

# **GINIE: Geographic Information Network in Europe**

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## **Abstract**

GINIE is an IST programme Accompanying Measure that will develop the European Geographic Information Strategy based on the EUROGI Strategy. It will also work on GI Capacity Building and Awareness Raising. Its tools include building reference communities based on government and industry. It will also organize the 2002 EC GIS Workshop and host the next Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Conference. GINIE activities culminate in the establishment of an Advisory Board for Geographic

Information (ABGI): this replaces the 'High Level Working Party' concept embodied in the GI 2000 initiative and is consequent upon the recent organizational changes in the Commission concerning GI. As ABGI, conceivably, may replace EUROGI at some stage and given the strong adherence to the GI 2000 concepts, this paper will start to set out the objectives for GINIE at the appropriate time - the very beginning of the two year project.

## **Introduction**

GINIE was proposed to the IST programme in October 2000 and is due to start at the latest on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2001. As a project that has not formally started at the time of the Workshop, the paper concentrates on plans rather than conclusions or achievements. It is clear from the title, that three pan-European organizations have come together under the facilitation of Sheffield University. The latter is well known for its contribution and good advice on pan-European issues. EUROGI has developed A Strategy for geographic information in Europe<sup>1</sup>. EUROGI will present the strategy in full detail later in this Workshop: it is therefore covered only lightly in this paper. GINIE is directly and indirectly concerned with beginning the implementation of this strategy. The project has four main work packages covering European geographic information strategy, capacity building and awareness raising, the provision of a theme for the next EC-GIS workshop and building up a European 'face' in global geographic information forums. This paper covers the objectives and work programme of the GINIE project.

## **Objectives of GINIE**

The overall aim of the GINIE project is to establish and promote a European strategy for Geographic Information. The Work Packages are organised around this aim. Given the strong government, research and industry participation within this project the objectives should be attainable within the project timeframe of 24 months and within the foreseen resources:

1. Develop a European Geographic Information Strategy
2. GI capacity building and awareness raising

3. Organise the 8<sup>th</sup> EC GI & GIS Workshop around GINIE
4. Establish a European View on the Global Perspective Related to GI
5. Extensive dissemination of the findings and progress of the project

One of the main issues that the Strategy hopes to accommodate is the well-known one that the GI sector involves several points of juxtaposition between the public and private sectors. Identifying the true consensus voice within either of these sectors and reaching an accommodation between these is a complex issue in all regional contexts: in Europe it has so far proved intractable. GINIE expects to propose an Advisory Board on Geographic Information (ABGI) that can work alongside other foci of agreement such as the EC's Committee on Geographic Information (COGI). Having agreed the ABGI Business Plan as the single main GINIE objective, it is hoped that the ABGI will be created towards the end of the project, that is, in about 21 months time.

### ***Development of a European Geographic Information Strategy***

The primary objective of the project as a whole is to develop a European Geographic Information Strategy (EGIS) by implementing the EUROGI Action Plan supported strongly by industry.

This Action Plan will form the basis for the development of an EGIS. This work is aimed at establishing a firm and stable European Spatial Data Infrastructure and the provision of support for (more) national GI associations. The measures proposed will lead to a platform (GINIE) to foster, develop, and carry out plans for a GI strategy in related areas in industry and government.

Key players in industry and government have already been identified to ensure the strategy is workable. The establishment of two panels, from industry and government, so far represented indirectly and inconsistently through national associations, is seen to be a vital component of the Strategy. The panels will ensure a reference point throughout the lifetime of the project that will be influential in both industry and government to contribute in the development and execution of the European GI strategy.

The GINIE Business Plan will show the way for the strategy to be sustained and to ensure longevity of life with support from government and industry alike.

As key players in industry and government are already known to the GINIE partners, partly through national association membership, a desk study is not being provided. However, a report collecting existing knowledge is useful, so a task is dedicated, mainly, to setting up relationships with governmental high level persons including MEPs. It will probably result in a presentation to the MEPs, and lead to the setting up of an MEP's panel. End user associations and service providers will also be identified and included in the consortium through specific initiatives within the tasks, for example national counterparts of COGI and other consortia achieving co-operation in specific relevant information communities. Various tasks include not only the preparation but also the organisation of Workshops and the wide dissemination of the results.

One task involves the setting-up of the GINIE Business Plan. Part of the GINIE Business Plan will be to document the Terms of Reference for a long term Business Plan for Europe after GINIE including a type of high level Advisory Board on Geographic Information (ABGI), which will discuss and seek consensus on GI matters at the highest political and industrial level. ABGI is to co-ordinate the use of Geographic Information **outside** the Commission services to improve the effectiveness of European policy monitoring that require

a spatial analysis of the European territory. ABGI is the counterpart of COGI and is expected to work in close co-operation with this body.

### ***GI capacity-building and awareness-raising***

Here the objective is to describe and analyse existing National GI Associations (NGIA) or coordinating bodies and make a comparative analysis of alternative models. By hosting a workshop of Mediterranean countries, a second objective is to produce a model of collaboration for the whole Mediterranean area. GINIE will, in addition, stimulate capacity building in pre-accession countries by producing a position paper on GI capacity building in pre-accession countries.

From this, and with the help of government and industry panels, a case study service will be developed to identify needs of users and agreed solutions from industry. It is expected that, through the project, a procedure for implementing the solutions will not only be agreed but also acted upon by industry through developing and implementing OpenGIS specifications and international standards.

### ***EC GI & GIS Workshop***

The objective, here, is to continue running the series of EC GI & GIS Workshops that have been such an efficient mechanism for concertation and cooperation over the last seven years. The Annual European Commission GI & GIS Workshops have provided a forum for GIS projects sponsored by the European Commission to establish and maintain contacts, and to enable consultation and cross fertilisation of ideas between the developers and participants. In addition the presentation of national GI or GIS projects at the conference enabled the exchange of best practices. There are also more general presentations on European issues relating to the current evolution of GI technologies, standards and marketplaces that are of importance to the Information Society Directorate General for the orientation of future programmes in the area of Information Technologies and, in a wider sense, in the development of the Information Society.

A further objective, therefore, is to continue to exploit and enlarge this successful formula in order to provide input into a European GI research strategy.

### ***European View on the Global Perspective Related to GI***

The objective, in relation to the GSDI<sup>2</sup> initiative, is to contribute to, and influence, the global GI infrastructure debate from the European interests viewpoint. The interest is not only to take part in the global debate but also to offer leadership by creating emerging structures on a global level for the benefit of Europe.

This will be done through working on several measurable objectives including: participation in global conferences and technical workgroups, dissemination of European legal, organisational and economic aspects, organisation of a Workshop on Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) in Europe, establishment of bilateral collaboration at international level with countries well advanced in the development and implementation of SDI, for example USA, Australia, or in managing global projects related to GI, for example Global Mapping and Digital Earth. In addition, a Workshop will be held and a report on "how to handle the mosaic" with the different views will be produced.

A formal dialogue will be established with the ETeMII project (in particular) to ensure that the activities in relation to GSDI etc are, and remain, complementary and supportive.

## **Communication and dissemination**

The GINIE project team will make use of conference and workshop opportunities to promote its activities: its own workshops are aimed at specific needs such as the Mediterranean zone, pre-accession countries, GSDI etc. It is assumed that many of these events will be attended by a wider European (and international) audience. Meanwhile a strong web site will feature dissemination in several languages (English, German and Italian) and a mechanism to register the members of the industrial and government panels. These panels will be consulted on the major areas of consensus to be established under GINIE.

## **Conclusions**

Within the 24 months of the GINIE project, the geographic information community will be able to recognize its extent and role in the information society. We will have provided leadership to ourselves and offered the same to the global geographic information community. We will have models for cooperation on geographic information infrastructures between private and private sectors that works at all levels between local and global. We will be starting to implement a business plan for a permanent cooperation infrastructure in Europe. The plan will ensure that we build an organizational structure that is capable of reacting quickly to policy change and also of consulting rapidly to identify industry opinion on such changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolkamp, A, *A Strategy for Geographic Information in Europe*, 7<sup>th</sup> EC-GI & GIS Workshop, Potsdam, Germany, June 2001.

<sup>2</sup> GSDI – Global Spatial Data Infrastructure. GSDI is a global and open process for co-ordinating the organisation, management, and use of spatial data and related activities (<http://www.eurogi.org/gsdi>)