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To All Heads of EuroGeographics' Members

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Dear Colleague

Completion of the Open ELS project and next steps, including outcome of CEF Bid

I am writing to tell you about the results delivered by the Open ELS Project and to update you on the latest bid for funding, as well as the next steps for facilitating access to your data in an ever-changing environment. More information will be provided in the presentations at next week's Extraordinary General Assembly in Leuven.

Open ELS Project

As you know, European Commission funding for the Open ELS Project concluded on 30 April 2019 after two years of work. Without the engagement of all our project partners, and the skills and experiences of all our colleagues involved in the project activities, we would not have been able to achieve the project outcomes planned in our proposal. These play an important role in demonstrating the value of authoritative open geospatial data.

The Open ELS test services, launched at Geospatial World Forum, are based on user requirements, in particular those from the European Commission and from the small and medium sized enterprises (SME) engagement programme. They enable us to demonstrate the value of members' open geospatial data to the public and to other potential users, and were developed using the Open ELS product roadmap decided by the ELS Programme Board:

- Open WFS test services with Addresses and Buildings
- Open Cadastral Index Map
- Open EuroGlobalMap as a service (built and hosted by IGN France without being an Open ELS project partner)
- Open Regional Gazetteer Service (built and hosted by BKG)

The services can be accessed via the Open ELS user interface, implemented during the project by ThinkWhere, a Scottish geospatial services company appointed following an open tender. We have already had very positive feedback on this user interface and available services from attendees at the Geospatial World Forum in Amsterdam at the beginning of April. You can try it for yourself by registering at: <https://www.euro-geo-opendata.eu>.

Project Outcomes

The Open ELS project has achieved what it set out to deliver in our project proposal. This includes:

- User orientation, a survey of small and medium sized enterprises (SME), and the identification of Open ELS use cases.
- An appraisal of the potential economic and social benefits of open data from authoritative sources, carried out on our behalf by Deloitte.
- A policy and legal framework for Open ELS that allows us to use members' open data for Open ELS and defines the terms and conditions for use and re-use of this data.
- Members have agreed the Open Data Policy for Open ELS, the Open Use licence, and the ELS Data Provider Agreement.
- Guidelines for edge-matching and a policy for cross-border harmonisation for our members.
- Compliance with the Metadata Quality Assurance (MQA) tool of the European Data (EDP) Portal. The Open ELS services metadata are now being harvested by the EDP.

Lessons learnt

In carrying out this work we have, together, learned a lot:

- We now have a better understanding of the complexity and challenges to set up open geospatial data services, what is required and how to do so;
- There is a better understanding about the challenges of creating an operational service – with wider recognition that we need more than a technical solution, and we have a better understanding of the gaps remaining, to inform the way forward. These include:
- The data supply team has worked hard to make members' open data services available and to engage them as data providers. We have some data that allows us to demonstrate the potential, but much more content is needed.
- We have to improve our approach to the technical infrastructure as well as data supply. We have prototyped a centralised approach to overcome technical constraints for the data supply chain which could help to improve the data supply and the accessibility of members' data significantly.
- While running and using the Open ELS technical platform to build the Open ELS test services, the technical experts worked on demonstrating the Linked Data concept for Open ELS, developed an “on-the-fly-edge matching tool” as a demonstration, and explored vector tiles as an opportunity for visualisation. These results should help inform thinking how to improve access to your data in future.

Bid for CEF Funding

You will be aware that EuroGeographics, on your behalf, bid for EU funding to continue the Open ELS work. We have now been informed this bid has not been successful. Whilst we are very proud of what we have achieved together, not only through these projects, but also through past projects part-funded by the EU, through the eContentplus, ISA, ISA2, and CEF programmes, feedback from the European Commission reflects our belief that we have delivered as much as possible through funded projects and we must now grasp the opportunity to adapt our activities and strategy to meet the challenges of our changing landscape. More information on this will be presented in Leuven.

Next steps

We also expect many opportunities to be created for members through the PSI Open Data Directive for High Value Datasets and the Commission's expected move towards accessing more data directly from official national sources. We encourage you to ensure you are involved in developing the rules governing high value data at both national and EU level, through your national representatives. EuroGeographics is committed to supporting you and will be as involved as practicably possible in the development of policies and rules concerning NMCA data.

Under the direction of the Management Board we are reviewing, renewing and reviving our strategy to ensure that we, and our members, remain relevant in an ever-changing environment. In doing so, our representation and relationships will help further define EuroGeographics as a facilitator for your data and the high value it represents to the public good. We will bring a revised strategy for approval at the October General Assembly.

Head Office Changes

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to update you about changes to the ELS team at EuroGeographics Head Office. With the completion of the Open ELS Project, they are concluding their work for EuroGeographics. Saulius Urbanas completed his contract the end of April; Helen Kaestner will conclude her contract at the end of May, and Abigail Page at the end of June. Jari Reini has already concluded his secondment and returned to NLS Finland.

I would also like to inform you that Dominik Kopczewski's secondment to EuroGeographics as Policy Development Manager has also come to an end and he has returned to Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography, Poland.

I know you will join us in wishing them all well for the future and in thanking them for their commitment and invaluable contribution to the success of the Open ELS Project.

I look forward to seeing you in Leuven, and to your continued support and contribution to our collective endeavours.



M J Cory
Secretary General & Executive Director
EuroGeographics