

# Inspire Helsinki 2019

22–24 October, Finland



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## Spatial data is becoming mainstream

**The Inspire Helsinki 2019 event brought together around 170 people from 29 countries to foster discussion and new ideas on how to get the full potential of spatial data. The three-day event featured data challenges, practical hands-on workshops and future-oriented keynote presentations. The event was summed up in a panel discussion, in which perspectives on tackling remaining challenges were brought up.**

One goal of the event was to bring forward solutions on how to better adapt spatial data and services to the needs of society. The need for getting out of the “spatial bubble” and for having the doors open to all kinds of users was the important key message of the event.

“Spatial data is no longer special. It’s becoming mainstream among web and mobile developers as one of the basic raw materials of knowledge”, said Bart de Lathouwer, Director of OGC, in his keynote. “The needs can be met by technical development, for example, the easy integration of spatial data with other data requires building blocks such as web developer friendly OpenAPI based solutions like OGC API features, coverages and map tiles.”

In the workshops international experts introduced the audience to alternative, simpler data storage solutions that allow software to read the content of the data in a better way, bearing in mind that exploiting spatial data should not require advanced in-depth expertise in the field of spatial information. Participants concluded that there is still not enough harmonized spatial data available, that both data and services are hard to find, and that the quality of data could be better. In order to integrate spatial data with other data, it must be available and easily accessible.

### **When data is flowing, there are many opportunities**

Hanna Niemi-Hugaerts, Director of IoT at Forum Virium, City of Helsinki Innovation Company, explained how opening data creates opportunities for innovation and business. Examples of easier access were also raised by Thorsten Reitz from wetransform. He also pointed at the Finnish [Geospatial Platform](#) as a successful example of increasing the availability and quality of data.

It is a known fact, that current WFS 2.0 interfaces and complex data in GML format data are not ideal in terms of developer user experience. Ideally the services should allow the application developer to get a grip of a service within 15 minutes, without having to digest complicated documentation. Also, from a data provider point of view, solutions making it easier to meet the INSPIRE requirements for example by applying alternative encodings, by simplification and by increasing the usability of datasets and services in society are essential. Even though many technical challenges are already being resolved, there is an urgent need to overcome bureaucratic obstacles, such as the challenges with accessing information and coping with a wide range of licensing schemes. Better design of services as well as user-focused communication about services were considered as part of the solution.

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## Data challenges – practical solutions

As part of the event, a Data Challenge competition was organized, attracting teams to submit innovative solutions that rely on spatial data. In the challenge of the European Commission (Joint Research Center JRC), two teams from Canada demonstrated how INSPIRE data could be used to predict the effects of natural disasters. Team Minerva Intelligence modeled earthquake sensitivity in Veneto, Italy, and "West Coast Data Surfers" (team Safe Software) created real-time flood warning reports for Britain.

A team from Statistics Finland and a team from KTH, Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden, took up the challenge of HELCOM (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission) to find the best holiday destinations around the Baltic Sea. The Dutch team from the province of Noord-Holland explored how weather conditions could better be considered when planning commuting routes in a challenge by the Finnish Meteorological Institute, Vaisala and Spatineo Ltd. All solutions were awarded, and team Minerva Intelligence won the first prize.

"These challenges helped us identify numerous shortcomings in discovering and using relevant information. This is very important cutting edge work in detecting barriers of information flow", Panu Muhli, Head of SDI Services Department at the National Land Survey of Finland, states.

[Please see a short \(1:20 min\) video of the event](#)

[Keynote by Bart De Lathouwer](#)

[Keynote by Hanna Niemi-Hugaerts](#)

[Keynote by Thorsten Reitz](#)

[Workshop presentations](#)

[Data Challenge presentations](#)

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