

INTERGEO 2016 UPDATE

BUILDING A EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE BASE

ASSUMING THAT MORE INFORMATION LEADS TO GREATER KNOWLEDGE, EUROPE CAN COUNT ITSELF LUCKY, HAVING LAID THE FOUNDATION WITH THE EU INSPIRE DIRECTIVE. ALTHOUGH STILL SHORT OF A COMPLETE SUCCESS, IT'S WELL ON THE WAY, AS DANIEL KATZER EXPLAINS

Dr. Martin Lenk, Head of the Coordination Centre at Spatial Data Infrastructure Germany (GDI-DE – www.gdi-de.org), is naturally positive about INSPIRE, given that GDI-DE considers itself the driving force behind Germany's implementation of this European project.

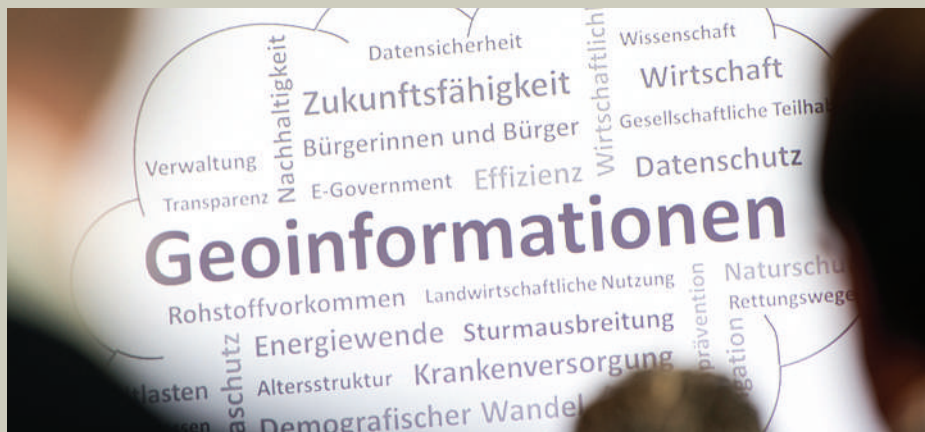
Despite his optimism, Lenk is realistic, referring to both positives and negatives in his interim assessment of the mammoth European infrastructure project. As he sees it, one positive aspect is the sheer volume of environmental and associated data that INSPIRE is bringing to light.

Since around 2010, approximately 11,000 data records and over 12,000 services have been made accessible to the public in Germany alone. On a wider basis, a web portal offers the public throughout Europe access to numerous data records and services from 31 countries and around 34 topics associated with the environment – from land registry data, traffic networks and utility services, to data on air/water quality, land use and much more besides.

In the context of the complex and time-consuming INSPIRE process this, in itself, is no mean achievement. However, Lenk sees room for improvement in the use of data by the target groups in government, scientific and business circles.

Use INSPIRE!

Lenk reveals that the EU Commission under its current President Jean-Claude Juncker has admitted to shortcomings when it comes to using INSPIRE data. Even the obligation for environmental reporting has so far made too little use of it according to Brussels. The EU Commission has therefore initiated pilot projects, such as reporting on the state of the oceans and on European water/air quality, all of which are to be implemented with the help of INSPIRE data. If the latter proves



The EU INSPIRE Directive establishes an infrastructure for spatial information in Europe to support Community environmental policies, as well as policies or activities that may impact the environment

inadequate for EU environmental experts when preparing reports, it will provide at least one focal point for improvement.

Second half

The second half of the INSPIRE project has only just started, though, with major milestones looming for the thousands of employees working on the overall result. Quite clearly, the most important task is to standardise the data formats.

The INSPIRE data already accessible via the Internet is so far in non-standardised formats, making it technically impossible to process in a consistent fashion. The goal is to make around 20 percent of the data available in Germany in the standardised European INSPIRE format from 2018 onwards, with the remaining 80 percent from 2020.

The business world is waiting

The full benefit of INSPIRE data will only become apparent in the second half of the project. Standardised cross-border information in Europe will then not only play a role in meeting environmental reporting

obligations, but also bring measurable added value to the public and the business world.

Companies are already gearing up to offer Europe-wide services, for example in agriculture or real estate, and they are all using these new data suppliers.

Only when this point is reached will Lenk and the entire team from the GDIs across Europe reap the reward of their years of co-ordinated efforts. "We're working in a well-organised network that extends across all administrative boundaries to ensure that INSPIRE is a success, because we all want Europe's knowledge to increase," says Lenk.

GDI-DE will be showcasing its work to the wider community at INTERGEO 2016 in Hamburg (11-13 October), more information on which can be found at www.intergeo.de



Daniel Katzer is Head of Trade Fairs at HINTE GmbH (www.hinte-messe.de).