



INSPIRE Maintenance and Implementation Group (MIG)

Update on Commission initiatives

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1. Reporting Fitness Check: outcome and next steps, relevance for INSPIRE (Action 6) and alignment proposal (Action 1)

As Action 1, the Commission will propose legislative amendments, as appropriate, when it revises particular pieces of environmental legislation anyway. This Action would aim for a "Proposal on the alignment of several pieces of legislation to streamline reporting in environment policy" by middle of next year (adopted by the Commission), that is now also found under Annex II, the Refit Initiatives, in the Commission Work Programme 2018. The streamlining exercise mainly means stronger references to active dissemination, clarifying role of EEA, reference to INSPIRE Directive and insertion of evaluation related provisions. The scope will be examined further during the preparation of the proposal, however the basic intention is to cover at least the legislation specified in Annex 6 under the Fitness Check Evaluation SWD¹ as well as issues identified under other evaluations (e.g. ePRTR Regulation). Issues that are foreseen: e.g. alignment of timing/frequency of certain pieces of legislation or elimination of the three-annual reporting under the INSPIRE Directive. In the action plan there is a reference to the revision of the Drinking Water Directive, however it will be adopted as a separate proposal, but using the same intervention logic. The immediate next step is the preparation of the Roadmap that will be published still in 2017.

The Action Plan also has a reference under Action 6 strictly to INSPIRE, it states that "the INSPIRE Maintenance and Implementation Group has agreed a work programme which includes a number of activities supporting this action. In particular the INSPIRE action 2016.5 on the list of priority datasets is designed to implement this action 6."

2. Study on improving national environmental information and data harvesting (FC Action Plan actions 4 and 5)

The Commission-led project started in September 2017, with the involvement of COWI, UBA, Epsilon and Wageningen University. Planned conclusion date is 1Q 2019. The project focuses on three main deliverables. The first task includes drafting a guidance on good practices as regards active dissemination of environmental information, which also include development of specific indicators to assess national portals. The second deliverable is a roadmap on harvesting of information at EU level. The third task involves testing the concept of harvesting and relying on active dissemination of information. Member States are called upon to actively participate in the different activities such as the online survey, the fact-finding missions of the contractor and the 3 workshops planned until February 2019.

¹ SWD (2017) 230

3. Study of INSPIRE data sharing, access and use (Art. 17 and related provisions)

In the recommendations of the [REFIT evaluation of the INSPIRE Directive](#), report published as [COM\(2016\)478](#) and [SWD\(2016\)273](#) the Commission announced that it will evaluate the effectiveness of the national approaches to the sharing between public authorities against the 'precluding practical obstacles at the point of use' objective in more detail.

In addition, the REFIT evaluation of coherence has uncovered areas needing attention. In particular, there are indications that certain data policies governing the access and use by third parties continue to raise obstacles. Such may be incompatible with the objectives of [Digital Single Market initiatives](#), including the [eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020](#), the [European Interoperability Framework, EIF²](#), the EU policy initiatives on [Open Data](#) i.a the PSI Directive [2013/37/EU](#) on the [re-use of public sector information](#) and other relevant EU initiatives such as i.a the [Copernicus programme](#).

These issues have been analysed only in general terms in the REFIT report and a more in-depth assessment of the effectiveness of the choices made to preclude obstacles to the sharing at the point of use is necessary.

To this end the Commission has launched a 12 month study for the '**Evaluation and assessment of INSPIRE directive 2007/2/EC data sharing between public authorities and public access and use provisions**'. The study has the following 4 tasks with a planned conclusion date in November 2018.

1. **Transparency evaluation task:** Evaluate the current status of the 'transparency' and conformity of the information that users need in order to understand the conditions applying to access and use and the limitations on public access.
2. **Sharing between public authorities assessment task:** Identify and categorize procedural obstacles to sharing, access and use in current arrangements. Assess the effectiveness, efficiency and internal coherence of the procedural measures and arrangements implemented by the Member States to meet the INSPIRE Article 17 objective on sharing between public authorities. and highlight 'best practices' successful for addressing procedural obstacles.
3. **Public access and use assessment task:** Identify and categorize procedural obstacles to the public access. Assess the effectiveness, efficiency and internal as well as external coherence of the procedural measures and arrangements implemented by the Member States to meet the public access and use objectives of INSPIRE, PSI and PAEI Directives.
4. **Consultation, meetings and preparation of the final report task**

² "The INSPIRE Directive is an important domain-specific illustration of an interoperability framework including legal interoperability, coordination structures and technical interoperability arrangements.", COM(2017) 134 final, [European Interoperability Framework - Implementation Strategy](#), page 19.

INSPIRE is a digital infrastructure in which the conditions applying to access and use and the limitations on public access to spatial data and services are documented in the meta-data harvested by - and available in the EU geoportal.

In Task 1 the project will deliver a quantitative evaluation of the *degree of the transparency*³ of the relevant fields in the meta-data. A 'snapshot' of the complete EU portal meta-data dated 17/11/2018 will be used as the input for this task.

Tasks 2 will produce a qualitative assessment of the conditions applying to access and use. The assessment will consider the conditions laid down in INSPIRE Article 17 on the sharing between public authorities.

Task 3 will produce a qualitative assessment of the conditions concerning both access and re-use by the public third parties – hence also looking at current limitations on public access and (the coherence with Directive [2003/98/EC](#) revised by Directive [2013/37/EU](#) on the re-use of public sector information and the Public access to environmental information Directive [2003/4/EC](#)).

For Task 2 and 3 the study will conduct a targeted and public survey. The survey will address the *Responsible organisations* identified through the meta-data, the *Public sector authority users* and the *'Third party'* users of INSPIRE. The output of Task 1 will feed into Task 2 and 3 with a limited number, categories of possible 'obstacles' on which the participants to the survey will be requested to express their opinion on the impact such obstacles have on their effective and efficient use of the infrastructure.

The intermediate and final report results will contribute to the review of the Directive [2013/37/EU](#) on the re-use of public sector information announced in the Mid-term evaluation of the EU Digital Single Market strategy where it regards access and re-use of spatial data. The Inception Impact Assessment of this review initiative refers to INSPIRE and the INSPIRE REFIT and the need to clarify the relationships (and coherence) of the legislation.

The study will involve and inform the INSPIRE MIG by reporting on its progress and findings (at the upcoming MIG meetings) and it seeks the support of MIG to promote the participation of the responsible organisations and other stakeholders in the countries to the planned surveys.

4. Copernicus – latest developments

With regard to INSPIRE the European Environment Agency, EEA as the Copernicus programme Entrusted Entity for the coordination of the in-situ (non-space) information and data required by the Copernicus services, conducted a study on study on INSPIRE and Copernicus. This study, INSCOPE is currently in its final stages. The study made a 'reality check' of what INSPIRE spatial data and services are concretely available on the internet to support the Copernicus programme. It looked in

³ Source: 'Good practice in data and service sharing', page 25, 09/01/2013 (revision) <http://inspire.ec.europa.eu/documents/good-practice-data-and-service-sharing>

particular to certain categories of INSPIRE themes most relevant for the services, and investigated for a number of use cases the data requirements to the object levels of the INSPIRE data specification requirements.

The findings of this study will be relevant to study on INSPIRE data sharing and the overall reflection on the fitness-for-purpose and data set priorities for environmental policies and other activities where the combined use of INSPIRE and Copernicus can improve the information base (e.g reporting, monitoring, policy impact assessments (e.g the CAP), active dissemination of environmental information and compliance assurance in general.

The final report of this study is expected by January 2018 and will be shared with the MIG for further considerations in the context of the MIWP.

5. Communication and SWD "Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions"

The Communication related to EU Regional policies, highlights ways in which the EU and its Member States can reduce the complexity, length and costs of cross-border interaction and promote the pooling of services along internal borders.

The Communication is relevant for INSPIRE in particular for the following reasons:

1. Cooperation is important in order to achieve several objectives of the EU environmental legislation. In several EU environmental legal acts cooperation between Member States is an explicit requirement, as it is stated both in the Communication (page 7) and in the Action Plan (page 26).
2. The Communication addresses also the issue of border obstacles deriving from lack of coordination in the transposition of the EU legislation, which (as we know) in some cases affects also the EU environment legislation, and proposes some actions in order to overcome these obstacles.

The Communication and its Commission Staff Working Document refer explicitly to the problem that statistical and geospatial data describing cross-border flows and phenomena is not always sufficiently available or standardised to allow policy-makers to take informed decisions.

The Communication announces a number of actions for the contribution of INSPIRE and particularly where its implementation is strongly coordinated across borders could deliver substantial benefits.

You can find further information on the Communication at:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/communications/2017/boosting-growth-and-cohesion-in-eu-border-regions

6. Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment

On the 6th of October all the European Union Member States and EFTA countries signed the '[eGouvernement Declaration](#)' in Tallin. This is very relevant for INSPIRE as it confirms the political

commitment at EU level on significant priorities towards ensuring high quality, user-centric digital public services for citizens, better cross sector collaboration between public services and the implementation of seamless cross-border public services.

You will find in the document several statements where the countries commit to actions which are explicitly or implicitly part of the INSPIRE implementation process or could guide its future development.

For example, on the 'Digital by default' principle, we find the commitment 'to enable seamless digital delivery of services across sectors and collaboration in public service provision, by allowing EU institutions, private sector and civil society linkages to information held in public administration databases and systems in appropriate policy areas'.

For example, on the 'Once only' principle we find 'take steps to increase the findability, quality *and* technical accessibility of data in key base registers and/or similar databases, to build up readiness for applying the once only principle for national or cross-border digital public services', 'work to create a culture of re-use, including responsible and transparent re-use of data within our administrations', and 'make use of available funding to digitise all necessary key data and implement data exchange services between administrations for applying once only on both national and/or cross-border levels'

For example, on the 'Openness and transparency' principle, we find 'increase the availability and quality of open government data that is of value to economy and society, including by adopting the open-by-default approach and *enabling more the automatic linkages to databases* (for example, by application programming interfaces)'

For example, on the 'Interoperability by default' principle, we find 'make more use of open source solutions and/or open standards when (re)building ICT systems and solutions (among else, to avoid vendor lock-ins), including those developed and/or promoted by EU programmes for interoperability and standardisation'.

The Declaration also calls on the EU institutions and the Commission to take several actions under these principles.

For example its calls on the Commission to 'strengthening the requirements.... for an appropriate open licence policy – by 2020.', or 'to prepare proposals on the future (post 2020) and sustainability of existing EU level cross-border digital service infrastructures and building blocks', and 'to take the lead and involve Member States in preparing an initiative on accessibility and re-use of public and publicly funded data, based on the evaluation of existing legislation and subject to an impact assessment'. Etc.

Several of the INSPIRE implementation actions already contribute to the countries' commitments. The Declaration therefore offers the possibility to raise the political visibility, priority and relevance of INSPIRE in your countries.

In this context we should emphasise that Declaration entails a commitment from the countries to annually report on the progress of implementation through the [European eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020](#) Steering Board – which is an 'expert group' alike the MIG – see the Register of Commission Expert groups [here](#). We would recommend working together with the eGov.Action Plan expert group colleagues to have your efforts adequately reflected in this report on the Declaration.

In addition, several actions under the INSPIRE 2016-2020 MIWP contribute to the actions requested by the countries of the Commission, while vice-versa, some the actions requested may justify the setting of certain priorities and further actions.

The implementation of INSPIRE is one of the priority actions in the [European eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020](#). In this context an interesting Guide "eGovernment in local and regional administrations: guidance, tools and funding for implementation" – referring also to INSPIRE - has been published to help local and regional administrations implement and find EU funding for eGovernment in line with the principles and priorities set out in the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 - which you find [here](#) online.