

2.4. The Situation in Municipalities

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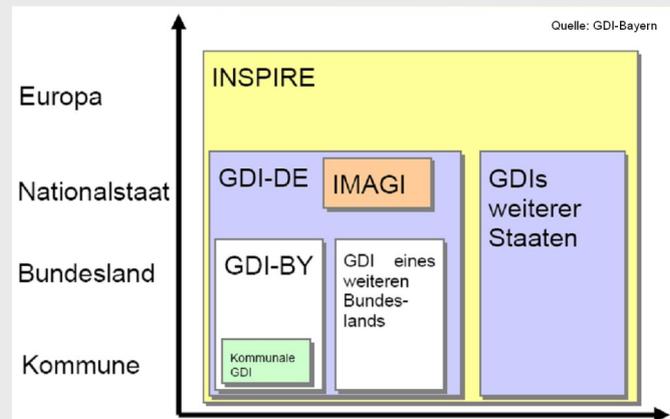
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What obligatory future role will administrative districts play in spatial data infrastructures?

Spatial data infrastructures both at state and federal level rely on the quality and versatility of currently available and future spatial information. Thus, these organizations depend on the involved local authorities. The heterogeneous nature of local authorities makes it not easy for the persons in charge to integrate local information systems in a higher-level spatial data infrastructure.

Intermunicipal GIS-cooperations combine local spatial data on the level of administrative districts and, therefore, are significant building blocks within the current spatial data infrastructures. This results in the question of “What definite role will administrative districts play in a higher-level spatial data infrastructure in the future”? It is yet too early to answer this question explicitly. A look at INSPIRE makes that clear. INSPIRE aims to enact provisions for the creation of the spatial data infrastructure in the European Union, in support of the common environmental policy and other political measures or actions affecting the environment.



This requires Web-based online services for the retrieval, display, and download of spatial data. The implications for local authorities are still a bit vague. There is an uncertainty, to some degree, which INSPIRE-guidelines may apply, e.g., who is actually required to provide data? INSPIRE affects Germany as a whole. Thus, the federal government, its states, and its local authorities are required to provide INSPIRE compliant, i.e., interoperable data. Even the administrative districts can't ignore the specifications of INSPIRE. It has to be kept in mind, however, that the federal government and its states run administrative departments, maintaining spatial data as part of their official duty. Examples are the state mapping agencies. On the other hand, this is not the case with most local authorities, especially among municipalities. Operating a GIS on a local level is, generally, optional. Consequently, standardized and consistent spatial databases are not on the agenda of local authorities.

Last year an inquiry, carried out by the GDI-DE, was intended to give a national overview whether public institutions were concerned with INSPIRE's Annex I. Even though several hundred datasets were reported, only 40 came from municipalities, an extremely poor result, given the more than 400 administrative districts and urban communes in Germany. For example, only two data sets were reported by the 96 Bavarian local authorities. Thus, from a municipalities' perspective there is still a lack of adequate information, resulting in a couple of questions of detail:

1. As a municipality, do I have to maintain a GIS?
 - a. Who obligates me to do so?
 - b. Who is going to pay the expenses of such a system?
 - c. Can I participate in the INSPIRE process without having a GIS?

2. Do I have to provide and maintain data compliant to INSPIRE?
 - a. If yes, what data?
 - b. Who obligates me to do so?
 - c. Who supports me, if necessary?

3. What value-creation / E-Government potentials can INSPIRE offer me?
 - a. ...in a GIS for municipalities?
 - b. ...without such a system?

In order to clarify these and other similar questions, as well as to represent municipal interests in respective bodies, more than ever municipal head organizations are responsible at both national and state level.

Basically it can be assumed that well-established municipal spatial data infrastructures will have it easier with INSPIRE's offers and requirements, than those who live in their ivory tower. Also, the co-operation between spatial data infrastructures on both a municipal- and state-level is an essential factor of success. Ideally, those in charge on a state-level take on the decision-making for municipalities. Only clearly defined collaboration on a district and state-level can ensure a successful implementation of INSPIRE on a municipal level. The "Round Table GIS e.V." can aid its members on a municipal level in answering any open questions. Its long lasting project work relating to the INSPIRE-GMES testbed and this brochure offers an excellent foundation of know-how and experiences.