

Open Maps for Europe: a Customised Approach to Unlocking the Value of Official Geospatial Information Through Open Data

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Key words: Cadastre; Geoinformation/GI; Open data; Cadastral Index Map; data reuse, data integration; pan-European data production; authoritative data

SUMMARY

Objective

Open Maps for Europe (www.mapsforeurope.org) provides free to use maps created using geospatial and land information from Europe's National Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registration Authorities. It is coordinated by EuroGeographics in partnership with the National Geographic Institute (NGI) Belgium and co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Union.

The objective is to unlock the value of authoritative geospatial information from official national sources by enabling and encouraging its re-use under an open data licence.

Results

This is the first time that datasets created using EuroGeographics' unique data integration process have been easily discoverable, accessible, and released as open data. All are available under a single open data licence to ensure a level playing field for all users, and will also be discoverable and available the European Data Portal.

Multinational distributed production teams are responsible for harmonising the data to standard specifications so users can be confident that the information provided is consistent, comparable, and easily shared — regardless of its national source. The work is led from EuroGeographics' head office, coordinated by production managers from Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy, Germany and National Institute of Geographic and Forest Information, France, and developed by a team of technical producers.

This customised approach unlocks the value of official geospatial information to support the Open

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Data Directive, which recognises that the value of data lies in its use and re-use, the Re-Use of Public Sector Information Directive, which specifically identifies geospatial as a category of high value datasets, and Digital Europe.

As of January 2022, almost 1,000 users have accessed the online interface, developed by IDOX, to discover, view, license and download the open datasets:

- EuroRegionalMap – multi-themed topographic open data at 1:250 000 scale.
- EuroGlobalMap – multi-themed topographic open data at 1:1 million scale.
- EuroDEM – 1:100 000 scale digital open data elevation model providing height data.

In addition, three new small-scale pan-European datasets have been developed and released:

- An Open Gazetteer service.
- Pan-European Imagery provided by Germany’s Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy –10 metre resolution high-quality open data images and mosaics as uniform reference products for mapping and visualisation, created from data taken from the European Union’s Earth observation programme Copernicus (Sentinel-2, L1C-L2A).
- A Cadastral Index Map prototype service, initially developed using a small number of official datasets.

Conclusion

The project, which runs until the end of 2022, promotes data use beyond national borders and encourages greater take up of official geospatial open data to drive innovation, market development and economic growth. It provides a potential roadmap for producing and releasing authoritative pan-European open data in the future.

Significance

Open Maps For Europe demonstrates how Europe-wide cooperation between National Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registration Authorities can deliver pan-European open data by sharing the lessons learnt and best practice. The value of the reuse of open geospatial public sector information will be demonstrated by a series of case studies that will be available by FIG 2022.

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