



Evaluation of the Policy Outreach Paper

Synopsis

UN-GGIM: Europe | Work Group on Data Integration | subgroup 1

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1 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND OF THE DOCUMENT

A primary function of national statistical and geospatial agencies is providing credible, reliable and independent geospatial and statistical data for evidence based-policy and strategic decision making. Therefore, the need to combine and integrate this information together to gain new insights is critical to measuring and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and meeting future challenges.

For this reason, UN-GGIM: Europe has investigated barriers preventing national statistical and geospatial agencies from delivering the most suitable data to meet new user demands. The Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe has identified a list of issues that need to be addressed nationally and internationally in order to overcome these barriers. The results are presented as recommendations for coordinated action in all European countries through a 'Policy Outreach Paper' published with the title 'The integration of statistical and geospatial information — A call for political action in Europe'.

UN-GGIM: Europe would like to improve the situation of data integration in Europe by highlighting the importance of statistical and geospatial information, recognising the barriers to their integration with a goal to implementing the recommendations presented here.

Therefore, UN-GGIM: Europe asked the Member States to provide comments and feedback by 30 April 2020, together with information about regional actions or plans which address any of the recommendations outlined in this Policy Outreach Paper.

The purpose and the aim of the document is to assemble the received answers and in a whole to evaluate the Policy Outreach Paper that was (finally) published within the Conference of the European Forum for Geography and Statistics (EFGS) on 10-11 October 2019 in Manchester.



1.1 Content of the Policy Outreach Paper

The Policy Outreach Paper is a brochure comprising 12 pages.

UN-GGIM: Europe has therefore identified some of the most important issues blocking or slowing down this innovation process and suggests the following measures to be taken by governments to improve the situation at national and international level:

Communication is the key for improvement

Communication with all the stakeholders involving all sectors of governments at all levels is needed to promote the benefits of data integration. This should also result in gaining a better understanding on both technical and non-technical issues.

Issues

- Lack of understanding on technical and non-technical issues between stakeholders
- Lack of structured and inter-institution communication
- Lack of regular meetings between data providers and data users to exchange experiences
- No sufficient promotion on the benefits of data integration to external stakeholders, e.g. citizens and businesses

Recommendations

- Make communication between all levels and sectors of government a priority by establishing national, and where appropriate sub-national stakeholder fora
- Engage in a constructive dialogue with the European Union to advance the use of national data for preparing EU policy decisions
- Organise communication with regular meetings and stakeholder conferences such as INSPIRE and the European Forum for Geography and Statistics (EFGS).
- Set up regular users and producers meetings to obtain conclusions on relevant topics for discussion at the decision making level
- Communicate and explain benefits and publish them regularly using various modern communication channels

FIGURE 1: ISSUE 1: COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Strengthening institutions and governance is crucial

Closer cooperation, knowledge exchange and capacity building, resulting in concrete actions and projects, are important drivers for combining data. Unfortunately, a relatively low level of interaction between geospatial and statistical organisations in Europe has been identified*.

Issues

- Non-existent or moderate cooperation between data producing authorities
- Lack of coordination and common approaches on methods for important data integration tasks
- Absence of legislation, frameworks and policies for cooperation between data providers and for data integration
- Lack of binding agreements and support from the government for data integration
- Lack of economic funding and political incentives to transform business models and data provision supporting data integration

Recommendations

- Formalise cooperation between Statistical Offices and Geospatial Authorities starting from the business case 'Reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals'
- Provide relevant institutions with a clear mandate to support data integration
- Ensure strong governance with legislation supporting data integration that is applicable to all data producers
- Sign a national data integration charter applying to all stakeholders
- Strengthen capacity for data integration at local, national and international level including geospatial data and technologies
- Enhance national data policies and e-Government strategies with data integration aspects and align with relevant EU and UN initiatives such as INSPIRE, the UN Statistical Geospatial Framework and the UN Integrated Geospatial Information Framework
- Adopt a national action plan for data integration applicable to all stakeholders with concrete measures and clear success indicators
- Support the participation of Statistical Offices and Geospatial authorities in European projects aiming to further data integration
- Connect geospatial information management to national development agendas and involve, by default, geospatial authorities in national steering and implementation groups for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals
- Support the creation of a European geospatial agency responsible for pan-European data as a central EU body, similar to what Eurostat is for Statistics

* Reference to the survey

FIGURE 2: ISSUE 2: STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE IS CRUCIAL



Standards, quality and accessibility are fundamental prerequisites

As not only the amount but also the complexity of data increases exponentially, a common understanding of data production, its publication and its distribution infrastructure is needed. Even if data is available and of good quality, the combination of data might still face challenges due to a lack of interoperability. Moreover, in some countries legislation may restrict the usage of the data and therefore may prevent data integration.

Issues

- Lack of ready-to-use data and insufficient data quality
- Missing interoperability by producing geospatial and statistical data that are incompatible
- Data is not compatible on country borders
- National laws restrict the sharing of data

Recommendations

- Improve the quality and availability of geospatial data by evaluating, implementing and supporting international, European and nationally agreed standards
- Accelerate the 'digital transformation' through the enabling mechanism of the 2030 Agenda. Innovative technologies such as the cloud, big geospatial data analytics, machine learning, geospatial knowledge services and integrated information systems can contribute substantially to this acceleration
- Adopt and implement the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, its European version (GEOSTAT GSGF Europe) and other relevant statistical and geospatial standards and methodologies.
- Agree on the content and common requirements for core geospatial data (e.g. metadata, scales, attributes, accuracy) based on the INSPIRE legislation and statistical standards
- Publish core geospatial data as national reference data
- Require all data providers to provide their data and services respecting open standards
- Make international efforts to harmonise the data for cross-border use cases
- Reduce legal restrictions and barriers to free users and producers of data, as much as possible, from the restrictions of respecting privacy and intellectual property rights

FIGURE 3: ISSUE 3: STANDARDS, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY ARE FUNDAMENTAL PREREQUISITES



1.2 Evaluation

In February 2020 63 NMCA organisations, 43 NSI organisations and 9 Observer organisations all across Europe have been contacted to give feedback. After the deadline of 30 April 2020, we received 15 answers from Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, The Netherlands, Romania, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and United Kingdom. Most of the countries sent a quite general response about the status of the data integration within their own country. Most of them indicated that they have already started with the integration process.

Half of them sent a consolidated answer of NMCA and NSI. Figure 4 shows the countries sending feedback to the Policy Outreach Paper.

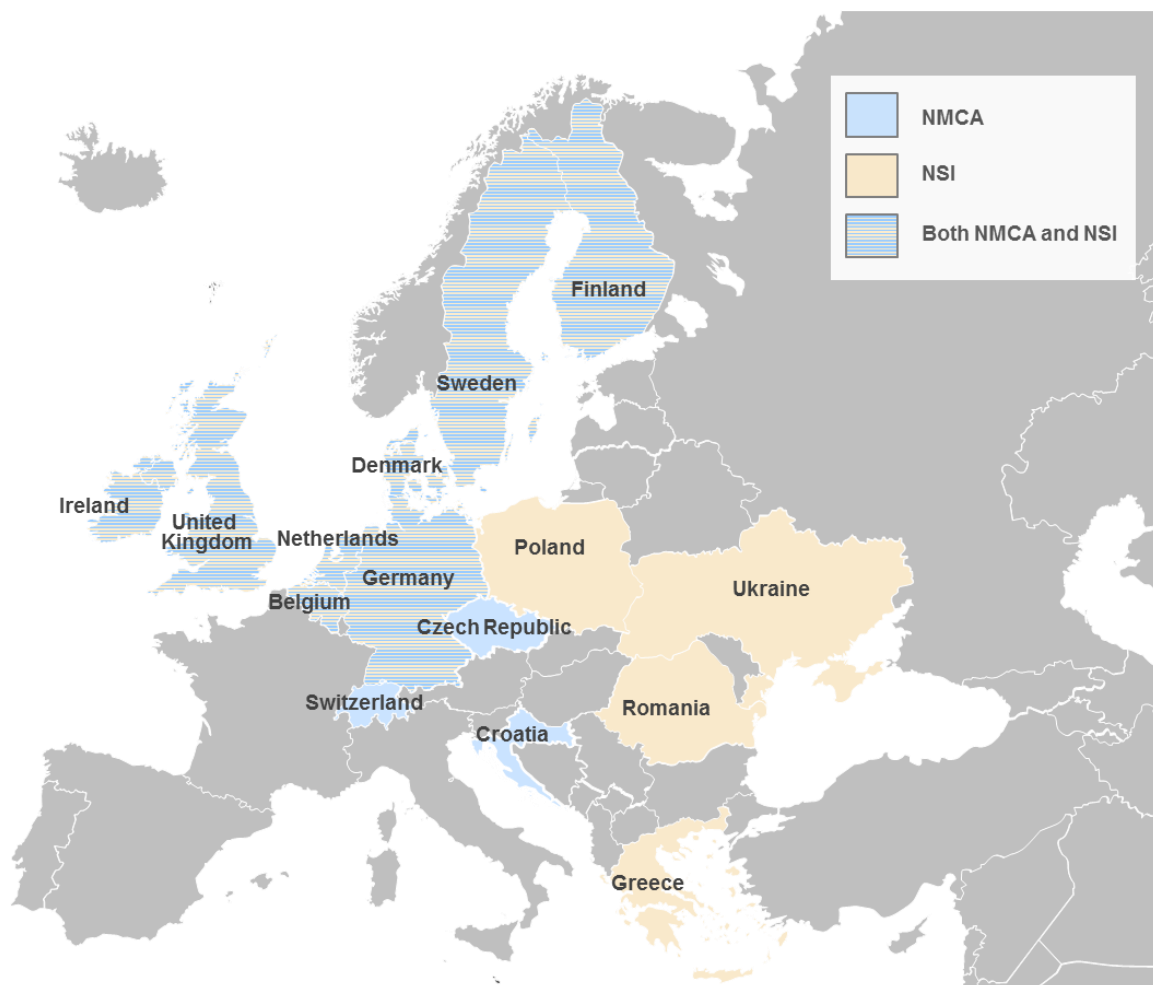


FIGURE 4: COUNTRIES SENDING FEEDBACK TO THE POLICY OUTREACH PAPER

As Figure 5 shows, around 50 % of the answers have been sent coordinated between the National Statistic Institutes and National Mapping Agencies. Around 20% of the answers came from NMCAs, around 30% from NSIs only.

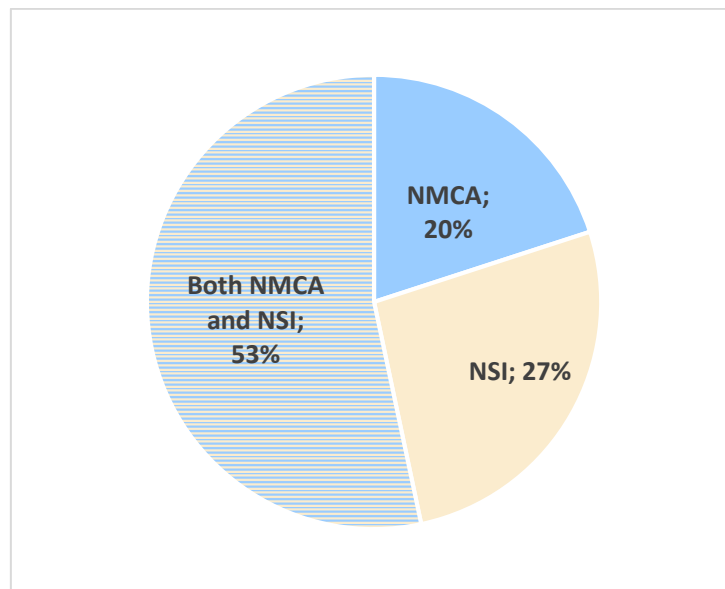


FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF THE FEEDBACK

In general, we received positive feedback, the answers indicated that it is a useful document with valuable input for the current work and the recommendations are of vital importance. Some countries (e.g. Greece, Romania, and Ukraine) have more or less started with a framework for integration between the Geospatial Agencies and the National Statistical Offices or are preparing a MoU and emphasize the importance of this document for their next steps. They will use the Policy Outreach Paper as a rationale for the next steps forward.

In contrast to that, many countries have already started with the integration process and can confirm that they have – apart from minor issues – already implemented most of the recommendations. For some countries like Denmark and Sweden expressed that the recommendations are high-level and address the decision-maker, but for a practical implementation do not go far enough. The 3 Issues as headlines for the recommendations might not be sufficient for practical implementation. If a revision of the Policy Outreach Paper will be tackled, Sweden suggests to add use cases for cross-border applications.

Belgium, Germany, Ireland and The Netherlands used the recommendations in the Policy Outreach Paper and tried to match their national situation to each recommendation. Belgium even mapped all issues blocking or slowing down integration of the geospatial and statistical data to their national situation.

1.3 Difficulties/Constraints in the evaluation

After sending out the request for evaluation the Policy Outreach Paper it became evident that a template for filling out the feedback would have been helpful for BKG to match all comments together and to be able to compare all answers received in a better way.



2 REPLIES FROM THE COUNTRIES

Below we will shortly describe the main aspect of each country's response.

2.1 Belgium

Belgium sent a consolidated answer from NMCA and NSI. It used the recommendations in the Policy Outreach Paper and tried to match its national situation to each recommendation. But most of the recommendations are already in place. Additionally to the evaluation of the recommendations, Belgium even mapped all issues blocking or slowing down integration of the integration of geospatial and statistical data.

The collaboration between the NGI and Statistics Belgium has been formalized through a framework contract in 2008 aiming at "improving the collaboration between Statistics Belgium, the Land Registry Administration and the NGI in the frame of the collection, management and distribution of geographical, patrimonial, statistical, socioeconomic, juridical and fiscal data" and "to provide a coherent development of this information".

Between the institutions at different governmental level a lot of communication is already ongoing. The discussion forum of the Belgium INSPIRE coordination Committee – actually only for communication about specific INSPIRE- related topics – could be revived in the future in bringing the discussion on integration of statistical and geospatial data to the table.

2.2 Croatia

Croatia's answer came from the State Geodetic Administration (SGA) of Croatia, i.e. NMCA. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS) has been working through the European Union grants for years to integrate statistical and geospatial data. This is being done in collaboration with SGA, which provides CBS with digital geospatial data. The CBS considers the communication with SGA so far satisfactory and fully satisfies the business processes of the CBS.

Given its business processes, so far there has been no need for SGA to retrieve CBS data (communication is one-way).

In its work, the CBS applies the recommendations of the UN Statistical Geospatial Framework, which resulted with the use case (<https://geostat.dzs.hr/>) of linking accommodation capacities and tourist activity data (no. of nights, capacities, connection with meteorological data) with geospatial data (within 1km² grid). In addition, CBS implements the INSPIRE directive in its processes.

2.3 Czech Republic

The State Administration of Land Surveying and Cadastre in the Czech Republic (ČÚZK) considers the document very valuable for European Nations. The Paper summarizes many recommendations that are suitable for implementation into national geospatial information strategies. ČÚZK has no comments to the presented document. Regarding the situation in the Czech Republic, ČÚZK very closely cooperates with the Czech Statistical Office. ČÚZK has organized many common professional meetings with the Czech Statistical Office during the years. Czech Statistical Office uses basic geospatial information from our information systems. Czech Statistical office maintains Register of Statistical Units and Register of census districts and buildings from the Czech territory. They provide data of Statistical Units and Basic Settlement Units as is stated in INSPIRE Directive.

2.4 Denmark

Denmark provided a consolidated answer from NMCA and NSI in which they welcome and agree to the main conclusion in the Policy Outreach Paper. From their perspective, the integration of geospatial



and statistical data is a very good way to provide more relevant and detailed information for many important societal information needs.

Furthermore, they agree on the observation that obstacles for data integration remain, many of which are non-technical and cannot be solved by one agency by itself. A coordinated approach across the administration/domains is obviously a sound way to optimise and remove obstacles.

Denmark has national legislation in place to support the statistical and geospatial data production. While these do not specifically address the integration of geospatial and statistical information, they do provide for data integration in general.

2.5 Finland

From Finland a joint response from National Land Survey of Finland and Statistics Finland was provided.

The presented ongoing and planned actions for promoting integration of statistical and geospatial data in Finland are very well aligned with the proposed technical, institutional, governance and communication-related recommendations of the Policy Outreach Paper.

2.6 Germany

Germany sent a consolidated answer from NMCA (federal level and Laender) and NSI. Germany used the recommendations in the Policy Outreach Paper and is currently matching its national situation to each recommendation. Most of the recommendations are already considered, some are in place, yet others are in the process.

But being a federal state, legal restrictions and barriers are still too high for geospatial data particularly that from the German Laender as Open Data has not yet been implemented in all the Laender. However, there is a trend in Germany towards Open Data and reducing legal restrictions and barriers as much as possible, respecting privacy and intellectual property rights which are highly protected in Germany.

2.7 Greece

The feedback from Greece was sent by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT). Although a national implementation framework for the integration of statistical and geospatial information is missing, a Memorandum of Understanding between ELSTAT and the Hellenic Military Geographical Service is under preparation to confirm and strengthen the already unofficial cooperation between the two agencies in the fields of geospatial data synchronization and updating.

2.8 Ireland

Ireland sent a consolidated answer on behalf of the Irish National Mapping Agency (Ordnance Survey Ireland – OSI) and the National Statistical Agency (Central Statistics Office – CSO). Both organisations appreciate the document and support many of the principles outlined in the call for political action in Europe on this matter.

Since 2016, OSI and CSO have signed an annual MOU to strengthen their collaboration.

For the feedback on the Policy Outreach Paper they described the recommendations one-by-one from their national point-of-view.

Most of the recommendations are already in place.



2.9 The Netherlands

The Netherlands provided a consolidated feedback by the National Mapping Agency and the Statistical Office. Like Belgium and Germany they tried to provide comments on each recommendation issue.

NMCA (Kadaster) and NSO (CBS) have signed a formal strategic alliance. This means there are strategic meetings between head of departments to discuss topics related to Geospatial and statistical data. There is a list with action items and projects that are operated and managed together. These action holders, stakeholders have regular meetings to discuss results and progress.

Legislation regarding Open data is strong. Both departments (Kadaster and CBS) are publishing their data as Open and through the national SDI so integration is supported through that. Combinations of Geo spatial data and Statistical data are published as open data on the Dutch NSDI and website, news about data integration is published also on Geo forums.

Additionally both also are supporting the independent legislation and standards organisation of The Netherlands, called Geonovum to make sure that standards are used by all departments and integration is supported.

2.10 Poland

From Poland the Statistics Institute sent comments on the Policy Outreach Paper. Being part of the UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group Data integration Poland has been deeply involved in the creation of the Policy Outreach Paper. Therefore, from a Polish perspective the growing need to integrate statistical data with geospatial information and to strengthen cooperation between NSI and NMCA is obvious. Besides the cooperation concerns the improvement of monitoring of public services (SMUP project), and also conducting strategic operations in crisis situations - e.g. cooperation within a governmental group regarding monitoring of COVID 19.

2.11 Romania

The National Institute of Statistics Romania sent the feedback and appreciated the work done by UN-GGIM and the Policy Outreach Paper. In the future more work towards a better integration of statistical and geospatial data is planned.

2.12 Sweden

The response from Sweden has been prepared by Lantmäteriet (the Swedish mapping, cadastral and land registration authority) and Statistical Sweden. Sweden is quite ahead in the integration of statistical and geospatial data, therefore many of the proposed recommendations have already been implemented in the Swedish national geospatial data strategy (geodatastrategi), yet others are to be implemented in the revised strategy and associated action plans in the years to come. From their perspective, the proposed recommendations form an appropriate response to improve and enhance the situation in many countries.

For the future revision of the paper, the use cases could preferably be selected to highlight the potential of cross border applications. A stronger focus on cross-border applications would give the paper an additional dimension.

2.13 Switzerland

The answer from Switzerland came from the Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo), emphasizing the close collaboration between swisstopo and the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). The recommendations are supported and the Policy Outreach Paper has been appreciated.



2.14 Ukraine

The feedback from the Statistical Institute of the Ukraine (SSSU) is positive. Due to the fact that the cooperation between the SSSU and the StateGeoCadastre today is rather formal than practical, the recommendations given in the document will have an important significance for further improvement of the processes to integrate geospatial and statistical information in Ukraine.

2.15 United Kingdom

United Kingdom provided a consolidated feedback by Ordnance Survey (OS) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the Policy Outreach Paper. Being involved in the work of the UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group on Data Integration, UK supports its focus on the value in integrating statistical and geospatial data for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2018 OS and the ONS signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enable the two organisations to work closer together in the national interest.

In 2019 OS and ONS jointly organised the European Forum for Geography and Statistics (EFGS) in Manchester bringing together geospatial and statistical experts to exchange ideas to further enhance the development of spatial statistics for Europe.

UK is already involved in work that aligns well with many of the UN-GGIM recommendations and will make use of them in developing our future action plans.



3 CONCLUSION

All organizations which responded welcomed and agreed to the main conclusion in the Policy Outreach Paper.

From the perspective of most organisations, the integration of geospatial and statistical data is a very good way to provide more relevant and detailed information for many important societal information needs. Even the value in integrating statistical and geospatial data for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is widely acknowledged.

Some organizations are involved in the work of the UN-GGIM: Europe Working Group on Data Integration, i.e. have been aware of the process to develop the Policy Outreach Paper and to agree upon recommendations aiming at the policy makers and the decision-making level. Thus, the recommendations are “high-level”, do not go far enough for a practical implementation and would have to be further elaborated. It is very positive that the Policy Outreach Paper has been the catalyst in some Member States that the geospatial and statistical institutes have started to jointly match their national situation to each recommendation.

If a revision of the Policy Outreach Paper will be tackled, these more detailed elaborations national situation should be reflected and shared amongst UN-GGIM: Europe and use cases for cross-border applications should be included.



I ANNEX I: CONTRIBUTORS TO THE EVALUATION

Country	Institution	Name
Belgium	NMCA NSI	National Geographic Institute Statistics Belgium
Croatia	NMCA	State Geodetic Administration of Croatia
Czech Republic	NMCA	Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre
Germany	NMCA NSI	Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy/ Working Committee of the Surveying Authorities of the Laender of the Federal Republic of Germany Federal Statistical Office (Destatis)
Denmark	NMCA NSI	Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency Statistics Denmark
Finland	NMCA NSI	National Land Survey of Finland Statistics Finland
Greece	NSI	Hellenic Statistical Authority
Ireland	NMCA NSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland Central Statistics Office
The Netherlands	NMCA NSI	Kadaster Netherlands Statistics Netherlands
Poland	NSI	Statistics Poland
Romania	NSI	National Institute of Statistics Romania
Sweden	NMCA NSI	Lantmäteriet Statistics Sweden
Switzerland	NMCA	Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo)
Ukraine	NSI	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
United Kingdom	NMCA NSI	Ordnance Survey Office for National Statistics