

CEN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON STANDARDISATION IN GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Renewed European Standard Setting

Standards are set within Europe as a result of voluntary agreements between the 28 member countries via the European Committee for Standardization (CEN). After a five-year period of dormancy, the CEN Technical Committee on Standardisation in Geographic Information was reactivated in autumn 2003. The authors provide an overview of new activities.

The mission of the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) is threefold: to foster the European economy in global trade, to uphold the welfare of European citizens and to protect the environment. Setting standards to be adopted by a generally broad user community is a major prerequisite for accomplishing these goals. After adoption by CEN, CENELEC or ETSI, the 28 countries of Europe are obliged to implement them as national standards and to withdraw conflicting national standards. National Standards Bodies have two years to incorporate adopted standards into their national systems.

The creation of a European Standard (EN) is usually preceded by several other outputs including CEN Technical Specifications (CEN/TS), Technical Reports (CEN/TR), CEN Guides and CEN Workshop Agreements (CWA). Most standards and reports are created in Technical Committees (TC) and their working groups, whilst CWAs are created in Workshops. Of all outputs, only ENs are normative. The Technical Board of CEN co-ordinates all activities.

Scope of CEN/TC 287 Activities

Standardisation in the field of digital geographic information for Europe: the committee will produce a structured framework of standards and guidelines that specify a methodology for the definition, description and transfer of geographic data and services. In order to avoid duplication of work, this will be carried out in close co-operation with ISO/TC 211. The standards will support the consistent use of geographic information throughout Europe in a manner compatible with international usage. They will support a spatial data infrastructure at all levels within Europe.

Reactivation

One CEN Technical Committee is concerned with standardisation in geographic information: CEN/ TC 287. After being dormant for five years, CEN/TC 287 held its first meeting for a new era on 10th and 11th November 2003 in Delft, The Netherlands. Its reactivation was a response to the widely expressed need for European standards in geographic information made clear by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), a European Commission institution based in Ispra, Italy, and responsible for INSPIRE: the INfrastructure for SPatial InfoRmation in Europe. According to Dr Paul Smits of the JRC, the main goal of the CEN/TC 287 revival was to develop standards that could and would assure full interoperability of Spatial Data Infrastructures SDI in the enlarging and developing European Union. This would be done through addressing specific European issues, developing compatible GI standards in national languages and ensuring that CEN member states and European institutions established interoperable SDIs.

During the reactivation meeting the scope of activities were defined and adopted in a CEN/TC 287 Business Plan, stating also that the main objective was to facilitate the building of the infrastructure for spatial information in Europe by:

- adopting the ISO 19100 series as European standards
- developing and take-up of new standards and profiles of standards in co-operation with ISO/TC 211 needed for the immediate INSPIRE initiative and other collaborative programmes
- facilitating interoperability with related standards initiatives through necessary harmonisation and associated agreements
- promoting the use of and education on standards on geographic information.

Table 1 summarises the standards produced by ISO/TC 211, which passed the Unified Acceptance Procedure (UAP) as per February 2005; Table 2 summarises the Standards soon to be submitted to UAP and Table 3 gives an overview of new work items.

New Tasks

During the reactivation meeting, Working Group 5 (WG5) on Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) was created, having the following tasks:

- identification of standards and their profiles to be used for creating SDI in Europe
- development of guidelines for implementers of SDI within Europe
- conformance of testing and registers for SDI in Europe.

Under the chairmanship of Dr Paul Smits, WG 5 presented its report to the CEN/TC 287 18th Plenary held at JCR, Ispra, Italy on 11th and 12th October 2004. The Plenary confirmed the creation of WG 5 and added the following tasks to be carried out by WG5 in collaboration with ISO/TC 211:

- drafting a technical report on implementations in Europe, including GI metadata profile of ISO 19115
- creating a Web Map Service (WMS) profile and guidelines
- assuring conformance testing
- extending GI metadata catalogue service profile and guidelines
- extending Web Feature Service WFS profile and guidelines
- investigating Conceptual Schema Language tools for interoperability in Europe
- recommending as to whether any of these items should become EN.

The WMS, Metadata profile of ISO 19115 and GI metadata catalogue service should be prioritised. Two new Working Groups were instigated to facilitate the tasks on WMS and Metadata. A technical report is expected by July 2006.

Sponsorship

CEN/TC 287 is chaired by Prof. ir. Henri Aalders, whilst the Netherlands Institute for Normalisation (NEN) is responsible for the secretariat of the committee. NEN is responsible for finding financial resources for running the secretariat. Because of the importance of standards for industry, CEN favours sponsorship of them. The money is used to pay secretariat staff, support travel and to organise meetings. In return, the sponsors receive information on the standards, but do not get voting rights, as CEN wants to uphold its neutral position. Sponsorship is welcomed from any organisation. To date sponsors include the Cadastre and Public Registers, Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment, the Netherlands Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, IPO-IOG-GEO, RAVI and ESRI Europe. For well-balanced support, some additional partners are needed.

Outreach Group

The Plenary also set up an Advisory Group on Outreach (AGO) - the name is the same as of the corresponding ISO group and chairmen are the present authors. The mission here is promotion within Europe of the use of, and education in, the results of CEN/TC 287 standardisation of geographic information. AGO has drawn up a work plan that consists of action on public aspects of the CEN/TC 287 website and an Outreach Workshop to be held prior to the next CEN/TC 287 meeting in Stockholm (13th to 14th June 2005).

Further Reading

- Tom, H., 2005, Levelling the GI Playing Field: ISO/TC 211 Geographic Information Standards, GIM International, Vol. 19, May 2005, pp 41-43.

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/renewed-european-standard-setting>
