



*European Umbrella Organisation
for
Geographic Information*

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Margot Wallström
Commissioner for the Environment
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

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Dear Mrs. Wallström,

In view of the meeting of the INSPIRE expert group that takes place on March the 5th in Brussels and the steps forward, I wish to clarify EUROGI's position. EUROGI represents GI associations in over 20 countries of the European Union and the accession countries, three EFTA-countries and a number of Pan European organisations, which in turn have altogether more than 6500 GI-related companies, societies, institutions etc. in the public and private sector as far as their members. EUROGI's mission statement is to 'maximise the use of geographic information for the benefit of the citizen, good governance and commerce'

EUROGI as you know is strongly in favour of the INSPIRE initiative. Our reaction to the INSPIRE consultation in May last year shows this positive support to the overall vision and the fundamental principles for INSPIRE although we had and have comments on some of the questions. The initiative is important as a means of using GI to enable better decision making at the local, national and European levels for the benefit of European citizens, which fits in our mission statement mentioned before. We know that several of our members are in the process of planning and development of the implementation of the basic principles in the initiative.

Various studies show the economic advantages and the strengthening of Europe's position of INSPIRE including European initiatives like GMES and Galileo. INSPIRE is a most important basis and indeed necessity for Europe to build upon and benefit from in many senses. In this respect we recommend a strong involvement not only of the public sector, but certainly also of the private sector that in our opinion has many solutions to offer.

EUROGI is considerably concerned about the present situation and feels that the right way forward is by way of a Directive as proposed. Other ways may easily weaken the objectives and thus INSPIRE vision statement might fail. This would mean many steps backwards and it would mean the missing of a momentum that the GI-community and other communities are really looking forward to.

Therefore we strongly wish to see INSPIRE move forward as a draft Directive to the co-decision process at the earliest opportunity certainly preferably before this legislation period ends and elections for the new Parliament take place. This would then permit the democratic processes to be activated that will allow a full and open debate on the merits of the INSPIRE Directive and its associated action plan.

We sincerely hope that the Commission and its Directorates take INSPIRE through to the next stage very soon.

Yours truly,

SIGNED

Jean Poulit,
President EUROGI