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Executive Summary on the evaluation of DIRECTIVE 2007/2/EC establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) and underpinning the report on the implementation

Accompanying the document

Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament

On the implementation of Directive 2007/2/EC of March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) pursuant to article 23

{COM(2016) 478 final}

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This staff working document looks at the implementation of the Directive establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community[1] (INSPIRE) since its entry into force on 15 May 2007 and evaluates its fitness for purpose[2], in line with the EU 'Better Regulation'[3] agenda. The Directive supports the application of knowledge-based policies and monitoring of activities that have an environmental impact. It sets out actions aimed at removing obstacles to the sharing of spatial data between all levels of government within and across Member State.

The Directive requires Member States to:

(1) set up coordination structures and adopt and implement legal measures to remove procedural obstacles to the sharing of spatial data;

(2) identify their spatial data relevant to environmental policies and those actions with an environment impact;

(3) document the spatial data so that they can be accessed on the internet together with other information;

(4) implement online services allowing the discovery, visualisation and download of spatial data;

(5) gradually organise and publish the spatial data in common data models.

Progress has been made in implementation, particularly in some Member States. However, the implementation gaps in most Member States are significant. They are the result of accumulated delays in the implementation process and underline the differences in speed and quality of implementation. The findings in relation to the different implementation steps can be summed up as follows:

- All Member States now have coordination structures in place, but their effectiveness is variable. In particular, coordination between national mapping agencies and environment data managers can be improved in many Member States.
- The national data policies for sharing data are highly variable and heterogeneous. Many Member States reported important, outstanding data policy issues that hamper the efficient sharing of spatial data between public authorities and with the public.
- Significant progress has been made as regards the spatial datasets identified and reported yearly, with close on 60 000 spatial datasets being reported in 2014 against less than 1 400 in 2007. However, for many Member States, the numbers remain low (less than 150), and with limited thematic coverage compared to some of the better performing countries.
- Implementation of the documentation obligations is at an advanced stage; yet only 12 Member States had documented 80 to 100 % of their reported spatial data in line with the INSPIRE Directive by 2014.

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1 Directive 2007/2/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community, OJ L 108, 25.4.2007, p. 1.

2 COM(2012)746 final — EU Regulatory Fitness and COM(2013)685 Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) and Staff Working Document (SWD) .

3 Commission Communication on Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) — COM(2014)368.

- Member States made progress on the online discovery services available for their identified and documented datasets. These services give users access to the documentation. The overall availability of digital services for viewing and downloading spatial data for further use was less advanced. This is mainly the result of the cumulative delays and shortcomings in the previous implementation steps. Also here there are noticeable differences between the Member States and the type of services concerned.
- The interoperability of the spatial datasets has not advanced much mainly because the main implementation deadlines are still in the future (2017, 2020).

At this half-way point in the implementation process, the main results of the evaluation on fitness for purpose can be summarised as follows:

- The INSPIRE actions are internally coherent and the intervention logic is still sound.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of the Directive vary. The level of effectiveness can often be related to implementation efforts (and investment) by Member States. Most have not done enough in this respect, and can close their implementation gaps through, for example, more investment in skills and infrastructure, better coordination, improving the free flow of data by updating their data policies, better streamlining with national policies on eGovernment and open data.
- Efficiency cannot, at this stage, be demonstrated through a positive cost-benefit balance in quantitative terms. However, overall implementation costs appear lower than predicted and most Member States reported qualitative benefits, such as improved access to information and evidence base. Where interoperable spatial data have already been incorporated in projects, including some cross-border projects and projects for reporting, gains in effectiveness and efficiency have been noted.
- There are indications that some implementation efforts which are not due until 2020 may be costly and difficult to achieve, in particular in relation to data harmonisation. Moreover, the INSPIRE reporting requirements appear to have potential for streamlining.
- The actions that implementation of the INSPIRE Directive requires remain relevant. This is underlined by the importance of interoperability and eGovernment services in the context of the EU Digital Single Market. The link to several sectoral policies also highlights their relevance, e.g. Copernicus.
- Coherence with other environmental legislation and policies is well established in the relevant documents, but can be further improved in practice, e.g. in the field of reporting.
- Specific improvements in coherence can be made in relation to data policies (i.e. Article 17) and the free flow of data among public authorities. Addressing this issue would also help improve the effectiveness of the INSPIRE Directive and its EU added value.
- Harvesting EU added value is currently not fully realised given the different levels of implementation. But this can be overcome by a better alignment of the Member States implementation plans and demonstrated through cross-border and end-user applications at EU level. A common set of implementation priorities, agreed at EU level between the Member States and the Commission, will facilitate the development of such applications.

In conclusion, this evaluation has demonstrated that the INSPIRE Directive is still largely fit-for-purpose, but that further efforts are needed at EU and Member State level to close the significant implementation gaps and to harvest the benefits of the Directive. Moreover, specific issues needing attention concern the data policy provisions in the Directive (Article 17) and requirements and use of some of the technical specifications in the implementing rules (including the streamlining of reporting).