



GINIE: Geographic Information Network in Europe

IST-2000-29493

Establishing a European Advisory Board for Geographic Information

A consultation paper

D2.13.1

13th November 2002

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1. Introduction

GINIE is a project funded by the Information Societies (IST) Technologies Programme of the European Union (IST-2000-29493), running from 1st November 2001 to the 31st October 2003. Its main purpose is to develop a cohesive Geographic Information Strategy at the European level and support its implementation. To do so, it proposes to establish a fully functioning Advisory Board on Geographic Information (ABGI) which will discuss and seek consensus on geographic information (GI) matters at the highest political and industrial level.

As part of this process the GINIE consortium is undertaking a consultation in the first instance with the *GI community across Europe, i.e. the wide set of people and organisations working in the public, private, voluntary, and research sectors who are committed to maximising the use of GI for better governance, business, research, and informed citizenship*. This is not a closed community, and it clearly needs to interact with other communities of interest in society to achieve its objectives. However, since the focus of this consultation is on an Advisory Board for GI, it seems entirely appropriate to consult with the GI community first.

The paper introduces the context and background to this proposal, and discusses the need for an ABGI, its possible mission and objectives, models, and timetable for action. The paper does not discuss at this stage funding models for the ABGI, because these are dependant on the result of this first level of consultation. The GINIE project however, clearly envisages a set of actions to develop a business plan for the ABGI, once its scope and structure have been agreed.

The consultation period closes on Tuesday the 31st December 2002. Feedback is invited via email, which should be sent to abgi@eurogi.org with the words *GINIE ABGI Consultation* placed in the subject line. All emails will be acknowledged. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within 48 hours please send the email again but indicate this is a repeat. All responses will be published on the GINIE web site www.ec-gis.org/ginie.

2. Context

As the Information Society and the Knowledge Economy begin to become a reality there is a growing realisation that Geographic Information (GI) plays a significant role within the Information Society due to its pervasiveness and its capability to underpin and enable the presentation of seamless information.

With over 40 countries across Europe there is a diverse range of cultural backgrounds; languages; forms of Government; economies; geographies; population sizes and densities. Of these countries less than half are currently members of the European Union (EU) and as such there is no single jurisdiction that can formulate and implement GI policy for the benefit of all in Europe.

Governments across Europe recognise the need for harmonised policy based on sound information in order to address issues that transcend national boundaries. These issues include for example – the environment; disaster planning and management; transport; navigation; health; cross border communities; tourism; demographic changes, and security. To enable such policies to be developed, implemented and monitored in a meaningful and sustainable way requires GI.

3. Background

Throughout the mid 90's the European GI Community together with the European Commission (EC) DGXIII/E debated and developed the GI2000 discussion document "*Toward a European Policy framework for GI*". The document went through a number of draft versions but the final draft version published in August 1998 recommended that the EC establish a High Level Working Group (HLWG). The purpose of the HLWG was to provide a European focal point for the exchange of information and debate on GI policy and strategies. A further role for the HLWG was envisaged as the conduit through which collaboration with other regions of the world could be conducted with respect to GI. The GI2000 recommendations attracted the attention of Members of the European Parliament (MEP's) that resulted in Astrid Thors MEP (Finland) raising a number of oral questions within the European Parliament at Strasbourg on the 15th September 1998. The basis of the questions was 'that given the importance of GI within Europe that the EC should establish the HLWG at the earliest opportunity and not wait for a formal communication.' Commissioner Bangemann responded that the EC fully intended to issue the GI2000 communication. This however did not take place, as a result of a perceived lack of support from industry, and from politicians at a time of crucial decisions affecting the Union, such as the introduction of the single currency, and the liberalisation of the telecommunication industry.

4. Towards a strategy for GI in Europe

Notwithstanding the demise of the GI2000 Communication, the EU funded several research projects in areas relevant to the establishment of a European GI Infrastructure, such as PETIT, ETeMII, PANEL-GI, ESMI, MADAME¹, and others, while the policy debate was reoriented towards the broader issues of access and reuse of Public Sector Information (PSI), of which GI is a recognised important component. Specifically related to the development of a European GI strategy, EUROGI, the European Umbrella Organisation for GI, published in October 2000 a consultation paper "*Towards a strategy for GI in Europe*". The EUROGI consultation paper was well received within the GI community and the EC and as a result a proposal to implement parts of the strategy was submitted to the EC for consideration as a fully funded project within the Information

¹ PETIT - Pathfinder towards the European Topographic Information Template:

<http://www.eurogeographics.org/Projects/ProjectsIndexLevel1.htm>

ETeMII: European Territorial Management Information Infrastructure: www.ec-gis.org/etemii

PANEL-GI: Pan-European Link for Geographic Information: www.gisig.it/panel-gi/

ESMI: European Spatial Metadata Infrastructure:

<http://www.eurogeographics.org/Projects/ProjectsIndexLevel1.htm>

MADAME: Methods for Access to Data and Metadata in Europe: www.info2000-madame.org

Society Technologies Programme. This resulted in the Geographic Information Network in Europe (GINIE) project being accepted and approved. As mentioned earlier, a key aim of GINIE is to support the implementation of a European Strategy through the establishment of an ABGI.

Since the start of GINIE, a major new initiative has been launched by the EC with the aim of developing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE). INSPIRE (www.ec-gis.org/inspire) addresses many important issues at the European level, including common architecture and standards, data policy and legal framework, metadata, and funding among them. The objective of INSPIRE is to develop a legal framework for a European infrastructure, starting from the requirements of environmental policy, but with subsequent daughter legislation addressing other sectors such as transport, regional policy, and agricultural policy. Although still at the proposal stage, it is also envisaged that a European Spatial Data Committee might be set up to help coordinate the implementation of the infrastructure. INSPIRE is clearly a new factor that needs to be taken into account in considering the need and possible function of an ABGI.

5. The Drivers for greater availability, access, and use of GI

The key drivers for GI at the European level include:

- The eGovernment initiatives at the European and national levels;
- The growing awareness on the value and fundamental importance of GI;
- The need to address European cross border issues in an effective way;
- The expansion of the European Union (EU);
- The demands by society for improved policy making and implementation;
- The demands for an inclusive society in the Information Age;
- The increasing concerns for sustainable development;
- The European perspective for Spatial Planning.
- The demands arising from emergency planning and national security.

Question 1: are there other important drivers supporting the need for increased use of GI?

6. The Drivers for increased coordination in GI policy

In addition to increasing pressures for a wider and more effective use of GI, we have identified also a number of key drivers that require an increased and more effective coordination of GI policies and across Europe.

6.1 Market Confidence: At the current time the largest depository of GI lies within the public sector. As a result the GI market place in Europe is dominated by large public sector organisations and a growing number of small to medium sized enterprises (SME's) within each nation combined with a small number of multinational organisations. The latter are often of small or medium size compared to other multinational organisations in other sectors of the economy. As the sector develops and matures there is an increasing

need to develop confidence in the market and society at large that dominant players do not exploit their position to the detriment of broader societal and economic objectives. Hence the increasing emphasis in Member States and the EC (e.g. the proposed Directive on Public Sector Information) for regulation ensuring transparency and a level playing field, together with mechanisms to monitor compliance with these principles.

6.2 Evolving Policy Environment: As GI becomes almost a transparent component of the Information Society infrastructure GI will no longer appear as a specialised or unique subject domain. As a result the forums and organisations where GI awareness and information exchange have traditionally taken place are slowly merging into wider generic type organisations that represent GI in its widest sense and its relationship to other parts of the Information Society. Therefore, there is an increasing need to develop mechanisms to coordinate inputs and liaise with the different sectors as well as increasing skills in GI usage.

6.3 Increasing number of stakeholders: Due to the pervasiveness of GI there are a very broad range of disciplines, organisations and stakeholders that have an interest in GI. As a result there are at times very different views and opinions regarding GI policy and strategy that need to be considered and resolved in the interest of all within Europe. The more the organisations and the stakeholders, the greater the need for such mediating and coordinating role. Some EU member states have already set up organisations, which advise co-ordinate or mediate on GI.

6.4 The need for effective coordination is also confirmed by the study of existing national spatial data infrastructures (NSDI) in Europe and the US conducted by GINIE², which has identified coordination and political support as the two most crucial factors behind the success of NSDIs. Specifically in relation to coordination, the study has identified the need for both *operational* coordination and *strategic* coordination. The operational side typically deals with standards and specifications, organisational coordination, and the management of clearinghouses and geo-portals. The strategic side has an equally important role to play in supporting institutional capacity, acting as policy watch, raising awareness, and sustaining the political momentum.

Question 2: Are there any other important drivers calling for increased level of GI coordination in Europe?

7. GI representative organisations

Across Europe at the country level there is a wide range of existing GI related representative organisations. Within each country it is not unusual for a number of membership based organisations to coexist that have an interest in GI due to its pervasive nature. These organisations can be categories as Broad or Umbrella; Professional; Sectoral; Thematic; and Research focused. The age and nature of these organisations tends to correlate with the degree to which GI is exploited and used within each nation, which reflects the GI capacity of each country. In some member states, inter-ministerial

² “Spatial Data Infrastructure: Country Reports”, (www.ec-gis.org/ginie)

departments have the role to advise government on national policies related to or affecting the GI sector.

At the European level there is a similar range of existing GI related representative organisations that reflect the situation at the country level with regard to the categories of organisations. TABLE 7.1 shows as an example how a number of these existing organisations fit into the various categories of organisation.

Table 7.1:

Category	Pan European Organisation
Umbrella/ Broad	1. EUROGI
Professional	1. The Council of European Land Surveyors (CLGE) 2. Federation of European Maritime Associations of Surveyors (FEMAS) 3. European Organisation for Experimental Photogrammetric Research (OEEPE)
Sector	1. The organisation representing National Mapping Agencies (EuroGeographics) 2. The organisation representing the Geological Surveys (EuroGeosurveys) 3. The Network of European Meteorological Services (EUMETNET) 4. European Association of Remote Sensing Companies (EARSC) 5. Union of the Water Supply Associations from Countries of the European Communities (EUREAU) 6. Association of the European Space Industry (EUROSPACE)
Thematic	1. Urban Data Management Society (UDMS) 2. The UNECE Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA) 3. Federation of European Direct Marketing (FEDMA)
Research	1. Association of Geographic Information Laboratories in Europe. (AGILE) 2. The Association of Remote Sensing Laboratories (EARSeL)

There are also a number of other international organisations that have a direct interest in GI matters in Europe, which may have a European branch. These include:

- The International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)
- The Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association (GSDI)
- The UN Working Group for GI (UNGIWG)
- The Open GIS Consortium. (OGC)
- The International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS)
- The International Cartographic Association (ICA)
- The International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO)
- The International Union of Producers and Distributors of Electrical Energy (UNIPEDE)

This list of course is far from being exhaustive but already indicates the variety of organisations that support through their activities the increased use of GI in Europe. As such it is important that they are included in the consultation process launched with this paper.

Question 3: Are there other important stakeholders in the GI community that we need to get feedback from? Please specify.

Some of these organisations already have a forum, the Pan European Associations Forum that is chaired by EUROGI, for the purposes of exchanging information and good practice. The Pan European Associations Forum (PEAF) (the PEAF web site hosted at www.eurogi.org) therefore will be an important vehicle to obtain feedback from on the proposals set out in this consultation document.

It is the contention of this paper that whilst all the organisations listed above perform an important role in energising and representing their specific communities of interest. There may still be a need for an additional organisation or structure able to perform the overall strategic coordinating role identified in the GINIE study on NSDI, which was referred to in Point 6.4 above. The following Section outlines the possible mission and objectives of such an organisation, the ABGI.

8. Mission Statement and Objectives of an ABGI.

The mission of the ABGI could be thus formulated:

To provide the strategic vision and leadership necessary to maximise the use of GI by all sectors of society for the purpose of good governance, business, research and informed citizenship.

Possible objectives include:

- To monitor the increasing number of policy initiatives and developments affecting directly or indirectly the increase use of GI by all in Europe [policy-watch],
- To ensure consistency of such actions and policies at national and European level. [This can be done through advice, advocacy, and publicising examples of poor coordination or unexpected impacts of policies],
- To provide strategic coordination among the many organisations involved in GI, and the different communities of interest (e.g. land-based GI, space, marine), act as a recognised voice towards decision-makers in Europe, and help sustain political support for the increased use of GI,
- To support institutional capacity building across Europe, including measures for education and training,
- To promote adherence to best practice and the principles of transparency and fair play through the development of comparative studies of national and regional experiences that relate to the use of GI in different sectors, gathering examples of

good practice to raise awareness and sell the benefits as well as evidence of practice not consistent with the goal of maximising the use of GI.

Question 4: Is there a need for such a structure?

Question 5: Is this an appropriate mission of what an ABGI should be for?

Question 6: Are these appropriate objectives? Are important ones missing?

9. Possible Models of an ABGI

There are several models of structures that could help achieve the mission set out above. They include as examples:

9.1 Policy Forum

A policy forum is often set up as a forum among high-level officials and decision-makers to establish a common ground for topic oriented policies in Europe. It may bring together experts, interest groups, politicians and decision-makers representing politics and administration, consumers, business and industry as well as science and academia to debate key issues.

The European Health Forum Gastein (www.ehfg.org)

The EUROPEAN HEALTH FORUM GASTEIN (EHFG) was founded in 1998 as a European health policy conference with the aim of providing a platform for discussion for the various stakeholders in the field of public health and health care. The EHFG has become an unique annual event, bringing together experts, interest groups, politicians and decision-makers representing politics and administration; patients and consumers; business and industry as well as science and academia to debate key health issues. Integrating various national, regional and European perspectives the Forum facilitates the exchange of views and experience amongst key actors and experts from the 15 EU countries, but also from the rest of the 51 countries of the WHO European region, in particular the EEA countries and the EU candidate countries.

Launched with major financial support from the European Commission as a joint initiative of Dr. Günther Leiner, Member of the Austrian Parliament and Mr. Pdraig Flynn, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection in 1997, subsequent events have grown with the continued and extended co-operation of Commission services culminating in the first presentation of the new EU health strategy to a diverse audience at the EHFG 2000. Amongst others the EHFG is co-organised and supported by the Austrian Ministry for Social Security and Generations; the European Commission, DG Health and Consumer Protection; the WHO, Regional Office for Europe; the EU Committee of the Regions and Land Salzburg.

9.2 Policy Centres

There are several examples of such centres, one of which is the **European Policy Centre** (www.theepc.be)

The European Policy Centre is the fastest growing think-tank in Brussels. Over the past three years, over 300 organisations have become members of The EPC. Initially, these primarily included major companies, the European Trade Union Confederation, and a wide range of diplomatic missions and professional and trade associations. Over the past year, The EPC has extended its membership to include bodies representing the regions and local authorities in Europe, non-governmental organisations, foundations and religious organisations. Many of our member organisations themselves represent a considerable number of affiliated bodies throughout the European Union. The Centre aims to achieve a balanced dialogue involving its different constituencies of members and to build up links with a wide range of organisations throughout Europe. The EPC's directors, staff and advisors have between them an unrivalled experience of EU affairs across the whole range of policy areas affecting the future development of the EU. They enjoy close contacts with the key policy makers in the EU institutions and closely monitor the strategic development of the EU. The EPC focuses on serving the interests of its members and has developed a growing range of activities and services, which help them to understand and influence the process of European integration. (source: EPC Annual Report 2000)

There are different categories of membership including Corporate, Diplomatic, NGOs, Professional, Regional, and Governmental. With a staff of 18 people, the EPC organises a wide range of seminars, workshops, forums, policy briefings, and other activities. In the year 2000 alone some 100 events were organised. The EPC had a budget of €1.3 million in 2000, of which 10% through a grant from the EC, and the rest through sponsorships and members fees.

9.3 Network

The concept of a network is based on people that share common interests that work towards an agreed mission. A model here would be based on the organisations already existing in the GI community, some of which were listed in Section 7. Examples of existing networks include EUROGI, and AGILE.

EUROGI, the European Umbrella Organisation for GI, (www.eurogi.org) was established in 1993 with the mission *To maximise the effective use of geographic information for the benefit of the citizen, good governance and commerce in Europe and to represent the views of the geographic information community. EUROGI achieves this by promoting, stimulating, encouraging and supporting the development and use of geographic information and technology.*

Its objectives are:

- To encourage the greater use of geographic information in Europe.

- To raise awareness of the value of GI and it's associated technologies.
- To work towards the development of strong national GI associations in all European countries.
- To facilitate the development of a European Spatial Data Infrastructure.
- To represent European interests in the Global Spatial Data infrastructure.

EUROGI has 25 members representing 22 national GI associations and 3 pan-European ones. Since each member in turn has a broad membership, EUROGI represents over 6500 public and private sector members across Europe. The General Board of EUROGI elects a President, and an Executive Committee.

AGILE, the Association of Geographic Information Laboratories in Europe, (www.agile-online.org) was established in 1998 with the following objectives:

- to promote academic teaching and research at the European level. This will be reflected by the establishment of working groups on specific topics intended to influence the future European geographic information research agenda.
- to facilitate networking activities between geographic information laboratories at the European level. This will be reflected in different kinds of activity including focused meetings based on state-of-the-art presentations on key research issues and European geographic information research conferences.

The AGILE members are 70 GI research laboratories in 20 countries. They elect a Council of 8 Members, who in turn elect a President, Secretary, and a Treasurer. The activities of AGILE include an annual conference, and research carried through its Working Groups on Data Policy, Interoperability, Environment Modelling, and Education.

9.4 EU based Structures

9.4.1 Committees:

European committees are based on “comitology” procedures defined in the EU regulations and functioning rules. Examples of two proposed committees include:

- **eEurope Steering Committee:** As part of the action plan for ‘*eEurope 2005: An information society for all*’ it is proposed to establish a steering group which would be made up of representatives from the Member states; the Candidate countries; the European Parliament and where and when necessary representatives from the private sector; and consumer groups. As GI is part of the Information Age Society and eEurope it would be expected that the eEurope steering committee would have an interest but not a sole interest in GI policy.

- **European Spatial Data Committee (ESDC):** The Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) initiative working group on *Implementing Structures and Funding* is proposing that the EU Council and Parliament should establish an ESDC. The proposed ESDC has a very similar role and structure to existing EU committees and will have a specific role with regard to INSPIRE and its implementation within the EU. Although only a proposal at this stage, it is conceivable that such ESDC would take a co-ordinating and policy development role for the scope set by INSPIRE, rather than the broader strategic role advocated in this paper.

9.4.2: High Level Working Party or Group

The use of High Level Working Parties (HLWP) to provide strategic advice appears regularly in EC affairs. One of the better-known examples relevant to this discussion was the **High Level Group on the Information Society** appointed by the European Council in 1993 to make recommendations on the specific measures to be considered by the Community and Member States for the infrastructures in the sphere of information. The High level Group was very high powered and included:

Martin Bangemann (European Commission, Chairman), Enrico Cabral da Fonseca (Companhia Comunicações Nacionais), Peter Davis (Reed Elsevier), Carlo de Benedetti (Olivetti / ERT), Pehr Gyllenhammar (Volvo / ERT), Lothar Hunsel (T-Mobil), Pierre Lescure (Canal+), Pascual Maragall (mayor of Barcelona), Gaston Thorn (Cie. Luxembourgeoise de Telediffusion / CLT), Cándido Velázquez-Gastelu (Telefónica / ERT), Peter Bonfield (ICL), Etienne Davignon (Société Générale de Belgique / ERT), Jean-Marie Descarpentries (Bull), Brian Ennis (IMS), Hans-Olaf Henkel (IBM Europe), Anders Knutsen (Bang & Olufsen), Constantin Makropoulos (Hellenic Information Systems), Romano Prodi (IRI), Jan Timmer (Philips Electronics / ERT), Heinrich von Pierer (Siemens / ERT). Please note that this information relates to the year 1994. Six of the 20 members of the Bangemann Group also belonged to the European Roundtable of Industrialists. (source: <http://www.xs4all.nl/~ceo/observer6/revolving.html>)

A HLWP was put forward as a co-ordinating mechanism in the GI2000 proposed Communication in 1997, which stated:

*To provide this leadership the Commission proposes to establish a **GI2000 High-Level Working Party**. This would involve representatives from all the leading players in the public and private sectors, including users and would be chaired by the Commission. The approach would be comparable to the one adopted further to the Telecommunications Council of 27.11.96 in relation to illegal and harmful content on the Internet. The Working Party would:*

- *provide the leadership required for the implementation of joint actions, focusing on strategy,*
- *act as a European focal point for discussion on geographic information. Stimulate co-operation and synergies between the key*

players in the EEA Member States, industry, users and the Commission,

- *elaborate and oversee the actions which will be developed in the follow-up to this paper*
 - *co-ordinate European input to global fora and decision-making*
- (Source: GI2000v10/7/1998)

Similarly, the EC Communication establishing the e-Content Programme (COM (2000) 323 final) proposed

*Without prejudice to the final decision that the Commission will take on the follow-up to the Green paper on public sector information, it is foreseen that a **high level group on public sector information** is established, consisting of Member States representatives, actors from the information industries, consumers organisations and other representatives of citizens interests. It will not only give guidance to the different initiatives in this field (follow-on to the Green Paper on public sector information in the Information Society, COM (1998) 585), but can also be an important platform for the detection and dissemination of best practices.*

The GI2000 High Level Working Party was not established, while in respect to the e-Content Communication, a High Level Group on public sector information, the Group to Promote Digital Public Data, was set up in 2002. The Group has had two meetings. As part of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan, an eEurope Steering Group will be established in 2003.

9.4.3 Observatories

This model is very frequently used in EU policy to monitor developments and make recommendations. The Europa.eu.int Web site returns 2922 entries under Observatory covering issues from transport, to demography, Small and Medium Enterprises, audiovisuals, and social policy. Two examples will suffice:

ESPON: the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (www.espon.lu) has been recently established with funding from the EU INTERREG III Programme. The Network is based on 15 nodes, one for each Member States, with a co-ordination secretariat in Luxembourg. Of interest for this discussion is that each national node is organised differently to reflect the particular characteristics of the country. So for example some of the national nodes are coordinated by national government departments or Ministries (e.g. Germany, Italy, Portugal), while others are coordinated by academic institutions. The extent and composition of the national networks also reflect the size and development of the spatial planning community of interest in each country.

E-Content Observatory: **Digital content observatory**

The stated aim of the e-content observatory is: *to pull together knowledge resources and analyses existing in the different Member States (institutes, market players) and the Commission on the e-content industries, and to present the information in a coherent and comparable way. An essential element is the speed of delivery of the information. The observatory should not just present a static report once a year, but should provide a flexible mechanism to get, disseminate and present updated information (even if this is partial information, e.g. just on a certain number of Member States).*

The Observatory was the object of a feasibility study by the EC, and is still subject to discussion as it is not part of the draft Work programme for E-Content for 2003-04.

Question 7: Are there other models that could be relevant to fulfilling the mission and objectives of the proposed ABGI?

Before discussing the strengths and weakness of the models identified above, it may be useful to set out some of the general attributes that an ABGI should have.

10. Attributes of an ABGI

A sustainable and effective ABGI should be:

- * **Independent** - be independent of the stakeholders (organisations) that provide the financial backing or support;
- * **Inclusive** - be representative of the stakeholders involved;
- * **Strategic in Outlook**– by not being responsible for the operational tasks of implementing policy;
- * **Open** - be open and adaptable;
- * **Connected** - be well connected with existing networks representing the various stakeholder communities; Government at all levels across Europe either directly or indirectly; and other policy making forums;
- * **Built on Strength** - it should wherever possible build upon what exists rather than create new structures;
- * **Transparent** - the processes by which the ABGI is constituted should be transparent and involve the stakeholder communities; the processes by which policy is formulated should also be open and transparent;
- * **Responsive** - the ABGI should be dynamic and responsive to emerging issues with a nimble structure;
- * **Flexible** - has a constitution and terms of reference that enable the ABGI to:
 - establish permanent working committees and tasks forces;
 - initiate research either directly or indirectly through requests to the stakeholder communities where it is pertinent to do so;
 - raise its own finances to enable it to deliver its remit;
 - request or delegate activities and tasks to the stakeholders' communities or others where pertinent to do so.

These attributes provide a framework against which the proposed model of the ABGI can be considered and assessed.

Question 8: are there other important attributes missing? Which ones?

11. Analysis

On the basis of the examples provided above, there seem to be four main models on offer:

1. **A Forum:** this type of structure is large, bottom up, with many hundred if not thousand individual participants. The main activity appears the organisation of yearly events to which key policy makers are invited with a view to give feedback on proposed initiatives or suggest new courses of action. The strength of this model is that it can be open and inclusive, representing a wide set of interests in a grass-root fashion. By developing as a recognised interest group in their specific field, a forum can also ensure that it is consulted by the EC when relevant proposals are made. It can therefore be well connected to decision makers. Other advantages include transparency, and flexibility. The disadvantage of this model is that by focusing its activities on a yearly event it may not fulfil all the objectives set out in Section 8 above, including capacity building, and policy watch. Moreover, if it is overly dependant on the funding of few organisations, including the EC, it may not be able to have the degree of independence required, including the ability to criticize policy from national or EU bodies if needed.
2. **A Policy Centre:** this type of structure appears to be more in line with the mission and objectives of an ABGI. It can perform all the activities required and in particular have a strategic outlook, be responsive to new developments, and be well connected. The disadvantages though could include: first the need to find substantive sponsors and financial backers. In the context of GI, it is important to remember that many of the key industrial players are based in the US rather than Europe, and that many of the European GI stakeholders are financially relatively small. It may therefore be more difficult to undertake effectively the tasks required, or to be independent if the sources of funding are too narrow on a few organisations. Second, this model appears to miss the opportunity to build on the many organisations that even if small in budget terms already represent different stakeholders communities. So the degree of “ownership” that such a Centre could command in the GI community could be diminished. Finally, any new organisations takes time to build up and develop, and in the short term this is clearly a disadvantage.
3. **A Network of existing organisations:** the advantage of this model is that it is the simplest to implement by building on the existing strengths. It also scores highly on all other criteria identified in Section 10. The disadvantage is that it requires a sustained effort to demonstrate its need and value, and that the more the

stakeholders involved the greater the management commitment required and complexity in raising resources.

4. **A EU-based structures: Committee, HLWP, Observatory:** the advantage of these models are obvious in respect to funding and authority being at the heart of the decision making process. The disadvantages however, are several and include lack of inclusiveness and transparency, difficulty in being independent (i.e. power to criticise), and only limited ability to build on existing stakeholder organisations. Such committees or parties would also tend to cover the EU alone with lesser representation from European stakeholders outside this framework. Moreover, some of the example cited such as the Bangemann Group was a one-off exercise rather than a permanent structure with continuity.

Table 11.1: Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses

Quality	Other structures				<i>EU Structures</i>	
	Forum	Centre	Network	Committee	HLWP	Observatory
Independent	Mainly	Partly	Yes	No	No	Partly
Inclusive	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Strategic	Mainly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly
Open	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Connected	Yes	Yes	Mainly	Yes	Yes	Yes
Built on Strength	Partly	No	Yes	No	No	Partly
Transparent	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Responsive	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flexible	Yes	Partly	Mainly	Yes	Yes	Yes

Based on the table above, it would appear that the Network model scores highest on the criteria defined in Section 10, followed closely by the Forum model. The Centre model has some strengths but also several weaknesses, while the three models identified under the heading of EU structures have significant shortcomings. When considering the models it is useful to consider sustainability, ease to set up, legitimacy, political awareness, and institutional acceptance amongst other factors.

Question 9: Do you agree that the Network and Forum models are the better ones? If not why not?

12. Summary of Questions

This paper has set out the arguments for strengthening the strategic coordination among stakeholders in the GI community to help formulate and implement a coherent set of policies and actions aimed at maximising the use of GI for all in Europe.

Although the INSPIRE initiative is a major development in the European GI landscape, we are conscious that it will take many years to implement, and that it is only one of the set of actions needed to achieve the stated objectives. Even if a European Spatial Data Committee is established in the near future, it is likely that such committee will already

have an important set of challenges to meet in providing the operational coordination needed to implement the INPIRE framework. A more strategic body working together with the ESDC, and all the other stakeholders in the GI community is needed.

The paper has set out the possible mission, and objectives of the ABGI, and identified some organisational models that could be adopted or adapted. Whilst the GINIE partners have developed in some further detail the scenario for an ABGI, it seems appropriate at this stage not to pre-empt the consultation by putting such details forward. Equally, it is not necessary to get into the details of a business plan, until the outcome of the consultation has provided a better idea as to the views of the GI community on the need, scope, and structure of the ABGI.

Below are the questions to which answers are sought:

Question 1: are there are other important drivers supporting the need for increased use of GI?

Question 2: Are there any other important drivers calling for increased level of GI coordination in Europe?

Question 3: Are there other important stakeholders in the GI community that we need to get feedback from? Please specify.

Question 4: Is there a need for such a structure?

Question 5: is this an appropriate vision of what an ABGI should be for?

Question 6: Are these appropriate objectives? Are important ones missing?

Question 7: Are there other models that could be relevant to fulfilling the mission and objectives of the proposed ABGI?

Question 8: Are there other important attributes missing? Which ones?

Question 9: Do you agree that the Network and Forum models are the better ones? If not why not?

Responding to this consultation

Please respond either via email to abgi@eurogi.org and enter in the subject line GINIE ABGI Consultation

Or alternative by post to
GINIE ABGI Consultation
EUROGI, P.O. Box 9046,
NL-7300 BA Apeldoorn
The Netherlands

13. Where Next

13.1: Consultation

As indicated above the success and sustainability of the ABGI will be achieved only if there is a wide support for its existence and activities. Therefore, GINIE Consortium believes that extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders is needed to build a sound basis for subsequent action. The consultation stage will include four main strands:

- 1) this discussion document is going to be circulated widely to individuals and organisations in the GI community, seeking grass-root feedback to the issues raised.
- 2) The partners of the GINIE consortium will consult with their main constituencies. In particular EUROGI will consult all its members, the JRC will seek the views of interested parties within the European Commission, OGCE will consult with GI stakeholders in European industry, and the University of Sheffield will lead a consultation process with the research community via AGILE.
- 3) High level Industry and Government panels, including large companies and SMEs, central government and local government representatives, will be set up by GINIE to have detailed feedback by opinion leaders in these groups and seek their views on possible funding models.
- 4) The GINIE consortium will take the opportunity of a meeting of the Pan European Associations Forum in December to have additional feedback from some of the key stakeholders represented in this Forum.

13.2 Beyond Consultation

The discussion in this document suggests that it is premature at this stage to recommend any major new development or structure that departs from the existing base of organisations representing the many interests in the field. The analysis of the feedback received from all the interested parties will determine the subsequent course of action. If the need for an ABGI is strongly supported, there may be several intermediate steps to help its establishment, including the use of one or more existing organisations to facilitate the process. In any event, any new development is going to be based on an open, transparent and evolutionary approach. What we need most from you is your input and commitment.

The outline timetable for action is shown in Table 13-1 below.

TABLE 13-1 Proposed timetable

Time Period	Action
Oct. – Dec 2002	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ABGI Consultation document is disseminated widely to the European GI community 2. Panels of experts for specific sectors of the GI community are set up e.g. a Government sector panel, a Industry sector panel, a research sector panel, a User sector panel and used to disseminate the document and channel feedback 3. The GINIE consortium partners consult with their constituencies among GI associations, the European Commission, industry, and research. 4. The ABGI is also discussed with members of the Pan European Associations Forum at their annual meeting <p>First round of consultation ends 31st December 2002.</p>
Jan. – June. 2003	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Results of the first round of consultation are published on the GINIE web site with preliminary recommendations for action. 2. Focused meetings held with selected leading representatives from central, regional, and local government, and from industry to seek detailed feedback, and help consider possible funding models. 3. Results of second round of consultation are published, with final recommendations for action.
June – Oct. 2003	The recommendations are implemented. If the need for an ABGI is supported, the structure and business model is developed and the ABGI is launched.
Nov. 2003	GINIE consortium closes down.
Jan. – Dec. 2004	The ABGI consolidates and develops on its own resources.

For further information on GINIE visit the web site www.ec-gis.org/ginie which contains GINIE newsletters, reports, workshop presentations and management overviews that include recommendations on implementing a sustainable European Spatial Data Infrastructure. The submissions from this consultation will be published on the GINIE web site.

End of document
13th November 2002.