

INSPIRE – What if..?

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What if INSPIRE needs to be future-proofed?

INSPIRE is based on the national spatial data infrastructures (NSDI) in the member states and establishes a framework for sharing relevant spatial data within the European Community for users and applications in the environmental domain.

But where are all the other domains that need a (spatial) data sharing framework for their users and applications? And how does the INSPIRE data sharing framework fit into the (spatial) data infrastructures ecosystem along with such other data sharing frameworks?

On the national level INSPIRE is one of several drivers that support development of a national (spatial) data infrastructure supporting multiple domains. Examples of other drivers are initiatives within e-government, emergency management, and the military. Each of these initiatives have their own requirements for a data-sharing framework.

As INSPIRE in many areas is a front-runner for developing a NSDI, it sometimes comes across as the dominant requirement setter for NSDIs with only little awareness of how to coexist with and complement other (spatial) data sharing frameworks.

SDFE is currently implementing coexisting frameworks for data sharing as defined by a national e-government initiative, by INSPIRE, and by the military respectively – and has identified topics where INSPIRE recommendations could be improved.

Future-proofing INSPIRE calls for development of a solid approach and best practice recommendations for data sharing in a (spatial) data infrastructure that allow for multiple frameworks for data sharing to coexist in a cost-effective manner.

What if application developers didn't know how to use our data?

INSPIRE defines the web-services that must be available for data sharing, our traditional community of geo-professionals have no problem using these web-services when building applications, and the development environment to do so is both flexible and powerful.

However, when you get outside the inner circle of the geo-domain, development against web-services is an issue, and we often hear objections about our web-services being too complex to handle. Mainstream ICT offers more approachable development environments for occasional and less geo-savvy developers (e.g. JavaScript APIs such as Google Maps API or OpenLayers API).

INSPIRE (and other data sharing frameworks) must find a way to offer a development environment that mainstream developers are more familiar with – and preferably an environment that can coexist with the current.

SDFE is currently considering how to address this issue. Do we have to augment the current functionality of the data-sharing framework? – or can we make an out-of-the-box solution use for instance the OpenLayers API as a front end to the existing web-services? – or ... ?

Expanding the knowledge about how to use INSPIRE calls for a data sharing framework offering development environments that satisfy both the geo-professionals and the mainstream ICT developers.