



Section 1

Introduction

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this compendium of European SDII Best Practice are those of the authors and editors alone and do not necessarily represent that of the authors organisation.

1 Introduction

Within Europe there are many good examples of how geographic information and the associated technologies are being exploited in a very wide range of application areas for the good of society. As this exploitation has accelerated the need for a spatial data infrastructure has become widely recognised. This awareness has resulted in large in many SDI initiatives evolving from the grass roots upwards across Europe at the local, provincial, national and cross border levels. As part of the GINIE¹ project it was recognised that it would be valuable to draw on these experiences and to bring them together in a European SDI Best Practice portfolio. It is the belief that this would assist the European GI community with respect to raising awareness and learning from others. It would also enable comparisons to be made between the different approaches that maybe adopted in various parts of Europe.

This document is the first release of the portfolio, which GINIE hopes the GI community within Europe will further develop and maintain either by one of the pan European GI Associations such as EUROGI, or the EGIS Network that has been proposed by GINIE. The objective would be to release the portfolio incrementally such that over time every country within Europe will have contributed to the content of the European SDI Best Practice portfolio. The European SDI Best Practice portfolio complements the GSDI Cookbook that is managed by the GSDI Association and which is available on their website at www.gsdi.org.

Both GINIE and INSPIRE² have through their many expert meetings research and documents highlighted a very wide range of initiatives across Europe that form one or more components of an SDI. In this initial release of the European SDI Best Practice only a small number of initiatives have been included.

The initial structure of the portfolio was to include good practice within the following sections:

- Section 2: An overview of European SDI initiatives.
- Section 3: SDI Initiatives – to include Pan European, Regional Cross border, National, provincial and local.
- Section 4: Data Policy initiatives.
- Section 5: Data Discovery Services.
- Section 6: Reference Data – at the pan European, National, sub national levels.
- Section 7: Data Quality and certification.
- Section 8: Inter-operability initiatives – including those within eGovernment that have been enabled through geographic information and the associated technologies.
- Section 9: GI Services
- Section 10: Public Private Partnerships.

In this first edition only Sections 2, 4, 5 and 6 contain content and examples of best practice.

To maximise the return to the reader and the contributors it has been the objective of the editor to provide at least two examples of good practice from two or more European countries for the same component. This has been achieved in Sections 5 and 6 of this edition. To assist with the comprehension of the material included it was also an objective to ask the contributors to provide an agreed comparison which could be included. In section 6 of this edition this has been accomplished. In subsequent editions it is hoped that this style can be broadened to cover all the sections of the portfolio.

The European GI community has over the past decade developed and implemented data discovery services. The significance of these services has grown since the European Union Reuse of Public

¹ GINIE is a project funded by the Information Society Technologies Programme of the European Union running from the 1st November 2001 through to the 31st January 2004. Its main purpose is to develop a cohesive Geographic Information Strategy at the European level. Its partners are EUROGI, OGCE, the Joint Research Centre, and the University of Sheffield. <http://www.ec-gis.org/ginie>

² INSPIRE aims at making available relevant, harmonised and quality geographic information to support formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Community policies with a territorial dimension or impact. It is a legal initiative of the EU that will address technical standards and protocols, organisational and co-ordination issues, data policy issues including data access and the creation and maintenance of spatial information. <http://www.ec-gis.org/inspire>

Sector Information Directive came onto the statute book on the 31st December 2003. Section 5 of this edition contains two examples GIGateway from the UK in Section 5.1 and MIDAS from the Czech Republic in Section 5.2. These two examples show the importance of the GI community to actively support the data discovery service to ensure the database is fully populated, maintained and used. The Czech approach has resulted in MIDAS containing all the local government data sets, which proved to be an enormous asset when the Czech Government in recent years reorganised the structure of Local Government within the Czech Republic. By comparison the UK experience has yet to achieve the equivalent geographic coverage or even of one particular sector even though GIGateway and its earlier incarnations predate MIDAS. There maybe good reasons for these differences and this demonstrates the value of making a resource such as this portfolio of good practice freely available to all within Europe.

Reference data forms an essential part of data infrastructures whether they be spatial or otherwise. To set the scene and to encourage further submissions a reference set that is recognised and used by a very wide section of society has been chosen – namely an Address reference data set. Section 6 of this edition contains two examples. The first presents the Danish experience and the other a British experience. Using just these two countries it has been possible to draw out the similarities. These similarities have been detailed in Section 6.3. These similarities are not just about the way the address reference data has been assembled but also the issues that those involved in constructing the reference data set have been confronted with and which they needed to resolve if the reference data set was to be widely used by all in the respective society. The comparison in section 5.3 shows that these issues are in the main the soft issues of policy and law.

It has become widely recognised that the take up and exploitation of geographic information is being held back due to the different data policies that occur all across Europe. Section 4 of this edition of the portfolio contains an interesting success story on a UK initiative which has the objective of encouraging access and re-use of public sector data and information.

The INSPIRE initiative sets out a number of policy principles which are:

- Data should be collected once and maintained at the level where this can be done most effectively.
- It must be possible to combine seamlessly spatial information from different sources across Europe and share it between many users and applications.
- It must be possible for information collected at one level to be shared between all the different levels, e.g. detailed for detailed investigations, general for strategic purposes.
- Geographic information needed for good governance at all levels should be abundant and widely available under conditions that do not inhibit its extensive use.
- It must be easy to discover which geographic information is available, fits the needs for a particular use and under what conditions it can be acquired and used.
- Geographic data must become easy to understand and interpret because it can be visualized within the appropriate context and selected in a user-friendly way.

These INSPIRE principles provide a useful framework when considering the various examples of European SDI Best Practice contained within this portfolio. For example do the Address Reference set examples contained in Section 6 adhere to these principles?

The GINIE consortium encourages the European GI community to submit contributions to this European SDI Best Practice book. To provide a guide to potential authors a template has been included in the annex of this document, which provides guidance and the common framework that would facilitate comparison. As the content of the European SDI Best Practice book expands then so will its potential value to all those people and organisations across Europe that are embarking down the road of developing and implementing a sustainable spatial data infrastructure that would enable the seamless flow of data between and across all levels of society whether they be in the public, private or voluntary sectors which should include the citizens of Europe also.

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On behalf of the GINIE partners
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