

Position Paper for the 2nd “INSPIRE – What if...?” Workshop

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I had submitted a position paper already for the first workshop in Delft¹. Work related to the topic of sharing data from INSPIRE on the Web has continued as part of the ELISE action in the framework of the ISA² programme and is presented at the INSPIRE conference. In this position paper, therefore, I want to take a different perspective and raise two topics for discussion, which are related, but complementary to the previous position paper.

1. INSPIRE with its download services shares the data in two ways - as a downloadable file ("pre-defined") and by providing access to the database via http ("direct access"). These options make the raw data that is typically used by domain experts available. In many cases, end-users will not be interested in that data itself, but in insights that are gained from analysing the data together with other data and/or by presenting it in ways that are immediately understandable by the targeted end-users: dashboards, statistical diagrams, maps, rule-based alerts, etc. It is in this additional layer of value-added services, tools and applications where value is created.

While the best practices discussed in the earlier position paper are helpful for developing such value-added services, the INSPIRE architecture based on the Directive has limitations in support the workflows to create and operate those²:

- a) In most cases, the data needs to be downloaded and processed by the developer of a value-added service or the user of a tool, but INSPIRE offers no mechanism to learn about or subscribe to changes in a dataset. As a result, it is difficult and requires active monitoring to keep the downloaded data up-to-date. To change this, pub-sub mechanisms and incremental updates would need to become part of INSPIRE, at least for datasets that change with time.
- b) In the other cases where data would be accessed "live" by a value-added service, a key requirement are reliable services with an appropriate service level. Services in INSPIRE sometimes do not seem to be on that level (yet). The distributed network of services may also be a challenge, when a value-added service accesses many datasets across Europe. One option to address this aspect could be to establish data holdings that cache data from INSPIRE and offer a service level that is sufficient for the targeted applications. Such offerings would not be part of INSPIRE itself, but are closely connected and require a mechanism for synchronisation with the source datasets, see item a above.

2. “Member States and stakeholders have repeatedly expressed concerns regarding the (perceived) complexity of the INSPIRE data models and guidelines [...] and the expected difficulty to have them implemented by the 2020 deadline”³.

Considering the fact that the current INSPIRE architecture requires that experts build a layer of value-added services and tools on top of INSPIRE as discussed in item 1 above, where data providers find it (too) hard to meet the requirements of the data specifications, why not accept that datasets may continue to be published using their current schemas, also beyond 2017/2020? For open data, it could be discussed how to leverage the community, Member State and Commission efforts to publish that data in accordance with the data specifications, but only where there is sufficient user demand.

Alternatively, for Annex III the requirements could be reduced to what is required by the Directive in Article 7(4): “the definition and classification of spatial objects [...] and the way in which those spatial data are geo-referenced”. That is, the Directive only requires the information about the location of the spatial objects.

¹ https://inspire.ec.europa.eu/documents/What_if_workshop/Portele%20INSPIRE%20What%20if...%20Position%20Paper.pdf

² This aspect has been presented at the INSPIRE Conference 2013: http://inspire.ec.europa.eu/events/conferences/inspire_2013/pdfs/25-06-2013_ROOM-3_14.00%20-%2015.30_45-Clemens%20Portele_Clemens-Portele.pdf

³ <https://ies-svn.jrc.ec.europa.eu/projects/2016-1>