

EuroGeographics: GMES the work programme and policy developments

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Briefing

- **EU initial operating legislation, the GMES regulation, takes account of our members' geographic information and the EU's preference not to duplicate this valuable European asset**
- **EuroGeographics and its members are pleased to make a constructive contribution to the development and delivery of GMES**
- **We believe it is important that the GMES work-programme, GMES data policy (including multi-faceted licensing), and GMES development each take account of our members' geographic reference data, the contribution which it can make, and respect the existing data policies in the members states in the delivery of this contribution**

1 Our contribution to the European Earth Observation Programme (GMES)

The GMES programme aims to guarantee continuous access to information on the environment and security issues through permanent space-based observation and importantly, in-situ infrastructures. The GMES programme will play a vital role in monitoring the sea, land and atmospheric environment, aiming for a better understanding of European and global environments. Beyond improving the provision of services, both to public policy-makers and to citizens, GMES has the potential to create opportunities for increased private-sector usage of information sources.

EuroGeographics and its members stress the importance of good geographic reference information services, particularly those from members' in-situ resources, which provide a context for, and help in the interpretation of, the permanent space-based observation. We recognise our responsibility to supply, as appropriate, geographic reference information in support of the GMES programme.

EuroGeographics supports the GMES Earth Observation Programme and believes its development should be compatible with, and complementary to, the national spatial data infrastructures (NSDIs) and the evolving European Location Framework of the EU member states and other countries.

2 GMES, access to reference data component

EuroGeographics reaffirms that geographic reference information should, as a general rule, be sourced from the existing and developing in-situ resources in the member states so avoiding duplication and wasted resources. EuroGeographics and its members welcome constructive discussions with the Commission regarding specific reference data requirements and the appropriate GMES budget for this area. During the delivery of the work-programme it is expected appropriate GMES funding will be used for the aggregation of member state data at EU level. EuroGeographics recognises its responsibility and role to help facilitate and coordinate this aggregation and its provision of support to GMES. For example, EuroGeographics set up a working group with the European Environment Agency (EEA) to facilitate the harmonisation of the hydro reference data used by EEA with the hydro reference data from member states.

3 GMES Emergency management mapping services

The next objective for the GMES emergency management mapping services is to set up an operational mechanism for:

- delivering emergency mapping products, including emergency response maps produced in rush mode showing the impact of an incident;
- geographic reference maps made available in rush mode providing basic topographic information on areas affected by the incident; and,
- pre-disaster or recovery mapping products supporting the prevention or reconstruction phases.

EuroGeographics recognises the importance of providing topographic and other mapping both depicting the land before a disaster and as reference data for use in rush mode. We believe availability of this can best be achieved through constructive discussions with holders of the existing and developing national in-situ data sets including through the coordination authority of mapping agencies, EuroGeographics.

4 GMES Pan-EU Land Cover monitoring service

In the coming two years GMES land monitoring service aims to launch and develop land cover activities at EU level, especially the production of five land cover high resolution layers, relating to;

- artificial surfaces;
- forest areas;
- agricultural areas;
- wetlands; and
- water bodies.

EuroGeographics is pleased to see that the approach of the Commission is to maximise member states involvement and contributions for producing these five layers and EuroGeographics is ready to assist the Commission and its Agencies in achieving this.

This inclusive approach will need the Commission to make available all relevant information about the requested production, the funding and the dissemination modes. It especially requires the specifications of the GMES land cover monitoring service to be discussed with and validated by data providers.

5 GMES data and information policy

Acknowledging existing EU legislation, which accommodates the full range of national policies and organizational circumstances, and reflecting all our members' data policies, EuroGeographics supports the development of a GMES data policy that respects existing policy and its working models along the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

We believe a GMES data policy is best delivered by respecting the full range of national policies and organizational circumstances. EuroGeographics finds that any or all of these are suitable for our members in particular circumstances, and we believe that none should be ruled out. Nor should any one of these choices be ideologically preferred to any other, bearing in mind Member States' arrangements for financing the activities of data providers.

Furthermore, our society expects geographic information that is reliable, complete, accessible, up to date and of high quality. And it should be fit for use. GMES should require no less.

Hence, EuroGeographics notes the benefits of the proposed GMES multi-facet licensing scheme respecting existing and national policies and is ready to assist the Commission in streamlining and converging licensing conditions for input data along the lines of such a GMES data policy.

Geographic information and European policies

Geographic information has long underpinned important policies at all levels of government including, and increasingly, at the European level. An early benchmark of this underpinning was described in a European Commission document on the spatial impact of EU policies¹. Since then, geographic information, and in particular public sector geographic information (as made available by the NMCAs) has figured more prominently in EU policies and initiatives, for example; in the Communication on the European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015 and subsequent Council Conclusions, the Digital Agenda for Europe, and the GMES Regulation.

About geographic information

Geographic information including reference data, taken in its widest sense, is location information about land, sea and air. Geographic Information (GI) relates to the earth's landscapes, people, places and environment. GI, for example, records official names and the location of features, from points of interest (a post box) to linear features running through many countries (such as the River Danube). GI provides the essential framework which allows attributes about features to be related or connected to them. This includes information about ownership, construction, environmental conditions, and the existence of essential services.

About the national mapping & cadastral agencies (NMCAs)

The national mapping, land registration and cadastral agencies (NMCAs), as a public task, produce, update and distribute reference and other geographic information (including topographic, cadastre and land information). Countries need geographic information that is reliable, sustainable, coherent and continuous at national level to deliver public services and underpin economic activity. Public sector geographic information has been the subject of particular attention and NMCAs, as holders of geographic information tend to have a high profile among information stakeholders, including those in their respective member states. NMCAs have paid close attention to the requirements of the Digital Agenda, the PSI Directive, INSPIRE, GMES and policy thinking in these areas.

About EuroGeographics

EuroGeographics is a non-profit organization formed in 2001 as the membership association and representative body of the European national mapping, land registry and cadastral agencies. EuroGeographics has its operational centre in Brussels putting it at the heart of European policy development and decision making. We currently bring together 56 definitive information authorities from 44 countries across Europe, providing a strong, unified and well-respected voice. We provide a single point of contact for communication with our members, and a platform for the exchange of information and best practice. Our geo-spatial products and services make a significant contribution to the operational delivery of a wide range of national and EU policies.

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¹ The Spatial Impact of European Union Policies. JRC. 2001