

Infrastructure for spatial information in the European Community (INSPIRE)

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The Commission presents a report on the implementation of Directive 2007/2/EC of March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE). The Directive supports the application of knowledge-based policies and monitoring of activities that have an environmental impact. It sets out actions to remove obstacles to the sharing of spatial data between all levels of government within and across Member States.

Implementation: the Directive had to be transposed by 15 May 2009 but significant political, legal and administrative delays meant that **most Member States missed the deadline**, with only Denmark transposing it on time. The average delay in communicating national legislation was 12 months.

The Commission pursued Member States for failing to transpose the Directive in a fully compliant manner, and in 2016, is still addressing **outstanding transposition issues in nine Member States**.

With regard to **implementing measures**, although progress had been made by 2014, none of the deadlines on major milestones in the implementation roadmap have been met by all Member States, these being:

- creating coordination structures and data policies for sharing between public authorities;
- progress in identifying the required spatial data;
- documentation of spatial data (metadata);
- creation of internet services providing access to view and download spatial data;
- availability of spatial data in common data models.

Evaluation of the INSPIRE Directive: the evaluation criteria are effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value.

The evaluation confirms that, overall, **the Directive is an important instrument in meeting policy needs in an efficient manner**. This importance is expected to increase with time, given the drive towards a digital economy as set out by the [Digital Single Market strategy](#), which includes important elements of the Directive.

However, the **overall effectiveness of the Directive is undermined**, since:

- **progress in implementation has been made in only the few Member States where the necessary investments were made** and implementation of the Directive was aligned with wider national action on open data policies and better eGovernment services;
- **the differences between Member States in speed and quality** of implementation are significant and result from accumulated delays in the process.

The **significant remaining obstacles** created by the data policies in many countries impede effective progress and perpetuate administrative burden because data cannot be easily shared between administrations.

The evaluation of coherence has uncovered areas needing attention, in particular the development of the data policies creating obstacles in the internal (digital) market, which is also of relevance to the 'free flow of data' initiative.

Lastly, **future EU added value can be significant**. The potential improvements in EU and cross border spatial data management offered by the INSPIRE Directive remain significant, not just in the environmental field. Whether it is sharing data on air quality or flood risk management, environmental solutions often need cross-border collaboration. In particular the chance to exploit the potential of data received through the [Copernicus programme](#) is important.

Recommendations: based on the evaluation results, the Commission considers it vital that **all Member States step up their efforts** in implementing (e.g. on their coordination activities) and critically reviewing the effectiveness of their data policies. This applies in particular to those Member States lagging behind the most.

Member States are asked to:

- give priority to **environmental spatial datasets**, in particular those linked to monitoring and reporting, and those identified in relevant global processes;
- improve **coordination** between the national INSPIRE implementation and eGovernment, open data and other relevant processes at national level.

To complement national efforts, the Commission will:

- **evaluate the shortcomings of the national data policies** in more detail and explore synergies with the ‘free flow of data’ initiative⁴⁰ under the Digital Single Market with the view to resolving these issues;
- **review, and possibly revise, the INSPIRE rules**, in particular on spatial data harmonisation, to take into account the implementing risks and complexities with a view to reducing them (simplifying requirements);
- **assist Member States** in applying and implementing the INSPIRE Directive, e.g. by the use of common tools, and promote priority setting working together with Member States;
- explore opportunities arising from the use of **existing EU-level funding programmes** to help capacity building and close the INSPIRE implementation gaps (e.g. through the Interoperability Solutions Administrations).

The Commission, together with Member States, will also promote the inclusion of INSPIRE services and data harmonisation **in relevant EU initiatives** (e.g. Copernicus, Horizon 2020), Commission departments, European agencies and international partners of the EU.