

# Providing common and consistent geographies to support the United Nations System

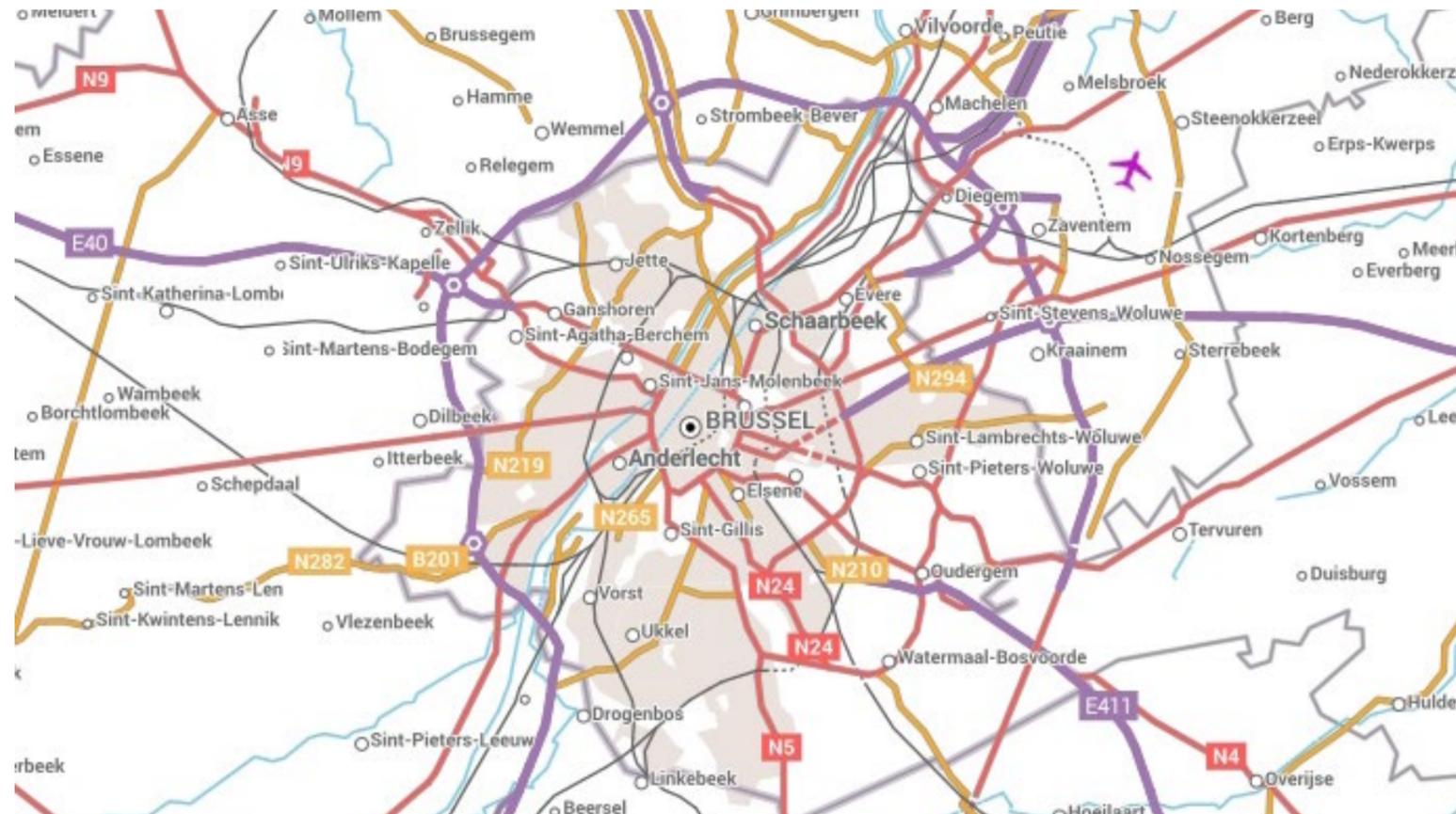
*“Open data created using official information from Europe’s National Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registration Authorities provides common and consistent geographies to support the United Nations System. We know that we can rely on these Open Maps For Europe and, that in turn, our colleagues can trust the information we provide to them to support decision-making and data action.”*

Kyoung-Soo Eom  
Chief, UN Geospatial Information Section

**The Geospatial Information Section of the United Nations, also Co-Secretariat of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) provides data, analysis and visualisation for decision-making and data action. Its vision is the universal use of geospatial information to underpin and support all roles, mandates and operations of the United Nations for a better world.**

## Challenge

With the Security Council, the office of the Secretary-General and the wider UN system among the users relying on its services, the Geospatial Information Section must be confident that it provides a consistent representation of the world based on common geographies. This is crucial in the context of international crises and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. To do this, it needs access to official data from the national authorities responsible for geospatial, cadastral and land registration information and standardised them against a global method and model.



## Benefits

- Provides a consistent representation of the world based on common geographies.
- Promotes confidence in the data provided by the UN Geospatial Information Section to colleagues within the UN System and enables it to be easily compared and shared.
- Provides a common operational picture for users across the UN System.
- Delivers official data for analysis and visualisation to support decision making and planning.
- Supports political and peace building affairs, and provides geospatial guidance which includes provision of names, terms of use and disclaimers.
- Provides a geographic base for monitoring and measuring progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## Solution

Multi-themed topographic open data created using official map, geospatial and land information from 31 European National Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registration Authorities (NMCAs) is used in the context of crisis response, such as when integrated in the UN's geo-hub one-stop-shop for geospatial information developed in response to the crisis in Ukraine, or in the context of providing readily available geographies for the wider mandates of the United Nations such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

EuroRegionalMap, a pan-European dataset available through the Open Maps For Europe project, is developed through a unique production system which harmonises and quality assures national data to standard specifications so users can be confident that the information provided is consistent, comparable and easily shared.

Guillaume Le Sourd, OIC, Cartographic Unit, UN Geospatial Information Section explains: "In the context of crises, for example in Ukraine, it is vital that everyone is working from the same map including geographies and common geographic denominations. To avoid any ambiguity in interpreting the geographic data, we use official information from the geospatial authorities responsible for national mapping, cadastre and land registration which provide common geographies."

"Indeed, despite the availability of official data, international partners collect information from a great variety of sources, including national, which may create confusion, waste invaluable time for coordination and impede the ability of the proper conduct of United Nations operations."

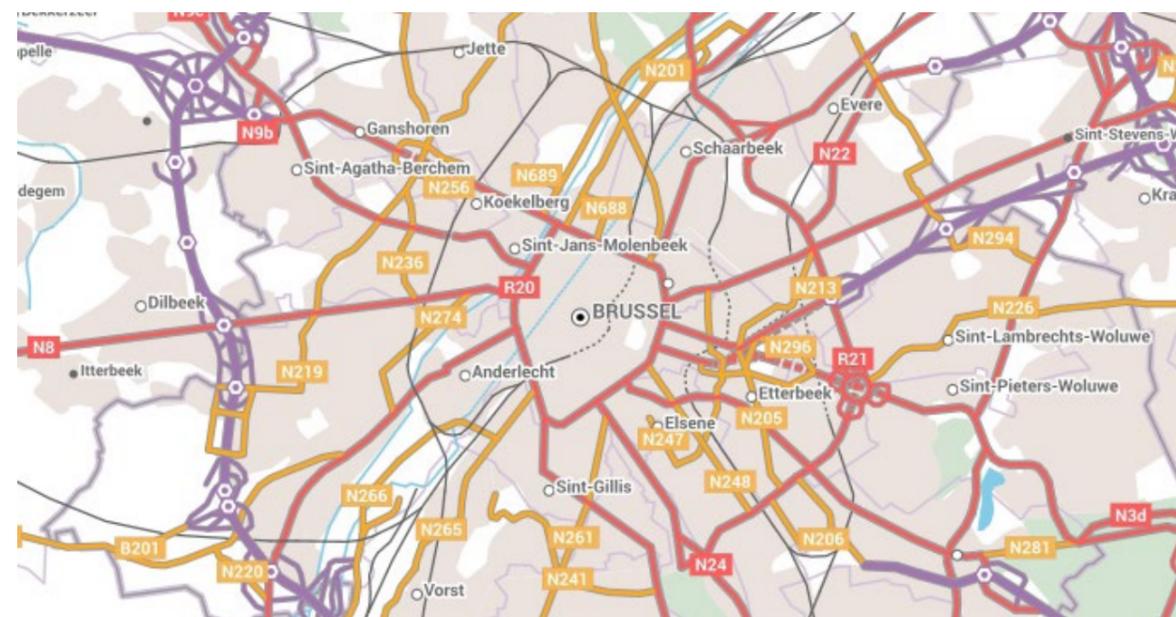
"EuroRegionalMap open data was invaluable in the development of web solutions to support political and peace building affairs, crisis response as well as in providing geospatial guidance on toponyms, geographies and related representation, with clear terms of use and disclaimers of the source data. In addition, we produce official maps produced under the UN imprint, provide general data to the UN System

and develop maps for the office of the Secretary-General to help monitor the situation and to support decision making and planning."

Harmonised European open data from Open Maps For Europe is also an object of integration for the Second Administrative Level Boundaries (SALB) programme led by the Geospatial Information Section of the United Nations.

SALB is collecting common geographies, including contact details from the responsible national geospatial authorities with the 1:1 million scale topographic open dataset, EuroGlobalMap supporting the aim of compiling global administrative boundaries data from authoritative sources. This provides base data and common, consistent and reliable geospatial information for monitoring and measuring progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Guillaume Le Sourd explains : "We can aggregate and extract data and information against the proper temporal period, examine the different changes in specific countries and identify the national focal point in case there's a further requirement to investigate geographies or detail."



"Datasets within the SALB programme enable our colleagues within the UN system to aggregate and analyse information to support knowledge in action, for example to identifying priority areas at subnational level so that the UN can then adjust and decide on the appropriate action to target its operations or development programs."

Open Maps for Europe provides easy online access to harmonised pan-European geospatial open data from official sources.

The Open Maps For Europe project is co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Union. It is coordinated by EuroGeographics, the membership association for European NMCAs, in partnership with the National Geographic Institute (NGI) Belgium.

This is the first time that the datasets, created using EuroGeographics' unique data integration process, have been easily discoverable, accessible, and released as open data. They include topographic data, a digital elevation model, imagery, a cadastral map, and a gazetteer.



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