Commission Call for Evidence for an Interim evaluation of the Digital Europe programme

EuroGeographics' contribution

Key point:

EuroGeographics recognises that the development of the Data Spaces is an important activity, however the provision of official data to feed these is as important as the infrastructure that they will be built upon.

EuroGeographics is the not-for-profit membership association for the European National Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registry Authorities (NMCAs). We are proud to represent official providers of geospatial information across Europe, working with them to enable access to their data and expertise for the public good.

EuroGeographics' contribution to the Digital Europe Programme interim evaluation focuses on Artificial Intelligence (AI) capacity in the Public open data for AI component.

As lead partner in the Digital Europe-funded project Open Maps for Europe 2 (OME2), EuroGeographics offers an evidence-based perspective based on practical experience. This financial support has enabled us to build upon the successful Open Maps for Europe project, which was co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility.

Open Maps for Europe enabled EuroGeographics to provide easy access to free-to-use harmonised data from more than 40 European countries, realising the benefits of the Open Data and re-use of Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive by driving innovation, market development and growth to support the digital economy. Thanks to funding from the Digital Europe programme, we are able to continue and enhance this work in OME2.

OME2 addresses the challenge of finding, easily accessing and licensing authoritative pan-European harmonised edge-matched, large-scale, high-value geospatial data. The project is creating a new production process and technical specification for free-to-use- high-value data from multiple

European countries under a single open licence. It will release a prototype for harmonised, edge-matched large-scale pan-European datasets covering 10 countries and also enhance the five existing Open Maps for Europe datasets.

OME2 is aligned with, and directly supports, the implementation of the European Strategy for Data, which includes various European directives such as the Open Data and re-use of PSI Directive, the opening of the high-value datasets, and the evolution of the INSPIRE Directive towards the GreenData4All initiative.

EuroGeographics recognises that organisations have a responsibility to be sustainable following project funding. However, the open data concept is a continuous release of data of at least the same or improved quality and quantity. Furthermore, datasets must be up-to-date, harmonised and easily accessible to stakeholders. The challenge in relation to the Open data and re-use of the PSI Directive is securing funding to remain sustainable. Programmes supporting digital transition, such as Digital Europe, should provide the solution.

EU value-adding is not a priority for our members whose remits are to provide national data. Achieving pan-European datasets is therefore not feasible without EU-level financial intervention.
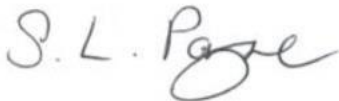
We consider that the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Digital Europe funding programme cannot be completed without full information on the practical implementation of the Open data and re-use of the PSI Directive in member states.

If the European Commission would like further innovations within the data areas, there must be appropriate funding mechanisms that are directly linked to the policy areas of the European Union.

It is disappointing that the future strategic funding is linked to different policy areas; there is no mention of open data or the provision of data for the Data Spaces. As a result, it is difficult for EuroGeographics and its members to link any future activity to the Digital Europe programme. This will stifle innovation, in particular the development of large-scale, high-value pan-European harmonised edge-matched open data from the European NMCAs, which OME2 feedback indicates is a stakeholder requirement. We ask that particular importance is placed on Digital Europe's response to stakeholder needs, as well as how it is adapting to the data requirements of business, citizens, and public administrations. EuroGeographics urges particular emphasis on the pan-European data requirements of these groups, which is beyond the national remit of NMCAs.

EuroGeographics recognises that the development of the Data Spaces is an important activity, however the provision of official data to feed these is as important as the infrastructure that they will be built upon.

Yours sincerely,

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