

Research Reveals Scope of Open Geospatial Data Across Europe



Open data is available from the majority of European National Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registry Authorities (NMCAs), a new survey has found. Research by the Open European Location Services (ELS) Project reveals that 98% of respondents provide at least some of their data free of charge. Of these, 37% make all their data available under an open licence.

Whilst open data models vary, more than 85% provide view and search services, 72% enable downloads and 67% allow its re-use in products. Users include public authorities, public services, research and education as well as commercial companies.

This survey provides a snapshot of the scope of open data from official national sources across geographical Europe, said Dominik Kopczewski, policy development manager at international not-for-profit organisation, EuroGeographics which is co-ordinating the Open ELS Project.

Interpretation of open data

With rising demand for open geospatial data, it is unsurprising that almost all the NMCAs questioned provide at least some of their information for free, funded primarily via government. EuroGeographics believes this demonstrates growing recognition of their contribution to delivering policy, economic growth and market development, Kopczweski added. A key finding however, is that, in addition to the legal and economic challenges faced by NMCAs, the interpretation of open data also varies significantly. As a result, so do the terms of use across Europe, with some NMCAs allowing its re-use in products and others only view, search and download services.

One of the key aims of the Open ELS Project is to provide certainty about what open data from official sources is free, what is charged for and under what terms and conditions. This research is the first step in delivering an Open ELS open data policy which will complement the national activities of NMCAs and respect their national policy, legislative and business requirements, Kopczweski concluded.

The survey was completed by 46 members of EuroGeographics, the Association for European National Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registry Authorities, which is coordinating the two-year Open ELS Project co-financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility.

Key findings

Of the 44 NMCAs responding to the Open ELS questionnaire:

- 26 (56%) reported that their country had a national open data policy.
- 29 (63%) had an open data policy in their organisation with a further eight (18%) preparing one. Where NMCAs do not have their own open data policy, this is usually because they have already implemented national open data legislation.
- 69% (29) reported that their open data was funded via government.

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