# Evaluation of the Webinar
## #3: Geospatial information for territorial policy support in the context of SDGs

25 October 2023

Synopsis

**UN-GGIM: Europe | Line of Work on SDGs**

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# FIGURES

# INTRODUCTION

During previous years, the UN-GGIM Europe Working Group on Data Integration has analysed current and future trends in geospatial data integration, including a special focus on the role of geospatial information in assessing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). With the new work plan, the Working Group on Data Integration has been assigned to coordinate the work for geospatial data integration within two 'Lines of Work': one on the needs and challenges to achieve the (1) 'Sustainable Development Goals' and one on (2) 'Data integration (DI)'. The recommendations address technical and methodological bottlenecks, but also discuss challenges related to organisational setup, use of resources, capacity building and policy relevance.

The current webinar series provides follow-up on these main recommendations. Findings and challenges related to data production, integration, analytical and policy-related use are considered.

This webinar covers a series of examples of international analytical work based on geospatial data and targeted towards policy support that presents a close relationship with one or more sustainable development goals.

# PARTICIPATING PARTIES

## 1. UN-GGIM: Europe Line of Work on Sustainable Development Goals

The Line of Work on 'SDG' is responsible for the contribution of UN-GGIM: Europe to showcase and promote the added value of integrated geospatial data in calculating SDG indicators and assessing progress towards the sustainable development goals. The work plan includes the compilation of use cases, operational examples and recommendations on SDG indicator calculation, the assessment of the use of relevant geospatial open data, the provision of national show cases related to SDG indicators presentation, the organisation of a series of webinars and the support of capacity building initiatives related to SDG indicator calculation.

**Presentation title:**
UN-GGIM: Europe Line of Work Sustainable Development Goals: Introduction to the session

## 2. European Commission – Joint Research Centre (JRC) – Territorial Development Unit

As a department of the European Commission, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) provides independent, evidence-based knowledge and science, in support of EU policies and aiming towards a positive impact on society. By offering scientific expertise and competences in a wide range of disciplines, the JRC works in close cooperation with other Commission departments, EU institutions and agencies.

The territorial development unit provides multidisciplinary research such as modelling, data science and econometrics, providing evidence for a broad range of EU policies with a territorial dimension. Building coherent and detailed data frameworks for monitoring policies across territories and economic sectors is part of this portfolio. Fine-scale geospatial data and analysis are an essential part

of those frameworks, supporting high-resolution monitoring and assessment of various sustainable development goals and indicators.

**Presentation title:**
Fine-scale geospatial data supporting the assessment of SDGs: practical examples

## 3. OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities – Regional Analysis and Statistics Unit

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that helps to shape policies fostering prosperity, equality, opportunities and well-being for all. Within the OECD, the Centre for Entrepreneurship (CFE), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Regions and Cities provides policy support at national and sub-national level on topics such as innovation, social progress, and digital and green transitions. The CFE relies on a diverse team of experts, including policy analysts, economists and statisticians. The regional analysis and statistics unit specifically uses a wide range of geospatial data and related analysis to underpin the policy support role of the centre.

**Presentation title:**
Leveraging geospatial data for territorial policies: Measuring digital divides and climate change impacts across cities in the world

## 4. European Commission – Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy

The European Commission's department for regional and urban policy is responsible for the conception and implementation of EU cohesion policy, providing support to all EU regions and territories, targeting the reduction of disparities between regions and providing investments that foster growth and create jobs. Cohesion policy operates towards five major policy objectives: a more competitive and smarter Europe, a greener Europe transitioning towards a net-zero carbon economy, a more connected Europe, a more social and inclusive Europe, and a Europe closer to citizens, fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories. To assess the link between the investments, the territorial specificities and particular sustainable development goals, enhanced geospatial data on the location of the investments are being collected.

**Presentation title:**
Geo-localising EU investment projects linked with the SDGs

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# OBJECTIVES

The objective of the webinar was to provide an overview of international analytical work based on geospatial data and targeted towards SDG related policy support. Each of the presentations explicitly illustrated the link between the compilation and use of geospatial data and particular sustainable development goals.

An additional objective was to identify common approaches within the presented examples, which could inspire future potential areas of cooperation and synergies.

Moreover the webinar aimed at providing insight in a European use case of linked geodata, covering EU cohesion policy investments, their characteristics and their links with sustainable development goals.

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# OUTCOME OF THE DISCUSSION

Questions and answers raised by the audience via Slido and moderated by the organisers:

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To the presentation by UN-GGIM: Europe Line of Work SDG:
- Which will be the indicators to be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the working group is Lisbon (scheduled in April 2024)?

  Answer: The meeting will discuss the list of indicators to be taken into account for future work, considering the indicators that have been tackled in previous years, the outcome of this webinar series and the input provided by the global UN-GGIM working group and UNECE. The indicators have to be relevant for UN-GGIM: Europe member states, and the potential role of geospatial information in the indicator production will be taken into count. Earlier webinars pointed out the important potential role of earth observation data and showed the potential need to go beyond the official list of global or pan-European SDG indicators to produce information that is relevant for European countries.

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To the presentation by JRC:
- Thank you for presenting such impressive work based on unconventional sources. Do you assess your outputs against official aggregated statistics?

  Answer: Unconventional data become more important, because often official data are only available at aggregated level, while unconventional data can draw a picture at more local level. A combination of both is possible: unconventional data can be used to disaggregate official statistics while respecting the overall values of the aggregated official data. The opportunities to do this vary between sectors: for instance, in the tourism sector there are a few big private companies that have harmonised data covering the entire European territory, while for instance in the housing sector real estate platforms are specific for each individual country.

- Do you have any interaction with users such as municipalities to gather user requirements (data, visualisation, workflow, etc.)?

  Answer: As we mostly work at pan-European level most of our interactions are with European or international organisations and with national statistical offices. However, certain case studies are carried out in co-operation or dialogue with specific cities and regions in several topics. Pan-European data produced by JRC analysis are made available as open data and are often useful for local or regional actors as well.

- Did you take into account information about schools and social facilities?

  Answer: In the housing machine learning model, we included information regarding the closest distance to schools and health services for each individual house considered in the regression. Other services, like public transportation, can also be considered with the same approach or for example by counting the amount in the surroundings.

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- How do private companies fit in the landscape of unconventional data? What is their role? What is their interest?

  Answer: Some private companies start to see the interest of collaboration in providing their data for analysis. It helps to improve their reputation and reduce web-scraping. This can result in data transfer protocols between private companies and official organisations like Eurostat.

To the presentation by OECD:
- Thank you for highlighting the importance of comparable spatial units. Is the way the OECD uses spatial units aligned with the TERCET Regulation used by Eurostat?

  Answer: The OECD keeps track of the TERCET implementation of typologies. For instance, when there is an update of the boundaries of the functional urban areas (FUAs) the OECD analysis is aligned with such update.

- How frequently do you update the regional boundaries you use in your work? Are you using authoritative sources for boundaries? What is the source?

  Answer: OECD relies upon the authorities of the member countries and follows-up on the modifications of regional boundaries that are applied in the countries and for which they provide updated boundaries.

- How can earth observation data play a role? What is your opinion in terms of its objectivity, repeatability, coverage, continuity and affordability?

  Answer: First of all, we often need unconventional data to fill data gaps, such as the use of earth observation to produce SDG indicators. The analysis work is so extensive that official data alone cannot cover the whole set of data requirements. Using unconventional data also comes with transparent analysis workflows, which are shared as open code in order to help building capacity and sharing experience. Data partnerships with private companies, already mentioned by the JRC, are an interesting opportunity.

To the presentation by DG Regional and Urban Policy:
- What are your plans to digest the needs, challenges and requirements from municipalities with all projects that are shown in the Kohesio database?

  Answer: The Kohesio data are of particular interest for municipalities, allowing them to easily retrieve information about cohesion policy projects elsewhere that are similar or complementary to projects happening in their own place, which can lead to information exchange and co-operation.

- Do you already have insights on how Kohesio is used by researchers, municipalities, etc.?

  Answer: The first objective of Kohesio is to raise awareness about cohesion policy interventions and to increase the transparency of information. We have recently started to explore the potential of the database for evaluation and research purposes. JRC is already

using the data to assess investments at local level in the area of research and innovation. Our main stakeholders are the managing authorities, i.e. the regional or national bodies responsible for the cohesion policy programmes. We help them to access the information on projects that are implemented in other regions. The same applies to municipalities.

# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The presentations showcased interesting analytical work using geospatial data and contributing to a better monitoring of SDGs in the context of policies with territorial relevance. The importance of using harmonized territorial concepts and classifications was a common element in the presentations.

Presentations by JRC and OECD stressed the importance and relevance of reliable high-resolution core geodata on themes as population distribution and land cover or land use. Both presentations also illustrated the role of non-conventional data in developing innovative ways to monitor SDGs and their indicators and highlighted the complementarity of non-conventional and authoritative data.

Detailed georeferenced data on policy interventions like the ones by EU cohesion policy open new opportunities to assess the role of those investments in relationship to various sustainable development goals. The granularity of the (linked) data on cohesion policy interventions offers possibilities for unprecedented territorial policy analysis.

Building further on the experiences presented in the webinar's contributions will require ongoing progress in the provision and availability of adequate authoritative geodata, often to be combined with innovative alternative sources of information.

Without being exhaustive, some common thematic areas that deserve follow-up work are:

- Analysis of building stock and housing characteristics
- Aspects of (urban) quality of life including environmental considerations
- Climate change challenges
- Digital transformation

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# ANNEX I

Results of the Slido evaluation poll

Out of 97 people who attended the webinar, 16 filled in the Slido evaluation poll, i.e. a 16.5% response rate.

The main messages harvested by means of the poll are:

- Half of the respondents is part of a national statistical institute or a national mapping and cadastral agency.
- All respondents stated the webinar met their expectations, resulting in overall very positive replies on the length of the webinar, the interest and level of detail of the presentations and the relevance of the content for their work.
- Some respondents stated their wish to have more time for discussion.
- Suggested topics for future webinars included:
    - All topics related to spatial information systems
    - What are the fundamental geospatial layers the various national statistical institutes are responsible for, and how do they create those?
    - What is the role of settlements layers within the context of high-value geospatial information?

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# ANNEX II

Weblinks to consider:

JRC Territorial Development Unit:

https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/territorial_en

OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities:

https://www.oecd.org/cfe/

Measuring the distance to the SDGs in regions and cities:

https://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org/

European Commission Cohesion Policy Open Data:

https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/

European Commission Kohesio database:

https://kohesio.ec.europa.eu/en/

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