

IMPLEMENTATION ENTERS A NEW PHASE

INSPIRE's Shift in Emphasis

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The implementation of the provisions of the INSPIRE Directive is now entering a new phase as the emphasis shifts from the Commission to the 27 member states. This article considers what has been achieved so far and the nature of the demands that are likely to be placed on the member states over the next few years. It also considers the member states' readiness to carry out these tasks and discusses some emerging issues from the latest round of State of Play studies.

The history of INSPIRE goes back more than 10 years, to an expert meeting in 2001 when the Commission agreed to prepare proposals for the creation of an Environmental European Spatial Data Infrastructure (E-ESDI). Sometime after this meeting the three commissioners responsible for Economic and Monetary Affairs (including Eurostat), the Environment, and Research (including the Joint Research Centre) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together to develop a legal framework for what then became known as INSPIRE. As a result of these efforts, a draft Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to establish an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) was published by the Commission in July 2004. The proposal went through various stages of discussion and amendment before being finally approved by these bodies in November 2006. It established the basic legal framework for all subsequent activities in the fields of metadata, the harmonisation of datasets and services, network services, data and service-sharing and also made provision for the monitoring and reporting of progress towards implementation.

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