

Members of EuroGeographics meet for 8th General Assembly

Demand for location information is creating a spatially-enabled society say Europe's mapping experts

National mapping and land registration specialists from across Europe are today (Sunday 5 October 2008) beginning a four-day conference to respond to the increasing demand for official geographical information (GI).

The 8th General Assembly of EuroGeographics, the membership association and official voice for the European Mapping and Cadastral Agencies, provides a top-level forum for considering how best to meet the expectations of a spatially-enabled society which routinely uses GI for policy decisions, business and leisure. The 2008 event, in the historic city of Sibiu, is hosted by the National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration of Romania.

“Geographical information doesn't just tell you where something is,” says EuroGeographics' President Magnus Gudmundsson. “Information about location, ownership, value and use, can be linked to other data to analyse statistics and forecast trends. In today's climate of economic uncertainty and constant social and technological change, the definitive location framework being developed by our members is crucial to building a well governed, competitive and sustainable European economy which benefits all citizens.”

“Our members' data and expertise is already at the heart of European policy and decision-making and being used by organisations such as Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Commission (EC). It is also helping to shape directives including the EC's Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) and to deliver projects like the Reference Information Specifications for Europe (RISE), which we successfully completed at the end of 2007.”

EuroGeographics' key achievements in the last year include:

- **Greater engagement with key stakeholders.**

This has resulted in more requests to contribute to EC initiatives and has also ensured the interests and views of EuroGeographics' members are represented in both the EC and European Parliament. EuroGeographics has also developed a closer working relationship with the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security

(GMES) Bureau and held a joint briefing with the European Space Agency for MEPs on the role of geospatial information in crisis response.

EuroGeographics plans to build upon this activity in 2009 with the opening of an office in Brussels and will also help to co-ordinate the 3rd INSPIRE Conference and GSDI11 combined event taking place in Rotterdam in June 2009.

- **Ongoing development of EuroGeoNames.**

This €1.9 million project – part-funded under the EC's e-Contentplus programme – will deliver an authoritative European multilingual geographical names infrastructure. It will help overcome the difficulties caused by language which can result in places being known by several different names. Work is progressing well and the project is on target to meet its 2009 deadline.

- **Award of a €3.1 million grant for EuroGeographics' e-Contentplus proposal – Underpinning the European Spatial Data Infrastructure with a Best Practice Network.**

The project, which started in September 2008, will overcome the technical and business obstacles which currently make it difficult to find, assess and join-up data across national borders and to reliably and cost-effectively download, use and re-use public sector GI.

- **Delivering new and improved products using official, definitive, Pan-European data.**

EuroGeographics' new national elevation data product, EuroDEM was launched in April 2008 and provides a digital representation of the ground surface topography of 38 countries, making it ideal for environmental change research, hydrologic modelling, resource monitoring, mapping and visualisation. The association has also updated EuroBoundaryMap, its seamless reference dataset of Europe's administrative and statistical units; EuroGlobalMap, its 1:1 million scale dataset; and EuroRegionalMap, its 1:250 000 scale topographic data. Throughout 2009 it will continue to work with members to create, maintain and distribute harmonised and consistent datasets.

- **Exchange of best practice.**

EuroGeographics brings together a wide range of specialists and has a number of expert groups focusing on different areas of work such as quality and pricing and licensing. These provide a solid foundation for the exchange of ideas, innovation and information among key players in Europe's geospatial industry. During the past year the Cadastre and Land Registry Group published a joint report with the European Council of Geodetic Surveyors and Geometer Europas examining European requirements for cadastral surveyor activities. In the coming year it will also work with the European Land Registry Association to examine hidden charges as part of EuroGeographics' contribution to the Commission on the White Paper on the Integration of EU Mortgage Credit Markets.

The Quality Expert Group published its guidelines on the use of ISO 19100 – Geographic Information Quality Standards in National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies – and a benchmark study on an accreditation for geographical information production processes developed by Ordnance Survey. Benchmarking and quality management will continue to be a priority for 2009.

Mr Gudmundsson concluded: "As governments, businesses and individual citizens continue to step up their use of GI, national mapping and cadastral agencies must ensure they can respond to the needs of this new spatially-enabled society. This conference provides a unique opportunity for Europe's National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies to discuss how they can shape future services to meet customers' ever-changing expectations."

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Notes to Editors

EuroGeographics is the membership association and official voice for the European National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies. It brings together 50 members from 43 countries, from Portugal to the Ukraine and Iceland to Turkey.

EuroGeographics' members invest around €1.5 billion in the development of geographical information each year and use cutting-edge technology to create, manage, maintain and make available authoritative national databases.

They are developing an infrastructure to integrate their national data – including topographic and land information – to deliver the definitive pan-European location framework for a wide range of uses. By sharing best practice and creating standard data specifications and policies to ensure that their individual geographical databases are compatible and can interact with one another. This will provide Europe with the high quality geographical information it needs to develop policies and legislation for the environment, business competitiveness, public services, legal systems, security and more.

To see our members geographical information in action, please visit our showcase at www.youtube.com/eurogeographics.