Update on GSDI Marine SDI Best Practice Project

The GSDI Association has part-funded a two-year research project focusing on identification of developments in marine spatial data infrastructures (SDIs) around the globe. The research includes a web survey to assess the developments of national marine and coastal geoportals for web services. The project grew out of research carried out by Dr Jade Georis-Creuseveau of LETG-Brest Geomer (UMR 6554 CNRS), UBO, Institut Universitaire Européen de la Mer, Plouzané, France. The project co-leaders are Dr Joep Crompvoets of KU Leuven and secretary-general of Euro SDR and Roger Longhorn, secretary-general of the GSDI Association and member of the UNESCO IOC IODE ICAN Steering Group. TKU Leuven and LETG-Brest are both GSDI Association members.

Marine and coastal geoportals

The research includes a web survey to assess the developments of national marine and coastal geoportals for web services. The initial survey led to an inventory of 35 national operational geoportals. For each geoportal, 12 characteristics were identified and measured in November 2014, March 2015 and November 2015 in order to monitor current developments. Based on the preliminary survey results, four types of geoportals were distinguished: Atlas-like, Hydrographic Office, Oceanographic/Marine Data Centre, and Hybrid geoportals.

The survey focuses on geoportals implemented by national public bodies in Europe enabling access to and use of geographic data related to marine and/or coastal zones. The term ‘data’ encompasses a broad range of items such as real-time observations, time-series data, GIS data layers, digital maps, etc.

In November 2014, 121 geoportals were assessed from 72 coastal countries. Of these, 24 geoportals were not operational at that time, seven failed to work during the period of the survey, 39 were considered to be out of the scope of the survey, and 51 were implemented by national public organisations providing access to coastal and/or marine spatial data implemented by 27 countries.

Types of data

Preliminary results suggest that European developments are still underway for geoportals enabling users to access various types of data concerning coastal and marine zones. These types of data and mechanisms were stable or slightly increasing between November 2014, March 2015 and November 2015.

The results indicate that platforms allowing access to a wide range of data related to marine, coastal and land territories are not commonly found. True data harmonisation and services interoperability, which are the underpinning principles for SDIs, need to be improved.

The proposed geoportals coordinators’ survey will be extended to geoportal users in order to analyse what they do with the data in their day-to-day responsibilities and to conduct a needs assessment. The combination of these approaches (geoportals, coordinators’ and users’ survey) will contribute to a multi-view framework in order to assess coastal/marine SDIs.
