

**PublicGeoData.org**

Benjamin Henrion  
Rue des ateliers 13-15  
B-1080 Brussels  
Tel: +32.2.414.8403  
Fax:+32.2.414.8404  
Email: info@publicgeodata.org

Brussels, 21 August 2006

**Subject: Position on the Inspire directive**

Dear Minister,

We are writing to convey our concerns, and the concerns of more than the 6000 citizens across Europe who have signed up in support our position, regarding the proposed INSPIRE directive on establishing a common framework for sharing geographic information in Europe. We particularly wish to know the Minister's position on a few specific amendments put forward by the Parliament at second reading.

Geographic information is an important issue as it is estimated that fully 80% of all information collected by government has a spatial component and geographic information is needed for environmental, census, and transport purposes among many others. Moreover state-collected geographic information is a public good and, as demonstrated by several studies, open access to it is the only way to realize its full social and commercial potential for Europe.

However since the first draft of INSPIRE, a set of amendments have been introduced which restrict the rights of the public to access, view, or even know about the existence of, geographic information that they have paid to collect. The Council's initial common position on the Directive not only fails to promote open access but risks doing the very opposite.

This would be a disastrous outcome and one which runs against the very purpose of INSPIRE. The Commission itself stated in this regard: "the common position could have the effect of reducing rather than increasing the availability of spatial data. ... The text of the common position leaves too much scope for data providers to refuse to give public access to their data and share it with other authorities."

The ENVI Committee of the Parliament voted against many of the Council's amendments to the original wording. ENVI's Rapporteur recommended "intellectual property rights [to] be deleted from the list of exceptions that would restrict access to environmental information... access free of charge, must be guaranteed not only for search services but also for view services."

We urge you to support amendments that promote open access and the sharing of geographic information. At Second Reading, the European Parliament supported Amendment 21 - to restore the right of the public to view, free of cost, the holdings of geographic information collected by the state. The Parliament also supported Amendment 27 - deleting the mention of "intellectual property rights" held by state agencies that collect geographic data from the Council's common position. We request a response from the Minister to the following questions:

\* Does the Minister support the Parliament's Amendment 21? If not, is it possible to outline the reasons why not?

\* Does the Minister support the Parliament's Amendment 27? If not, is it possible to outline the reasons why not?

Thank you for your time, and we, and our supporters, look forward to hearing your response on these matters.

Yours faithfully,

Benjamin Henrion  
Publicgeodata.org