



EUROPEAN LOCATION SERVICES

VISION AND STRATEGY

Securing the long-term future of authoritative geospatial information and services

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INTRODUCTION

1. This document outlines the strategic vision and strategy for delivering operational European Location Services that build on the European Location Framework (ELF) Project. It starts by summarising the strategic context within which we currently operate, considering political, economic, cultural, technical and legal factors, as well as the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats associated with the service. It then sets out the long-term strategic intent for the development of these services, and describes eight areas for strategic action. Finally it plans how EuroGeographics will oversee and manage the development of these services during the next two-year period, which is seen to be a transition period between the ELF Project and a future operational service.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2. In common with EuroGeographics, the planned European Location Services cover the whole of geographic Europe and offer much more than “INSPIRE” compliance. It will therefore benefit those members who are not from within the European Union (EU) as well as those who are. It is recognised, however that the EU influences and even dominates this wider geographic Europe. The EU’s political mandate is backed up by its legislative making capability and some €150-160 billion per year of funds. It is therefore important that the contribution of location services to EU political and policy priorities is clearly articulated to key European stakeholders.
3. The pace of technological change impacts across all areas of National Mapping Cadastre and Land Registry Authorities (NMCA) business – from data collection right through to data management, supply and the way in which geospatial data is used. The ELF Project has developed a complex technical infrastructure and it is seen to be equally influenced by the pace of technological change. Technology is therefore expected to have an ongoing impact on the way users access location-based products and services in the future as well as the way in which these are delivered by providers.
4. EuroGeographics’ members are governed by national laws, international treaties and, for those within the EU, the European policy and legal framework. National conditions vary from member to member, creating challenges for pan-European projects. The most significant pieces of EU legislation which specifically impact on EuroGeographics’ members and the ELF Project are the Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive, the INSPIRE Directive and associated technical rules, and key pieces of Copyright and Database Right Directives. These factors all influence future operational European Location Services

5. The move towards operational European Location Services will build on the key achievements of the ELF Project. As a practical example of INSPIRE implementation, the ELF Project has supported the delivery of national web feature services and provided valuable feedback on the data specifications as they are implemented in different countries. This work is now helping others to meet INSPIRE requirements. It has delivered the technical infrastructure to incorporate data content into an application environment, as well as tools for harmonisation and edge-matching, and other tools for identifying areas of interest and products. It has also delivered some test services. The ELF project is a good example of the public, private and academic sectors working together towards a single aim that will benefit governments, businesses and, ultimately citizens across Europe. It has developed a collaborative environment, fostered by EuroGeographics, and built on the strong technical competence of NMCAs and their partners. The ELF Project is complex technically, legally and organisationally, but its achievements are a strength that can be built on going forward.
6. The underlying concept of a pan-European service is a key strength. Providing the single access point for authoritative geospatial information, harmonising technical and business aspects, and licensing and pricing conditions of pan-European geospatial data remains a valid and important goal. A number of challenges remain however in delivering an operational service on which customers can rely, and these must be addressed. Challenges include developing the market for these services, creating a demonstrator to help test this market, and increasing coverage. Directly operating such a service may fundamentally and significantly change EuroGeographics as an organisation, and this may not be desirable. Therefore, whilst it will be owned by EuroGeographics, on behalf of its members, we need not necessarily run the operational service.
7. It is also important to address the sustainability of the operational service. This requires a clear business model. Formal commitment to the ongoing support for the development of European Location Services from data providers and service partners is only part of the picture. Whilst there are strong indicators of interest, there is no proven market willing to pay for such services. Therefore centralised funds will be required to get the service up and running, and a business model for sustaining such funds may have to incorporate the potential to lower overall costs through the development of value added, premium services for a commercial market. This requires European Location Services to develop a compelling and valuable market proposition to ensure the generation of commercial income. It will also require constructive and realistic engagement with the European Commission, which remains a potentially significant user of such data services. These actions are required to ensure the affordability of the proposed services.
8. Success presents a number of opportunities for EuroGeographics and its members. Successfully delivering operational European Location Services will enhance the reputation of both. At this point in time no other comparable service exists to provide the services envisaged. Ensuring that NMCAs data remain the

authoritative source of information within our geospatial domain is therefore a key driver. European Location Services provide an opportunity for EuroGeographics and its members to demonstrably contribute to the important economic, social and environmental issues that challenge Europe and beyond, addressing the needs of citizens, businesses and public administrations.

9. One in five EU citizens live within 50 kilometres of a border. Access to harmonised geospatial information from different countries and different agencies that can be easily shared between Member States is essential. This will help ensure that cross-border services are designed and delivered using consistent and comparable information, giving confidence in the quality of data used regardless of its national source.
10. As a single access point for geospatial information that meets international standards, European Location Services provide opportunities for businesses as well. They facilitate the development of applications for the pan-European market. This will encourage the creation of solutions that can be transferred easily between countries, and, because all data meets the same specifications and defined quality standards, developers will be free to focus on their applications rather than on managing content. In addition, the development of a clear license model available from a single source will negate the need to negotiate with multiple national data providers. Overall this means it will become less time-consuming and less costly to interact with the public authorities responsible for national mapping and cadastral information.
11. European Location Services also provide the opportunity for national data from NMCAs to be used across Europe. They will allow the NMCAs to meet the needs of existing data users, whilst also opening up new markets for their information. European Location Services complement national activities and helps NMCAs to meet national policy and legal commitments, such as the delivery of INSPIRE-compliant operational national spatial data infrastructures.
12. European Location Services also provide an opportunity to meet European Commission needs for pan-European mapping, geographic and land information and contribute to key European policy initiatives, including the Digital Single Market and Copernicus. They also encourage the reuse of Public Sector Information and contribute to the provision of e-government services.
13. EuroGeographics is a trusted brand, recognised for its ability to bring NMCAs together to deliver unique and powerful pan-European technological and business solutions. There is a strong belief and desire to proactively work together to deliver European Location Services. This belief is widely shared, not only by EuroGeographics and its members, but also by our wide range of partners and stakeholders. Delivering on this belief requires our urgent and immediate attention.

VISION AND MISSION

To provide the single access point for international users of harmonised, pan-European, authoritative geospatial information and services, and, in doing so for National Mapping, Cadastre and Land Registry Authorities to be recognised in our international effort to contribute to the wider public good.

14. This is the statement of intent for our endeavour to build European Location Services. It is the description of the future state we want reach and also a description of our basic motivation for getting there. We have chosen our words carefully:

- The single access point means that European NMCA data is easily accessible through a single, online portal.
- The service will focus on international cross-border applications - it will be complementary (not competitive) to the national solutions already provided to customers.
- It will provide technical and business interoperability. On a technical level, this means cross-border feature harmonisation, INSPIRE compliance, geometric and topological edge-matching, and defined quality standards to defined accuracy. From a business perspective this means that there are harmonised licensing and pricing models – users will not have to negotiate separate terms and conditions for cross-border, pan-European data.
- The intention is to provide full coverage across the whole of geographic Europe (not just the EU 28).
- The authoritative data is sourced from the organisation with the legal or other official government mandate to undertake the collection and maintenance of geospatial information as part of its public task (a phrase used in the Public Sector Information Directive).
- By geospatial we mean data with a direct or indirect reference to a specific location or geographical area of the Earth.
- The information and services provided enables the discovery, view, download and use of geospatial information, and makes data integration possible.
- The desire to contribute to the wider public good means that this service is not just about delivering economic benefit alone; it recognises that there are wider non-financial benefits from European Location Services. These benefits apply equally to NMCAs and their governments as well as at the European level.

15. EuroGeographics recognises that this is ambitious. We recognise that it may take many years to achieve. However, we (our members) are committed to doing this; we know that unless we begin it would never be achieved, and that the alternative is confusion and expense for users of pan-European spatial information. We are therefore taking the initiative and developing practical steps to deliver European Location Services.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

16. Eight strategic actions have been identified to deliver on this, our ambition. These are not necessarily listed in priority order, and there are interdependencies between them.

MARKET OFFERING

17. It is essential that we understand the market, and define the product and services we offer to meet its needs. We must also identify the channels to market – and be clear what basic services are required. We will then need to prioritise on which to focus as we cannot deliver everything from day one. By building partnerships with market players, we will share delivery and fill gaps which we cannot otherwise reach ourselves.

SHOWCASE

18. There must be something operational to show – enough to be able to demonstrate the potential for cross border geospatial services. This should be a basic showcase which is free of charge and builds on the ELF Project's showcase application.

PARTNERSHIP

19. We will work in partnership to help make this happen. For example, working with the European Commission to help it achieve its goals. We will also work with the private sector, with an initial focus on working with consortium partners and a few value added resellers (VAR) in order to realise the potential of developing a set of minimal viable products for market. It will also be important to work with academic partners to develop research tools for using our data.

OPERATIONAL SERVICE

20. Our aim is to have a core functioning, secure, fully operational, robust and reliable service. This will require a formalised approach to platform management, including release planning and test management with a production platform (the one accessible by users), a testing platform and a platform for further development. It will require the commitment with binding agreements from the key agencies delivering the services on which our customers rely - the data providers, service suppliers and coordinators. Finally the operational service will require the skills, expertise and resources to deliver it.

DATA CONTENT

21. European Location Services are about the data content. This means getting harmonised NMCA data to pan-European users. Our vision is to provide full

coverage across the whole of geographic Europe (not just the EU 28). It is recognised that this may take some time to achieve, therefore a clear prioritised programme for delivering full coverage must be developed.

COMMUNICATION

22. Clear messages about European Location Services that are targeted at key stakeholders are critical and must emphasise:

- The Unique Selling Points (USPs) of the service.
- The non-profit aspect, contributing to the wider public good, but recognising the need to recover the costs of the Platform owner.
- Long-term sustainability of provision of data and services (protecting the investment of customers).
- A pragmatic market offering on a commercial basis where added value takes place (as this will lower overall costs).
- Continuity in updating and keeping the defined quality of the content?
- The single access point and selection methods that match customer needs.
- The authoritativeness of data with legal aspects (on which users can rely).

CAPACITY BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

23. This would have two clear purposes. First, to share our experience with others across Europe and globally (through UN GGIM) and secondly building capacity with NMCAS and non-EU member states to assist them in delivering online, INSPIRE-compliant data and services. This would signal our desire to help those in Europe who have some way to go to deliver geospatial data that meets internationally recognised specifications. This in many cases will be essential if we are to achieve full coverage.

FINANCIAL PLAN

24. An underpinning business plan demonstrating financial sustainability and ensuring the long-term maintenance is required for European Location Services. A number of options may need to be considered, based on an underpinning concept and business model, and funding sources identified – from the European Commission, commercial sector, members, or all of these. There will need to be an interim view on this during the two-year transitional phase followed by a three-year plan.

DELIVERING SUCCESS

Programme Plan

25. Work has begun on developing the programme plan describing how we will transition from the ELF Project into operational European Location Services, a key step towards successfully delivering on this vision and strategy. The plan will cover three key activities:

- To implement the transfer of ownership from the ELF Project to EuroGeographics;
- To identify and then implement the activities and tasks required to take the ELF Project Platform services into sustainable, operational, European Location Services; and
- To consider the longer term arrangements for operating the services.

Timescales

26. The programme plan will include an integrated time schedule with milestones. The intent is to achieve the transition within two years.

Structure

27. The EuroGeographics Management Board will establish a European Location Services (ELS) Programme Board to oversee the delivery of the Programme Plan. The Programme Board will have responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the plan, monitoring progress, ensuring that customer needs are fulfilled, overseeing strategic communications and stakeholders, and managing risk.

Costs and Funding

28. Detailed financial estimates have been made of the costs of operation. These estimates have considered the people required, software, hardware and associated licensing costs, and other fixed and variable costs associated with the overall system. The development of a financial plan is a key strategic action, and require a balanced model of funding from the European Commission, commercial markets, private sector and members (through the use of EuroGeographics financial resources). The model will need to develop an interim view during the two-year transitional phase followed by a three year plan to ensure stable operational European Location Services.

Commitment and Agreement

29. EuroGeographics recognises that this strategy is ambitious. We recognise that it may take many years to achieve. However, we are committed to its delivery. This document cannot deliver the vision or strategy alone. It needs commitment from the organisations responsible, but also from our members. This commitment will

need to be underpinned by clear understanding of the expectations between the various partners who agree to help deliver European Location Services. An overarching legal agreement will be established between partners involved in delivering the services. It will set the high-level terms of agreement for participation within the overarching control of the participating organisations, and will cover the scope, timescales, terms of agreement, engagement, dispute resolution and termination. Data provider agreements will cover the provision of EuroGeographics members' data and services. These agreements will underpin the constructive and collaborative relationship with the partners involved which is required to successfully deliver the vision and strategy.

CONCLUSION

30. This document has described the vision and strategy for European Location Services. It will be a significant challenge to deliver on it. By its very nature the vision is aspirational, and it must develop, evolve and change to reflect changing circumstances. However, it provides direction, it helps to priorities and to focus attention. It will channel the energies and commitments of the Association and its partners, and sets the context for the detailed plans and resources required to achieve the vision. It provides a vision for the future: of pan-European geospatial services from EuroGeographics members, one that we can all aspire to and one we can look forward to being associated with.