

## **GSDI Legal and Economic Working Group: A Template for Reporting National Legal and Economic Issues Affecting Spatial Data Infrastructure Developments**

### **Abstract**

The primary objective of the GSDI Legal and Economic Working Group is to open communication channels and encourage dialogue regarding the legal and economic frameworks within which spatial data infrastructures will be developed within each of our nations. The exchange of such information will help identify constraints and opportunities for cooperation among nations in sharing data and pursuing GSDI concepts.

The primary near term activities of this working group include: (1) preparation of detailed descriptions of the legal and economic frameworks for five selected nations and (2) preparation and distribution of a legal and economics framework survey. A detailed legal and economic framework for a single nation is presented and nominations are solicited for similar reports from other nations to be prepared addressing the same major topics.

### **Chairs:**

Harlan Onsrud is Professor of Spatial Information Science and Engineering at the University of Maine and a research scientist with the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA). He is President of the University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS) and Chair of the U.S. National Committee (USNC) on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA), established by the International Council for Science (ICSU). He serves on the Mapping Science Committee of the U.S. National Research Council (NRC) and is Editor-in-Chief of the URISA Journal. He is a licensed engineer, surveyor, and attorney.  
<onsrud@spatial.maine.edu>

Bas Kok has been the Director of Ravi (Netherlands Council for Geographic Information) since December 1993. From 1994-1998 he was vice president of EUROGI. He also has been the legal advisor for the EUROGI Executive Committee. From 1996-1997 he was a member of the drafting team to compose the GI2000 document for DG XII of the European commission. In 1996 secretary of State Tommel appointed him as a representative in the creation and development of a global geographic information infrastructure. Since 1997, he has been advisor to the new board of the national GI clearinghouse organization in the Netherlands (NCGI) and is also a visiting professor in GI at the University of Delft. <bas.kok@ravi.nl>

### **Introduction**

The GSDI Legal and Economic Working Group is striving to open communication channels among nations regarding the legal and economic frameworks within which our national spatial data infrastructures are developing. Increased understanding should help identify the constraints under which each nation operates and thus allow us to better seek opportunities for cooperation in sharing data and pursuing GSDI concepts. In pursuit of these goals the Working Group is seeking participants to help it accomplish the following two near-term tasks:

1. Prepare detailed descriptions of sample national legal and economic frameworks

This task involves preparation of detailed descriptions of the legal and economic frameworks within which SDI are developing in five selected example nations on five continents. Each of the five reports will be developed in response to a common set of questions and be prepared by those with legal expertise in the nations selected. Among the legal and economic issues addressed by each report will include (a) copyright, database protection, and similar intellectual property protections, (b) rules and laws regarding access to government data, (c) liability and other legal means for ensuring the suitability of data, and (d) protections of personal information privacy. All of these legal issues will be addressed in the context of geospatial data, the Internet, and evolving communication technologies. The initial five national reports will be used as exemplars of the types of issues that respondents in additional nations may want to discuss in their responses to a subsequent questionnaire. Ideally the five initial sample national reports might cover one nation each in (1) Europe, (2) Africa, (3) Asia, (4) South America, and (5) North America.

## 2. Prepare and distribute a legal and economics framework survey

This task involves preparation and distribution of a questionnaire in which contacts within each nation are asked to describe the legal and economic frameworks within which SDIs will necessarily need to develop within that nation. The questionnaire will be very short consisting of three or four open ended questions. The examples from the five previously prepared national responses will be supplied as potential reference bases from which respondents may extend or diverge and contrast. The initial step of identifying appropriate contact in each nation will be critical to the success of acquiring suitable and informed responses. Respondents will be informed up front that their responses will be posted on the web.

### **Sample Country Report on Legal and Economic Issues Affecting National Spatial Data Infrastructure Developments**

Due to page limitations, a sample country report has not been appended to this article. However, such a report may be found at <http://www.spatial.maine.edu/~onsrud/gsd/CntryLgIRprt.pdf>

We invite and encourage the preparation and open distribution on the GSDI web site of articles reporting legal and economic issues affecting the spatial data infrastructure developments within additional Nations. Please note that much of the material in the sample report is drawn verbatim or with few changes from other past published sources. Thus there may be little need to resort to new writings in order to report the situation in a specific country.

### **Conclusion**

Scholarly yet practical discussions are needed of the legal and economic constraints imposed on those nations developing SDIs. Better knowledge of constraints and differing perspectives can lead to opportunities for collaboration and sharing. Through the initial five sample reports and the structured follow-up questionnaire, we believe the conditions for developing communication channels and understanding among nations will be facilitated. We believe also that development of a network of engaged individuals seriously addressing legal and economic issues relative to NSDI's will be perhaps the important outcome in accomplishing the planned tasks.

If you are interested in preparing a report for your country similar to that presented below or if you know of someone who could prepare such a report, please contact the Chairs of the GSDI Legal and Economic Working Group at [onsrud@spatial.maine.edu](mailto:onsrud@spatial.maine.edu) and [bas.kok@rivi.nl](mailto:bas.kok@rivi.nl)