



Description narrative

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From	Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG)
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Proposal Title	EuroGeoNames – developing a European geographical names infrastructure and services
Action	<p>Geographic information</p> <p>3.1.1 Promoting the enabling infrastructure - Targeted Projects <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3.2.2 Stimulating geographic content enrichment - A Thematic Network <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Educational content</p> <p>4.2.1 Stimulating educational content enrichment - Content Enrichment Projects <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4.2.2 Stimulating educational content enrichment - Thematic Networks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Cultural and scientific/scholarly content</p> <p>5.1.1 Promoting the enabling infrastructure - Targeted Projects <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5.2.1 Stimulating cultural and scientific/scholarly content enrichment - Content Enrichment Projects <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5.2.2 Stimulating cultural and scientific/scholarly content enrichment - Thematic Networks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Reinforcing cooperation between digital content stakeholders</p> <p>6.1.1 Public Sector Information - A Thematic Network <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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1. Proposal summary

EuroGeoNames (EGN) aims at linking official multi-lingual geographical names data across Europe. It will set up a functioning and interoperable Internet service that will enlarge the availability and accessibility of geographical names as essential part of geographic reference information. It will integrate geographical names data better in national infrastructures as well as in the European Spatial Data Infrastructure and stimulate a widespread use of the information.

By developing specifications, guidelines, data and business models, services and applications, EuroGeoNames will lay the ground for a pan-European geographical names data infrastructure built on identified user & business requirements. The framework will consist of specifications or guidelines for data content and data exchange. The geographical names information will be built and maintained taking full advantage of distributedly accessible national geographical names data as well as existing standards.

EGN will make national data available to the market in a harmonised and interoperable way. EGN will provide the geoinformation sector and other communities with a powerful infrastructure and services for georeferencing and information management. It will be a key for opening up public sector geographical names information and for promoting public-private partnership. EuroGeoNames will fulfil the typical country coverage as requested by the eContentplus programme aiming at integrating at least 5 (ideally 10 or more) countries into the EGN infrastructure.

2. Intended consortium (participant names and profile)

The EGN Consortium consists of the German Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG), as project coordinator, together with, the University of Utrecht (UU), the National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies (NMCAs) from Austria and Slovenia as well as with the Eurogeographics Head Office (EGHO). Furthermore, the company GeoTask Germany, the EDINA/Data Library Services for University of Edinburgh, the Geodan Holding in the Netherlands and the ESRI Geoinformatik GmbH, Germany will be part of it.

The EGN Consortium partners represent a wide range of organizations combining the benefits of national/regional distribution with the benefits of public private partnership:

The Consortium partners coming from organisations/institutions of Germany (BKG), the Netherlands (UU) and Austria (BEV) provide long-term experience with regard to the standardisation of geographical names. They are intensively collaborating within the Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD) of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNGEGN). The idea of the project was first discussed and developed in the DGSD.

Slovenia is through its mapping agency in this context representing the Slavic-speaking area and thus also serving as bridge between the orthographic diversity of Europe.

EuroGeographics – the Association of the European national mapping agencies, with Head Office in Paris (France) and members from 40 European countries – is intensively working on the structuring of the reference data with view to a European spatial data infrastructure (ESDI) and the provision of reference data specifications and guidelines for the ESDI set-up.

GeoTask, through its involvement in building national and European geo- and metadata portals, it is acquainted with the problems of implementing business models for trading digital goods, i.e., geo-names, and according web services.

EDINA, based at Edinburgh University Data Library, is a JISC-funded national data centre. It offers the UK tertiary education and research community networked access to a library of data, information and research resources. All EDINA services are available free of charge to members of UK tertiary education institutions for academic use, although institutional subscription and end-user registration are required for most services.

Geodan develops solutions for all problems related to geo-information. Geodan is specialized in IT solutions for both the private and public sectors, which can be used to ensure the adequate management and availability of geo-information. Geodan also provides a wide range of Location Based Services (LBS), for mobile geo-information applications indoors and outdoors.

ESRI is the world leader in GIS (geographic information system) software and system technology.

3. Problem addressed and solution(s) proposed

A European survey on geographical names data recently conducted under the umbrella of EuroGeographics, the association of national mapping and cadastral agencies (NMCAs) in Europe, investigated the availability, quality, accessibility and responsibility for national official geographical names data. As a first result it can be stated that the methods/solutions of keeping and maintaining geographical names data in the European countries are very heterogeneous. In some cases various feature categories of geographical names (e.g. populated places and administrative units) are often not yet based on the same data model and are therefore not yet compatible with each other.

It was also confirmed that the community, and interests, of geographical names are very wide, and often go beyond those traditionally attributed to the geoinformation sector. The responsibilities for specific named feature categories are various, sometimes without having any cooperation. E.g. statistical offices may be responsible for administrative units and so may hydrographic offices for hydrographic features.

Geographical names are much more than just 'names on a map' and are not only used for the search and overview of maps but in other spatially related products as well such as administrative reports, statistical summary tables etc. The main bottleneck regarding names data is still their spelling and display, no matter what the platform, no matter what the program, no matter what the language.

The project EuroGeoNames (EGN) will ultimately be a multi-lingual Internet service linking official geographical names sources across Europe. Generally, names searches will be possible for all official European languages including the officially recognized minority languages. And EGN will also help to stimulate NMCAs to better integrate geographical names data in national SDIs and in the European SDI to be established. Hence, the establishment of the EGN infrastructure and the development of an ISO/OGC-based EGN web service, incorporating the Unicode standard, will be the core task of the project. It will help to publish, find, deliver and use geographical names data through the Internet across Europe, in general based on authoritative national geographical names sources.

EuroGeoNames specifications, architecture and implementation will aim at being consistent with the guidelines for

data harmonisation and specifications to be developed by INSPIRE and the EuroSpec initiative of EuroGeographics.

4. Target users and benefits of proposed solution for target users

Clear and consistent use of geographical names is important for administrative tasks in the EC itself and in the administrations of all European countries. The replies of the NMCAs to the survey, as mentioned in chapter 3, do underpin the presumption, that correctly spelled geographical names are indispensable, amongst others, for postal services, telecommunication, health and risk management, safety and rescue services, transportation and navigation, translation services, tourism, for the purpose of popular education or for the use in the mass media. Additionally, geoportals and Location Based Services (LBS) do not only need multi-lingual geographical names as the first access to the item inquired, but also for enhancing the attractiveness of their services in general. It is worth noting that cartographic map producers, atlas and dictionary publishers and libraries would benefit from the EuroGeoNames service, too.

5. European added value

The EU will benefit from interoperable European geographical names data not only for its own administrative purposes, strategies, policies and projects. Particularly a multi-lingual geographical names data network will contribute to the economic development by improving various applications of commercial enterprises occupied with GIS, the development of geoportals and with the publication and provision of geographical names related products. And, also the different organisations and services of the European Commission, like translation services, Eurostat, EEA, JRC, etc., as well as the European Parliament will be able to improve their applications. Language, cultural and physical barriers in exploitation of the large potential of geographical names would be removed by EuroGeoNames, supported by the NMCAs of EU member countries, thus contributing to a borderless European infrastructure.

The EuroGeoNames project aims at providing an infrastructure & services to commercial companies and other organisations to develop specific applications for their customers and deploy value-added GIS products using the EGN Internet service, incorporating the Unicode standard. Further EGN would guarantee the access to data updated by the national data holders themselves and it would stimulate NMCAs to a better integrating of geographical names data into their national SDIs.

The EGN infrastructure & services would extend the applications of national, regional or thematic databases by bringing them together in a continental context, by that. It would also bring in the knowledge of European geographical names experts for using authoritative geographical names sensitively in the context of political issues.

6. Planned effort (person-months), duration and indicative total budget

160 person-months; 30 months duration; 1.800.000 € total budget (900.000 € EC contribution = 50%)