



The EU INSPIRE Directive:

Pros and cons from a water services perspective

1. Introduction

INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe) is a EU Directive that entered into force on 15 May 2007. Its aim is to make environmentally relevant spatial data of the EU member states available through national spatial data infrastructures and on the basis of harmonized rules and data structures. Theme 6 of Annex III of this Directive concerns Utility and governmental services and water supply. Member States shall ensure that all new spatial data sets are available in conformity with the implementing rules. The INSPIRE Directive defines the requirements spatial data infrastructures (SDI) in the EU member states and contains general information that is specified in more concrete terms by individual implementation provisions. Annexes 1-III of the Directive set out 34 environmental themes that need to be considered in the process of setting up a European SDI. Article 6 of Annex III expressly mentions supply infrastructures that, among other things, include the distribution networks of energy and water utility companies, while Articles 8 and 20 address the corresponding production plants.

2. Spatial data

In the context of the implementation of the INSPIRE Directive, the water utilities are approached by representatives of the Member States or competent authorities with the intention to coordinate the provision of INSPIRE-relevant spatial data, if required.

The aim pursued by making these data electronically available is to improve the access to and exchange of digital geographic information from public administration authorities and to facilitate better environmental and information policy across the EU.

INSPIRE helps to define threats to resources and supports protection and implement water policy:

- ~ Soil, geology, land use and land cover
- ~ Environmental monitoring facilities
- ~ Production and industrial facilities and agricultural facilities



- ~ Area management, restriction zones and reporting units, drinking water protection areas
- ~ Energy resources and mineral resources (shale gas).

3. INSPIRE and water utilities

EU-legislation must ensure protection of drinking water resources and safe and healthy drinking water for European citizens. INSPIRE must provide relevant data about the soil, and groundwater- and surface water quality. INSPIRE must be well integrated with other EU-legislation, especially the Water Framework Directive and the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, where extensive reporting through a Structured Implementation and Information Framework (SIIF) is now established. A SIIF is designed to improve implementation of environment legislation through better online information on how laws work in practice. They help national authorities, the Commission, the public and stakeholders to assess implementation based on accurate up to date data, to design and implement measures to fill compliance gaps and to provide accurate up to date info to the public on water services. Water supply is a vital sector: restrictions must be set regarding free access to information. No information on vital production facilities for water supply can be shared regarding the public. EurEau has strong concerns on the obligations imposed by the INSPIRE Directive to make information on underground utility networks publicly available into detail, with great accuracy and without any limitations. All European utility service providers are presently making large efforts in order to reduce risks of terrorist or harmful attacks. The industry is investing substantially for this. In many instances utility suppliers have been ranked as vital sectors for society. In the Member States we encounter different local authorities and different local situations.

4. Restricted access

As a matter of rule, the downloading of data shall be subject to terms of use and license agreements. Arrangements must be such that all persons with whom information on underground networks is being shared shall be specifically identified and bound by the terms of use and the license agreement. The utility must be free to decide over what information will be shared and into what level of detail and accuracy taking into account the legislation of INSPIRE. The goal is to protect water resources against adverse impacts and to exclude potential hazards and minimise contamination.





About EurEau

EurEau is the voice of Europe's water sector. We represent drinking and waste water service providers from 28 countries in Europe, from both the private and the public sectors.

Our members are the national associations of water services in Europe. At EurEau, we bring national water professionals together to agree European water industry positions regarding the management of water quality, resource efficiency and access to water for Europe's citizens and businesses. The EurEau secretariat is based in Brussels, from where we coordinate the work of around 150 experts from member organisations and utilities and advocate common positions with EU decision makers.

Our members are fully committed to the continuous supply of clean water and its safe return into the water cycle. As gatekeepers of Europe's water, we have a role in raising awareness of threats to the water environment. With a direct employment of around 500,000 people, the European water sector makes a significant contribution to the European economy.



EurEau

Rue du Luxembourg 47-51,
B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 706 40 80
Fax: +32 (0) 2 706 40 81
secretariat@eureau.org
www.eureau.org