

Infrastructure for spatial information in the European Community (INSPIRE)

2004/0175(COD) - 23/07/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to create a legal framework for the establishment and operation of an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE), for the purpose of formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating Community policies at all levels and providing public information.

PROPOSED ACT : Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT : with a view to improving mapping in Europe, the European Commission is launching the INSPIRE (INfrastructure for SPatial InfoRmation in the European Union) initiative. A database with consistent geographical information, INSPIRE will support environmental protection policies as well as infrastructure development, agriculture and maritime navigation. This proposal calls on EU Member States to put geographical information on a publicly accessible electronic network and to progressively harmonise it. At present, information on rivers, road networks and other geographical features is collected in an uncoordinated way and based on different methods and specifications, resulting in data gaps and lack of comparability.

The proposal states that community policy on the environment must aim at a high level of protection taking into account the diversity of situations in the various regions of the Community. In preparing its policy on the environment, the Community is required to take account of available scientific and technical data, environmental conditions in the various regions of the Community, the economic and social development of the Community as a whole and the balanced development of its regions. Many information themes related to spatial features are required for a broad range of environmental policies.

A key objective of INSPIRE is to make more and better spatial data available for Community policy-making and implementation of Community policies in the Member States at all levels.

INSPIRE focuses on environmental policy but is open for use by and future extension to other sectors such as agriculture, transport and energy.

The proposal focuses specifically on information needed in order to monitor and improve the state of the environment, including air, water, soil and the natural landscape.

INSPIRE will not set off an extensive programme of new spatial data collection in the Member States. Instead, it is designed to optimise the scope for exploiting the data that are already available, by requiring the documentation of existing spatial data, the implementation of services aimed at rendering the spatial data more accessible and interoperable and by dealing with obstacles to the use of the spatial data.

INSPIRE will pave the road for a progressive harmonisation of spatial data in the Member States.

The main beneficiaries of this proposal will therefore be those involved in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies ? at the European, national and local level. These are public authorities, legislators and citizens and their organisations. However, other user groups are also expected to benefit, including the private sector, universities, researchers and the media. The proposal will support the formulation and implementation of a wide range of environmental and other policies.