

## The OECD Laboratory for Geospatial Analysis Terms of Reference (draft) 2021 - 2023

### **Background**

Geospatial (i.e. location and geographic) data is pervasive and is recognised to bring new and significant insight in solving key challenges in all sectors and facets of society. The use of geospatial data and spatial analytical techniques has become paramount to responding to growing concerns for increasing geographical inequalities in many life domains and the heightened need for place-based policy-making.

The OECD Laboratory for Geospatial Analysis (The Geospatial Lab, or the 'Lab' henceforth) is an initiative to encourage the widespread adoption of geospatial data in shaping policies that make a difference in tackling today's place-based problems. It aims to create an international community of stakeholders from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors, to share knowledge and co-operate in the production and use of geospatial data, all the while emphasising the policy implications of geospatial data use.

To do this, the Lab leverages on the OECD's convening power to bring together governments, policy-makers, academia, businesses, civil society, solid data and analysis, to help shape better policies for better lives. The Lab is hosted within the OECD's Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, regions and Cities (CFE) in coordination with other OECD Directorates (i.e. Statistics and Data Directorate and Environmental Directorate, among others), and will be supported by the Working Party on Territorial Indicators (WPTI) of the OECD Regional Development Committee (RDPC).

### **Key objectives**

The Lab is designed to deliver on that need by:

- **Facilitating exchanges, networking and knowledge sharing between all stakeholders (academia, specialised agencies, private sector, policy makers, national statistics agencies) active in the production of geospatial data and/or geospatial analysis, through:**
  - A series of plenary meetings and thematic workshops targeting specific policy sectors of interest, which aim to develop and showcase best practices of geospatial data use in policy settings while promoting innovation in geospatial technology development.
  - Networking activities between Lab members, supported by the Secretariat, to promote long-lasting co-operations.
  
- Enabling the implementation of **principles and standards for aggregation, harmonisation, interoperability and use of geospatial data**, by:
  - Setting standards and underlying principles for harmonised geographical aggregations, with a mind towards how these frameworks can be utilised to facilitate more timely and effective policy-making
  - Developing best practices on methodologies and utilisation of geospatial data, including (but not limited to):
    - The integration of statistical and geospatial information (in coordination with the other existing initiatives) to better inform policies

- The responsible use of geospatial data, including with regards to privacy, complementing existing international standards and guidelines
- **Promoting the production, dissemination, and innovative use of geospatial data, and facilitating access to data and to reproducible geospatial analyses, by:**
  - Facilitating data sharing between data providers within the Lab's network through formal and/or informal agreements
  - Facilitating reproducibility and reliability of geospatial analyses by testing methods and approaches to develop best practices that are shared through a repository of open scripts, methodologies and tools.
  - Producing new indicators, in a number of domains, to inform policy-making.
  - Motivating wider take up and investment in geospatial data through showcasing and disseminating their use in policy-making and analyses, and potentially, subject to satisfying legal requirements across stakeholders, via a public-use database and data visualisation tools.
- **Developing and showcasing policies which enable innovation so that members are able to maximise the value of geospatial for economic, social and environmental value**
  - Identifying best practice in policy setting which contributes to innovation in geospatial technology development and /or where geospatial is leading to innovation in the economy
  - Developing a framework for policy setting

### ***Governance***

The Geospatial Lab will operate according to a three-tiered structure, in co-ordination with the OECD Working Party on Territorial Indicators:

- The **Steering Committee** will provide leadership and direction in meeting the Lab's core objectives as set out above, and in setting out the content and structure of meetings. It will be composed of people representing institutions that explicitly expressed their commitment to make an active contribution in the Lab's activities and vision through a Letter of Intent signed, ideally, by the highest representative in the institution. The Steering Committee will take into consideration institutional and geographic diversity.
- The **Secretariat** of the lab will be provided by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE), in coordination with other OECD Directorates, when relevant. In consultation with the Steering Committee, the Secretariat will be responsible for day-to-day operational activities, preparation of meetings, drafting of supporting material, developing and disseminating analytical work, and supporting all of the objectives described above.
- Lab **Members** will participate in Lab discussions and consultations through written contributions or through attendance at meetings and related events. Members are required to attend at least one plenary meeting per year. Member status will be granted after receipt of a simple Letter of Intent.

### ***Funding and support***

The Geospatial Lab welcomes voluntary financial and/or in-kind contributions from members and from stakeholders that are supportive of the goals and vision of the Lab. In-kind contributions can

take the form of hosting meetings, staff-secondments, liaising with non-Members for outreach and communication, contribution to seminars, workshops or surveys, and/or mobilising a range of expertise as needed.

### **Activities**

Subject to available resources, the activities of the Geospatial Lab will be organised as follows:

- **Biannual Plenary Geospatial Forums.** Ideally, when circumstances allow, one of the two plenary meetings will be held physically (either at OECD Headquarters in Paris or elsewhere when meetings are hosted by Lab Members). The summary records of these meetings will be shared regularly with Lab members and, if relevant, with WPTI delegates.
- **Thematic workshops** for specific policy areas. These will be organised on a frequency determined by members and the Steering Committee in between or during the plenary meetings, with topics that continuously vary based on the common interests of Lab members.
- **Specific working groups.** The Secretariat will provide support to members interested in creating working groups for specific Lab-related themes, with feedback mechanisms provided through the plenaries or thematic workshops. These working groups and their themes are subject to change depending on the ongoing interests of Lab members.
- **Technical platform.** Through a technical platform, the Secretariat and Lab members will: share knowledge and experiences regarding geospatial analysis (including remote sensing); foster the dissemination of best practices; facilitate harmonisation; inform the standards setting for geospatial data; and collaborate on joint research projects.
- **Communications and Outreach.** The Secretariat and Steering Committee will disseminate tools for better policy design utilising geospatial analyses, and will ensure greater impact and co-ordination with other initiatives. In this respect, the Lab will produce (through the Secretariat or members), short briefs/notes, maps and data stories that can be disseminated at events and through a dedicated web-platform.