

INSPIRE – What if...? Position Paper

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GeoCat is an (INSPIRE) SDI implementation provider based in the Netherlands. We use open source tooling such as GeoNetwork, GeoServer/MapServer, PostGres to set up SDI's. Last year we have participated in the GeoNovum testbed Geo4Web on which we did research on exposing data from SDI's to non-geo communities using a approach of a WFS/CSW-proxy to linked data and search engines. Our general view on INSPIRE is that choosing common standards as a base for INSPIRE is a very good choice, a wide set of tools was already available to manage about data creation, validation, discovery and communication. It also helped in the further adoption of these generic tools.

To understand our more detailed views, we need a bit of philosophical discussion. A main question is: "What does INSPIRE actually want to solve?" Should it provide a set of technologies to make data communicable? Or does it also intend to harmonize procedures and legislation in member state over time. A current challenge of INSPIRE is that hardly any government has adopted the data models in their legislation and work processes (yet). INSPIRE is commonly implemented as a proxy layer on top of existing registries. In our opinion the selected technology is less optimal to act as a proxy layer.

A Linked data approach is a more favourable technology to act as a proxy layer.

- Linked data can be more easily ingested by other (non-geo) systems
- Linked data models are more convenient to be extended
- In linked data the data itself does not require data transformation to be exposed using an alternative ontology
- Versioning of iterations of ontology development are better managed

However, if (over time) the intention is to introduce common models in Europe that are embedded in European legislation and used in daily work processes, then the rigid INSPIRE models actually are more favourable. They can be better enforced on data.