

Message of support Econtentplus conference

MEP Frieda Brepoels

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Dear participants,

Unfortunately I am not able to join you live at this interesting conference, due to the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. However, I would like to seize the opportunity to pass a brief message of support to you.

As former rapporteur for the directive on Inspire in the European Parliament, I firmly believe in the crucial role geo-information plays in our society and in the promising contributions it can offer for the future. Inspire was my first dossier during my first term in the European Parliament, back in 2004. At first glance it seemed to be a technical proposal with an agreement in first reading within reach. The contrary became true; in the end we needed conciliation to reach a final agreement with the Council. I am still proud though, of the result we obtained. I think we needed this time to get a full understanding of this technical, complex and important issue.

Inspire was one of the answers to the many challenges identified in the 6th European Environmental Programme like clean air, soil protection, waste prevention etc. Developing a sound policy to meet these challenges required the EU to have reliable and high-quality spatial information. This was far from easy: the EU Member States conducted a very restrictive data policy which practically impeded the exchange of data and information. Furthermore, there was a lack of coordination and standards, which made the data not comparable.

Since Inspire entered into force in May 2007, a lot has been accomplished. We must however make sure that the implementation of Inspire stays on track and that we overcome some important challenges still ahead, for example by enhancing the sharing and exchange of data and encouraging the interaction between Inspire and other initiatives like GMES and SEIS. Also the further development of the Geoportal deserves our attention. Inspire can equally contribute to the global level like GSDI, GEOSS and UN-SDI.

Inspire is a real step forward for European environmental policy. There are still challenges ahead, and the exchange of best practices can play an important role in this regard. GDI is a vibrant item of discussion, also at subnational and local level. The many initiatives which were registered for today's conference underline this. I strongly believe that these initiatives can act as a driving force! They can have a significant added value to push Inspire and GDI in general forward. You have my support. I wish you an interesting continuation of the conference.

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