

*Intergenerational Relationships and Transfers between
Older Adults and their Co-Resident and not Co-Resident Children;
Outcomes of the International Comparative Research Program GGP*

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Social scientists have pointed out the broad impact of ageing, for individuals, families and societies, and in this field the issue of social integration has been central. This has been illustrated already in the classic volume on old age by Rosow (1967) and his statement that “The most significant problems of older adults are intrinsically social. The basic issue is that of their social integration”. Recently this theme has been addressed in a special volume of *Research on Aging*: “How and to what degree are older adults integrated in society, and what are the extent and the quality of older adults’ integration and embeddedness, or are they segregated, isolated and lonely ?” (de Jong Gierveld and Hagestad, 2006).

In this paper two avenues towards social integration of older adults will be addressed, namely, (1) living arrangements, that is the size, the composition and the functioning of households in which older women and men live (intergenerational relationships and transfers e.g. between older adults and the children within the same household) and (2) familial embeddedness, more in particular the size, composition and the functioning of the family (intergenerational relationships and transfers e.g. between older adults and their non resident children). Many research projects up until now have addressed either the living arrangements facet or the familial facet of intergenerational support and transfers. The special characteristic of this paper is the combined analyses of both the living arrangement and the family facet to provide a broader view of the participation and integration of older adults. The outcomes of their participation and integration for social well-being is a central feature of this project.

This brings us to our main research questions: What are the patterns of intergenerational relationships and transfers between older adults and their children and what are the effects of the different types of participation on the well-being of older adults?

In investigating the living arrangements and familial embeddedness of older women and men, one needs to keep in mind that characteristics of living arrangements and familial embeddedness of older women and men are directly related to their phases in the life course. While certain interpersonal and economic features of a family may ‘fit’ young-old adults well, they may constrain opportunities for social integration of older old women and men. Additionally, levels of social integration vary considerably between individuals. Differences in marital status, age, gender, health status, education and socioeconomic position provide some explanation for why some older adults are more likely than others to be integrated and embedded in the family, community and societal

contexts. However, individual characteristics do not fully explain the differing levels of social integration. In fact levels of social integration vary substantially across neighborhoods, communities, and across regions within countries. Furthermore, there might also be variations between countries in Europe.

Nowadays, we have the unique opportunity to compare detailed information in this field, incorporating several countries of different regions of Europe. This new situation entails nuanced and internationally comparative data, both at the level of individual older adults, at the intermediate level of households and families, and at the broader level of country specific (contextual) data.

We will rely on the database of the Gender and Generation Program, initiated by the Population Activities Unit of the UNECE. This data set consists of international comparative micro level data, based on the outcomes of the Gender and Generation Surveys executed in many European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Russia, Tsjech Republic, and several countries outside Europe), and the corresponding international comparative contextual data base, encompassing information, e.g., about the national level policies, and the country specific labour, housing, and pension scheme regulations. First outcomes of this program, mostly descriptive information and preliminary multivariate analyses have been presented during the summer of 2007, based on data from Russia, Bulgaria, the Netherlands and France. Now that this winter the harmonized data sets of several GGP countries will be made available, a further, more detailed multivariate analyses will be started. It is expected that four to six countries of different regions will be available for this comparative undertaking.