with the article and work on version 4.02 was started.

Working Group 4 The extraction software (scripts on fertility and mortality) has been tested by George Alter and in Umeå. A script on occupational structure is under development in Umeå. They run into several, but expected, problems. Anders plans to put the scripts on the collaboratory, first to be tested. They continue to work on the scripts for marriage (by George Alter, who is quite on his way) and migration (by Kees Mandemakers). Anders gave an overview of the problems with the occupational script, followed by a discussion. Anders asked the participants to test the scripts as soon as they become available. Input might be given by participants of the summer schools as well. When the documentation is finished, the extraction software can be found on the repository. George is working on a tool which guides one through the process of transposing a database into IDS. The WG released version 2 of the Guidelines for program documentation, which will be published by Anders on the collaboratory. Spring 2015 the working group will organise a spring webinar for programmers and developers. The WG will have a workshop late spring 2015 (with input from the webinar). Hélène Vézina wanted to know how the scripts were tested. Kees Mandemakers told here that they were tested on about six databases, o.a. the Henri-database.

Working group 10 Luciana Quaranta has written programs in STATA and has two articles ready for publication in the e-journal. A colleague of Anders is currently developing software in R. Tommy Bengtsson suggested that this colleague would contact Lund as they have experience with R.

CHAIR AFTERNOON SESSION: KEES MANDEMAKERS

Presentation and discussion Working Group 7 - Education

See report of the Working Group (Report_WG7)

Chair WG 7: Ioan Bolovan; Members WG 7: Luminita Dumanescu, Alexander Buczynski, Maria Börjesson, Peter Teibenbacher, Maria Fagerlind, Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Shtelian Sterionov, Péter Öri, Saskia Hin and Renzo Derosas.

September 2014 Ioan Bolovan replaced Alexander Buczynski as chair. Kees Mandemakers gave an overview of the current state of affairs on courses. On an annual basis a summer school in Cluj (beginners) is organised. The other courses are biennial: Lund organised a summer school (advanced) in 2014, the summer schools in Umeå (advanced) and Nijmegen/Leuven (family oriented) will take place in 2015. In addition, there will be a course in Amsterdam in 2014 (or beginning 2015) on how to transpose sources into IDS and in 2015 on working with IDS and extraction software. Michel Oris has a winter course in Geneva. Tommy Bengtsson remarked that there is another course in Lund besides the summer course, on mapping.

Ioan Bolovan announced that he intends to continue the summer course in Cluj beyond the framework of EHPS-Net, until at least 2020. He wants to attract more students: 40 rather than 20. Kees wondered if 40 wouldn't be too much. Ioan Bolovan told that the English language skills of the students was a problem last year in Cluj. This year the level was sufficient, probably due to the short Skype interviews held this year. Luminita Dumanescu took over to report on the summer school 2014 in Cluj. There were 19 students this year. There was a good mixture of levels, so that the more advanced students could help the less advanced. Luminita pointed out that it is very important that at least some of the teachers stay for a longer period, so that the students can establish a good working relationship with them. From the evaluation report appeared that many students complained that the course was too condensed. Luminita suggested to take this into account in the selection process. Ioan suggested to

prolong the course to ten days. Elena Glavatskaya said that she wants to send students to the course in Cluj, but that she is not sure what the students can expect.

Tommy Bengtsson reported about the summer course in Lund. This year the course was oriented around the Lund database. In his experience, 20 students is too much, he would prefer 15. A discussion on the use of Stata followed. Despite the problems with Stata in Cluj, it was decided to use Stata for the courses for the beginners and consider switching to R later on.

Angélique Janssens presented the plans for the course in Leuven/Nijmegen. The level of the course is between the introductory course in Cluj and the advanced courses in Lund and Umeå and will concentrate on database management. The course will be two weeks, aiming for 15 students.

Anders Brändström told about the plans for the summer school in Umeå. The schedule will be on the website in January. To be accepted, the students should send in a small research plan. They aim for a maximum of 20 students.

Kees Mandemakers will organise a 3 day course on IDS in January 2015. Students should bring their own source material and they learn how to convert into IDS.

Kees Mandemakers will also organise a course on extraction software, still depending on the availability of software. Teachers to be invited will be the writers of the software.

Jan Kok wanted to know is there is any budget available for the students. Kees Mandemakers answered that the cost for travel and accommodation of the teachers can be subsidised. Part of the cost of the students can be subsidised, within reasonable limits. Tommy Bengtsson added that accommodation was paid in Lund, but their main expenses are the costs of the teachers. They pay them half of their salary. Some European universities encourage teachers to teach abroad, as part of their job, while others don't allow them to teach without payment.

Kees Mandemakers suggested to meet as soon as possible to talk about the entrance and output levels of the different courses.

Presentation (with special attention to digitally born archives/registers) and discussion Working Group 6 - New databases

[See report of the Working Group \(Report_WG6\)](#) and [PowerPoint WG6](#)

Chair WG 6: Gunnar Thorvaldsen; Members WG 6: Alexander Buczynski, Peter Teibenbacher, Shtelian Sterionov, Ioan Bolovan and Mikolaj Szoltysek

Gunnar Thorvaldsen pointed out that, according to the original application, special attention should be drawn to East and South-Eastern Europe, but he feels that Western and Southern Europe are as just as important. There is no lack of source material. The main problem is that you need different methodologies, because of the nature of the material.

Gunnar told that both applications for the Norwegian Historical Population Register and the Historical Population Database of Transylvania at Cluj University were funded. Some of the people working on the Transylvania database will visit Tromsø for help and instructions. The Ural Federal University in Ekaterinburg also received some funding. Gunnar emphasized that the Ural is European. An application for a local database in Catalonia from the Centre of Demographic Studies in Barcelona is in good order, but has to wait for a call. The project *Five Centuries of Marriages* of the Centre of Demographic Studies in Barcelona needs extra funding, but can run smoothly.

Finally Gunnar drew attention to the problems with digitally born archives. Archivist Børge Strand has written a book about this subject: *Digital archives in historical research*, dealing with the challenges (o.a. privacy issues) and potential for research. Gunnar gave an overview of the situation in Norway and pointed out that the data structure of more modern material is very similar to IDS. He feels that IDS would be a great bridge between the old and the new data.

After a discussion, Gunnar concluded that the structure of data should be discussed as well as the privacy issue. Kees proposed to organise a workshop on working with modern data with specialist from archives from the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Scotland.

Presentation and discussion Working Group 9 - GIS

[See report of the Working Group \(Report_WG9\)](#) and [PowerPoint WG9](#)

Chair WG 9: Diego Ramiro Fariñas; Members WG 9: Michel Oris, Chris Dibben, Patrick Svensson and Alessio Fornasin

Diego Ramiro Fariñas reported on their meeting on GIS data in Vienna. The main purpose of the workshop was to share information on how to develop a GIS system in Europe. Three main decisions that were made at this workshop are: a) To increase the cooperation with the US. Although in the US the approach is different, the methodology is very interesting. It was decided to arrange a meeting at the SSHA conference in Toronto, fall 2014, b) The group wants to investigate in more detail how much can

be gained by having a more detailed approach. For many analyses a simple approach might be sufficient and c) The group wants to discuss also the need to introduce alternative approaches and variables to the SDI (spatial data infrastructure) systems.

In July 2015 the group wants to organise another workshop in the UK.

Tommy Bengtsson pointed out that it is normal for this larger scale GIS work to have differences. Lund tries to produce manuals and offers to give training, if they are able to get funding. Peter Ekamper mentioned that GIS software is very expensive. Diego replied that most are now moving to free software, like R-GIS. Kees Mandemakers noted that it's also very expensive to sustain a GIS system.

Presentation and discussion Working Group 5 - Looking into European and national call structures, developing proposals for historical micro data infrastructure

See report of Working Group 5 (Handout_WG5) and PowerPoint WG5

Chair WG 5: Kees Mandemakers; Members WG 5: Koen Matthijs, Anders Brändström, Mikolaj Szoltysek and Diego Ramiro Fariñas

Kees Mandemakers stated that the network needs to make applications both to continue the network and to strengthen the network. Gunnar Thorvaldsen already mentioned some applications.

The mid-term evaluation of EHPS-Net was positive. We were recommended to look beyond the programme and look for continuity.

Two years ago it was decided to go for a topic proposal to be included in the Horizon 2020 framework. Spring 2013 we learned that the proposal had high potential, but December 2013 it was not included in Horizon 2020 call for research Infrastructure. Koen Matthijs and Kees went to Brussels to talk to a representative of RI, which led to the investment proposal *ELPRI*, supported by 12 universities/countries. The proposal was submitted on 2 September 2014 and aims at the continuation and broadening of EHPS-Net. Furthermore, we have to go into the direction of an ERIC. Koen added that we will know more at the end of February 2015.

The application *LONGPOP* ('Methodologies and Data mining techniques for the analysis of Big Data based on Longitudinal Population and Epidemiological Registers') was mainly the work of Diego Ramiro Fariñas and was done within the framework of the Marie Curie-program. The rating was very good, but unfortunately some proposals were better. Main problem was that the private company's part was too weak.

Kees suggested not to wait for the outcome of the *ELPRI* proposal, but to start now to think about the future. To prevent that we have to close the network, he proposes a 'plan B' - a basic situation (continuation of website, e-journal, secretarial support and small subsidies) for which we need 30.000-50.000 euro per year. If every member of the network makes a small contribution (3.000-5.000 euro), we can at least continue to exist in a very basic form. Tommy thinks that 100.000 euro would be more realistic. Kees invited everyone to think of other ideas to continue the network

Jan Kok suggested to have a look at the possibilities to apply for COST Actions. Kees suggested to do a COST application for workshops only, so that we can easier apply for more funding. Anders Brändström proposed to keep an eye open for the possibility to join other consortiums. Anders remarked that we can make really good use of the health oriented trend. We should look around and let people know that we exist. Kees mentioned that he had a meeting with Kevin Schurer and Michael Green, who was interested in our data to feed the European Social Survey with historical data.

Kees proposed to organise a workshop dedicated to make an application for Horizon 2020 with Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Scotland on technical and privacy topics. Spain is also ready to join, as is Belgium. Tommy Bengtsson said that he is already preparing an application (on methods) for Horizon 2020 with the participation of the Netherlands. Richard Paping proposed to approach companies. Kees replied that the possibilities are quite limited: insurance companies (not preferable) and IBM (our data are not complicated enough for them).

Anders Brändström proposed a 'Plan C': small money from many sources - each member of the network tries to get as much national funding as possible.

Next future (EHPS in 2014/2015) and wrapping up by Kees Mandemakers

Kees Mandemakers closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their presence and participation. He thanked Lucia Pozzi and Marco Breschi for their help and support with the organisation of the meeting, all working group chairs for their detailed reports, Mauro of the San Francesco venue for the practical and technical support and Marja for the minutes and preparation of this conference.

Assessments of the results and impact of the event on the future directions of the field

The European Historical Population Samples Network (EHPS-Net) aims at bringing together scholars to create a common format for databases containing information on persons, families and households. This format or Intermediate Data Structure (IDS) forms an integrated and joint interface between many European databases.

The meeting in Alghero was the third after Amsterdam 2012 and Budapest 2012. In Alghero we welcomed a group of 35 participants. Including the ones that could not come, we now have a group of over 40 active database administrators and scholars active within the Network. All in all they represent about thirty databases from which we can conclude that the goal of bringing together all relevant researchers and database administrators really works. All agree to the basic principles of the project: converting the data into the IDS format, building data extraction programs for different types of studies (e.g. on migration and fertility), educating researchers in using the data and last but not least creating and using a portal that provides access to the European databases, as well as to important non-European ones which have joined the Network.

Central in the Network is the EHPS-Net portal. After the meeting in Budapest, the portal was launched and the portal now functions well. In the near future, the databases section will be updated with data from a new questionnaire and the repository section will be filled.

Our activities include the stimulation and creation of new databases and organizing training session in participating countries where historical population database are still scarce. Since the last meeting we have set up a range of summer schools and workshops. Shortly, a workshop will be organised to harmonise the input and output levels of these courses.

We will not repeat here all the goals and background of the EHPS-Net. For this we can refer to the brochure that was published in September 2011 and to our website. With this meeting in which we have invited again the whole field we made good progress to achieve these goals. Working by way of the working group structure proved effective and will be the strategy to focus on for the year 2015. We were happy that we could also invite administrators from countries not participating in the network by way of organizing the meeting in coordination with the ESHD conference.

The running period of the EHPS-Net Programme is five years, from July 2011 to July 2016. On the basis of our mid-term report the Scientific Review Groups for the Humanities and for the Social Sciences recommended the continuation of the programme.

We are confident that we are well on our way to achieve our goals as formulated in the brochure.

Annexes

Programme

Chair: Koen Matthijs

09:00 *Welcome with coffee*

09:10 Opening by Kees Mandemakers
Goals EHPS-Net, Program of today, Minutes of the second conference of EHPS-Net, 4-5 September 2012 in Budapest
Presentation and discussion working group 1 - Development Portal (see report of working group 1) by Kees Mandemakers

9:30 Presentation and discussion working group 2 - E-journal Editorial Board (see report of working group 2) by Koen Matthijs

10:15 Presentation and discussion working group 8 - Standards for documentation about databases (see report of working group 8) by Nanna Floor Clausen

11:00 *Coffee break*

11:20 Presentation and discussion working groups 3 (IDS Clearing Committee), 4 (Extraction software for IDS) and 10 (Extended IDS) on IDS (see report of working groups 3/4/10) by Anders Brändström

12:30 *Lunch*

Chair: Kees Mandemakers

13:30 Presentation and discussion working group 7 – Education (see report of working group 7) by Ioan Bolovan and Kees Mandemakers

14:10 Presentation (with special attention to digitally born archives/registers) and discussion working group 6 - New databases (see report of working group 6) by Gunnar Thorvaldsen

14:50 Discussion and discussion working group 9 - GIS (see report of working group 9) by Diego Ramiro Fariñas

15:30 *Break*

15:45 Presentation and discussion working group 5 - Looking into European and national call structures, developing proposals for historical micro data infrastructure (see report of working group 5) by Kees Mandemakers:
a Horizon 2020
b New developments DARIAH and Horizon 2020 (ERIC's)
c Strategy on Research Infrastructure
d Other matters

17:00 Next future (EHPS-Net in 2014/2015) and wrapping up by Kees Mandemakers

17:30 End of meeting

20:00 *Dinner*

List of participants

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