



European Environment Agency

Data Policy

March 2013

European Environment Agency Data Policy

PREAMBLE

This policy provides guidelines about EEA's handling of data. The policy will ensure that data is handled in a consistent and transparent manner. EEA aspires to promote the sharing of environmental data. In agreeing to share, data providers need to have assurance that their data are properly handled, disseminated and acknowledged following similar principles and rules across countries and stakeholders.

NOTING:

- (1) Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet),
- (2) Regulation (EC) No 911/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the European Earth monitoring programme (GMES)¹ and its initial operations (2011 to 2013),
- (3) Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) and related Implementing Rules,
- (4) Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information and repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC,
- (5) Directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information (PSI Directive),

¹ "Copernicus" since 11 December 2012.



- (6) The UN Convention of 1998 on the access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (the Aarhus-Convention),
- (7) Directive 1996/9/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 1996 on the legal protection of databases,
- (8) Directive 1995/46/EC on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (Data Protection Directive),
- (9) Draft Regulation 2012/1025a (EC) on the access to Copernicus dedicated data and information.²

RECOGNISING:

- (1) The principles of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) as a collaborative initiative of the European Commission, the EEA and the member countries of the Agency and Eionet. The principles establish that information should be:
 - managed as close as possible to its source;
 - collected once and shared with others for many purposes;
 - readily available to easily fulfill reporting obligations;
 - readily accessible to end-users at all levels for the design of new policies;
 - accessible to enable comparisons of the environment at the appropriate geographic scale;
 - fully available to the general public, to enable citizen participation;
 - supported through common, free and open software standards.

² Regulation foreseen to be adopted during 2013



- (2) The Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE), which addresses spatial data themes needed for environmental applications and which aims at making available relevant, harmonised and quality geographic information to support formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and activities which have a direct or indirect impact on the environment.

The INSPIRE Directive establishes harmonised conditions of access to spatial data sets and services and facilitates the sharing of spatial data sets and services between public authorities in Member States and between Member States, to the institutions and bodies of the Community.

- (3) The work of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) which through contributions from members and participating bodies (including EEA) is constructing the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). GEO explicitly acknowledges the importance of data sharing in achieving the GEOSS vision and anticipated societal benefits and has defined GEOSS Data Sharing Principles.
- (4) Copernicus³ establishes a European capacity for Earth monitoring and will provide users with information through services dedicated to a systematic monitoring and forecasting of the state of the Earth's subsystems. A full, open and free data policy is pursued by Copernicus..

RECOGNISING further:

- the task of the EEA to collect, collate and assess environmental and climate related information and the management of its dissemination and its access, the task to draw up expert reports on the quality, sensitivity, pressures and impacts on the environment within the territory of the Community to facilitate use of and to provide uniform assessment criteria for

³ “Copernicus” since 11 December 2012 previously known as GMES.



environmental data, to develop further and maintain a reference centre of information on the environment;

- The Commission shall use this information as relevant in its task of ensuring compliance with and implementation of relevant EU legislation.

EEA ADOPTS the BASIC DATA POLICY PRINCIPLES for the exchange of data related to the environment:

ARTICLE 1: SUBJECT MATTER AND SCOPE

This policy covers environmental data collected, acquired, processed and disseminated by EEA, including data flows within the framework of Eionet. As such, this policy covers data which is owned by EEA as well as data which is owned by others. Much of the source data made available to EEA falls into the category of being owned by other organisations in particular from EEA/Eionet member and cooperating countries. From these source data, added value data products are created as part of EEA's duties. This process can also add value for other organisations or processes to whom these data can be disseminated as sources of input to their work.

ARTICLE 2: OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the data policy are to support, promote and enable

- a. the continuing availability of latest data and the maintenance of long-term series of observations,
- b. wider exploitation, re-use and re-combination of data from different sources in different frameworks and media than those for which they were originally commissioned,



- c. full, free and open access to all kinds of data where possible, whilst recognizing and respecting the variety of business models and data ownerships that enable these data to be created,
- d. protection of integrity, transparency, and traceability in environmental data, analysis and forecasts,
- e. recognition of data providers, their intellectual property rights through citation and data licenses,
- f. meeting relevant legislation and government guidance on the management and distribution of environmental information,
- g. implementation of INSPIRE, SEIS principles, Copernicus and GEOSS data sharing principles,
- h. interoperability and use of European or international standards,
- i. use of crowd sourced and citizen science data,
- j. recognition of the quality of data through quality assurance and quality control procedures, documented in the Agency's Quality Management System (QMS). This does not apply to crowd sourced data,
- k. publication of relevant metadata,
- l. stewardship and sharing of data from EU funded research projects.

ARTICLE 3: DATA PROVISION TO EEA

EEA expects the data providers to follow the principle that all data and products, financed with public means should be fully available for use by public bodies, and that these data should be made available for others to use with as few restrictions as possible.

The data provider shall clearly specify intellectual property rights, use or re-use conditions, including statistical confidentiality, and quality statements in metadata information for each type of data (metadata, raster/image data etc.).

EEA accepts and encourages data provided from crowd sourcing and citizen science. EEA will make use of this type of data in its products and services where it judges that it is appropriate to do so and taking into account the available information on the quality of data.

ARTICLE 4: ACCESS TO AND REDISTRIBUTION OF DATA

Access to data covers both technical access and the policies that govern access.

Products created by EEA are considered a public good and where possible, they will be made fully, freely and openly available for others to use.

All data held by EEA shall be made available with minimum time delay and at no cost except where

- restrictions apply resulting from binding rules, including international treaties, European Union law and national legislations including the protection of personal data, statistical confidentiality, the protection of intellectual property rights as well as the protection of national security (i.e. State security), defense, or public security,
- data made available by EEA is accompanied by a data license. Data originally made available to EEA by a third-party may have their own data access agreements and license conditions agreed upon with EEA, which restricts how or when EEA can make data available to others,
- the data access request exceeds EEA's handling capacities.

EEA will endeavor to provide access to the source data that underpins EEA's products and services for:

- data held by EEA that are owned by others,
- data held by EEA which have been adapted, combined or harmonised (for instance to cover pan-European extent),
- data located, managed and publically accessible in other bodies or distributed, for instance in national administrations in accordance with SEIS principles,
- data where EEA has been requested to arrange access, for instance to act as a data provider for third parties (e.g. European Commission, Copernicus services, R&D projects, other public authorities).



Data will be provided through discovery, view and, as far as possible, through download services which are compliant with established standards from ISO⁴, OGC⁵, INSPIRE and other relevant standardisation bodies. EEA will hold the data where it sees fit and EEA will aim to provide meta-information for all data.

ARTICLE 5: RECOGNITION OF DATA SOURCES

As a standard approach EEA will cite the source of data, and may offer opportunities for branding through inclusion of data provider logos, etc. All instances of use of data from crowd-sourcing or citizen science shall be clearly labeled as such by the EEA. EEA may undertake and publish benchmarking exercises on data provision in terms of performance and quality.

ARTICLE 6: WARRANTY

EEA data are provided ‘as is’ to users without warranty of any kind, either express or implied, including quality and suitability for any purpose.

ARTICLE 7: QUALITY

Data providers shall retain the primary responsibility for the quality of the data they produce and distribute. For data produced by EEA, the EEA shall strive to publish quality metadata including, where appropriate, information on transparency, accuracy, relevance, timeliness, consistency and comparability.

⁴ International Organization for Standardization

⁵ Open Geospatial Consortium

**ARTICLE 8: REVIEW**

Technological shifts in Information and Communication Technologies are impacting data collection, processing and use in innovative ways. This data policy is designed to enable these opportunities to be explored and used. To enable the benefits of these developments to be fully achieved, this policy will be reviewed at regular intervals.



Annex 1 to the EEA Data Policy: Definitions

1. *Fully, openly and freely available* means complete, non-discriminatory and without charge.
2. *At no cost* in the context of this document means at no more than the cost of reproduction and delivery, without charge for the data.
3. *Environmental Data* shall be defined as individual items or records (both digital and analogue) usually obtained by measurement, observation or modelling of the natural world and the impact of humans upon it. This includes data generated through complex systems, such as information retrieval algorithms, data assimilation techniques and the application of models.
4. *Users* mean users accessing EEA data through EEA dissemination platforms.
5. *Products and services* means all information that results from the transformation or processing of data in the form of assessments, web services, pictures, charts, text, or data files embodying substantial know-how. Usually associated with value adding.
6. *Re-distribution* means distribution to a third party other than the originator of the data and products.
7. *Re-use* means the use by persons or legal entities of data and documents held by public sector bodies, for commercial or non-commercial purposes other than the initial purpose within the public task for which the data and documents were produced. Exchange of data and documents between public sector bodies purely in pursuit of their public tasks does not constitute re-use.