

EuroGeographics Information Paper Communication from the Commission on A European strategy for data

- EuroGeographics welcomes the “European strategy for data”.
- We fully support the strategy’s principle that “The value of data lies in its use and re-use”; EuroGeographics’ membership is committed to this principle.
- EuroGeographics’ membership has a particular interest and expertise in delivering high value, authoritative, geospatial data.
- Such data has significant potential to contribute to the Strategy. It is ubiquitous across all the data spaces.
- We will be pleased to contribute to any review of INSPIRE both within the GreenData4All initiative and across sectors.
- We look forward to the contribution that geospatial data from the national mapping, cadastral and land registration bodies will make to the success of the Strategy.

Introduction

We believe that the Communication “A European strategy for data” (the Strategy) is an important development for Europe and we welcome it warmly. Our members are the National mapping, cadastre and land registry authorities of Europe. They are responsible for high value public sector geospatial datasets that are an important part of the Strategy. We look forward to the very real contribution that they can make to the Strategy’s success.

We fully agree that an overarching data strategy is needed for the digital transformation of European society. In this paper we introduce our capability under the four pillars of the European strategy to contribute to the success of the Strategy based on our experience in facilitating cross border data sharing and re-use of geospatial public sector data. We look forward to being able to make a significant contribution to the success of the Strategy, and will welcome being part of a conversation on how best we might do this.

Cross sectorial governance framework for data access and use

We fully support the Commission statement “The value of data lies in its use and re-use”. It is our aim, and our member’s long-standing role, to add to that value for the public good. Making available authoritative data for use and re-use by others is at the core of our members’ public task. The Open Data (PSI) directive is fundamental to our commitment to provide easy access to, and encourage increased use of, public sector information from our members. The Open Data (PSI) directive helps create new business and research opportunities by increasing the re-use of public sector information including for the public good. This is part of our and our members’ remit.

We are aware that geospatial is not an isolated silo of data. It is ubiquitous across the dataspace set out in pillar four of the Strategy. In pillar one it is one of the five High Value Datasets themes expected to be available free of charge in machine-readable format, via suitable APIs. With sustainable funding our members can ensure a continued supply, indeed an increase, in the provision of high value authoritative geospatial data for use and re-use.

We believe that a horizontal, cross-sectorial governance framework for data, regardless of data theme or sector of origin, is an appropriate step forward to the alignment of the different actions and to avoid duplication. We stress that technical and policy duplication hinders progress, is costly and should be avoided.

Within EuroGeographics our way of working is built upon the success of our enduring collaborative effort with our members to mitigate fragmentation, avoid gaps, eradicate duplications and contradictions, and avoid missed opportunities. We have experienced the problem of fragmentation set out in the Strategy. The Strategy provides an opportunity that we must not miss.

Enablers

Trusted, authoritative sources of geospatial data are an important part of a European digital society. As the national authorities for official geospatial data in Europe, our members continue to capture an ever-changing landscape accurately to provide certainty to citizens, governments and businesses.

We fully support the opening up of public sector data in line with the Open Data (PSI) Directive and we support this being done in a sustainable way. According to a recent study¹, data provided by a public body which has an official mandate to provide it are considered authoritative, and as such have a positive impact on transparency, trust, and other democratic (European) values in society. Furthermore, a report by Deloitte² highlights the potential of open geospatial data from official sources as being complementary to many of the policies and projects launched by the European Commission in support of the Data Economy. New funding or finance streams will, in some cases, need to be found and developed to ensure that this is done effectively and in a sustainable way. The role of national government and the EU will be important in these situations to enable and maximize the re-use of high value datasets and realise the potential that exists as is highlighted by the Strategy.

Competences

We believe that the future Digital Europe Programme will help enable and maximise the best use of digital capacities, standardisation and interoperability. This support is needed to ensure citizens, researchers and business have easy, trusted, and seamless access to public sector data and services. Developing capacity related to new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, is a crucial driver for the full digital transformation of our members and society. The Digital Europe Programme may also support national authorities in making high value data sets available for re-use in different common data spaces.

¹ "Authoritative Data in a European Context" October 2019 - joint project of EuroSDR – EuroGeographics – KU Leuven. See https://eurogeographics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Pub72_AuthoritativeData.pdf

² "Final Report on The Socio-Economic Impact of Open ELS" November 2018. See: https://openels.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Open_ELS_socio_economic_benefits_final_report_Website.pdf

European data spaces

Geospatial data underpins and is ubiquitous across all the data spaces set out in the strategy. We give a brief example below for each data space.

Industry: location-based applications created to individualise customer wishes are already available and developing daily. Industry needs interaction with customers: end-to-end support, smart-service-design, the need for trusted location data for controlling production, logistics and the distribution network. We welcome the use of geospatial data from the Copernicus earth observation programme and are pleased that data and services from the EU space project Galileo are also being incorporated.

Green deal: A key asset for achieving the goal set in the Green deal political priority lies in data created on the principles and mechanisms set by the INSPIRE Directive. EuroGeographics members have a role and, in many cases, responsibility for the implementation of INSPIRE. We will be pleased to contribute to any review of INSPIRE within the GreenData4All initiative and potentially across other dataspace sectors.

A further asset is the “Destination Earth” initiative to which our members will be pleased to contribute.

Mobility: transport needs authoritative geospatial datasets for cross border requirements, including identification of current road, water and rail transport and provision of an overview of the entire region.

Health: Geospatial data locates health facilities and informs how best to access them. It allows geospatial analysis to better inform public policy and operational delivery. There are many national case studies emerging in the current COVID-19 pandemic that demonstrate this.

Finance: cadastre and land registry data provide a basis for property tax in many countries, and provide an important aid to combating fraud and tax evasion at national and international levels.

Energy: geospatial data supports smart energy systems and help to identify who needs energy efficiency support and deliver it at the right time, in the right place and at the lowest cost.

Agriculture: geospatial data forms an important component of the land parcel identification system which supports the common agricultural policy. Geospatial data makes environmental protection easier, to manage and adapt environmental and climate actions to the reality on the ground.

Public administration: public administration relies on trusted authoritative sources to inform policy and deliver services; geospatial data from Europe’s national mapping, cadastre and land registry authorities provide national government with reliable national data as part of their public task.

Skills: the full exploitation of data requires adequate awareness and competences: the geospatial sector is no different. Producers and users need geographic information specialists but also coders, programmers and highly skilled information technology professionals to support the Strategy. These skills are transferrable across all the data spaces.

EuroGeographics

EuroGeographics is an international non-profit organization based in Brussels. It is the membership association and representative body of the European National Mapping, Cadastre and Land Registry Authorities. We currently bring together over 60 organisations from 46 countries, delivering benefits

for each regardless of the geographical, technical, political, organisational, linguistic and business parameters in which they work.

EuroGeographics supports the public good. We believe in a society that is informed by the use of trusted data from our official national sources. By providing a single point of contact, we enable government, business and citizens to benefit from our members collective expertise and services.

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