

The EU Information System for Sustainable Supply of Europe with Energy and Mineral Resource

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The European Union currently imports more than 50 per cent of its hydrocarbons and minerals and this is growing each year. In view of the reduction in the world's hydrocarbon and mineral reserves, and the possible disruption of importation by uncontrollable political events, the rational use of these resources is becoming a central issue in EU economic policy.

The financial downturn in 2008 has affected global markets and, as a consequence, energy and mineral prices, in some cases leading to deprivation and social unrest. To enable sound economic and political decisions, as much information on energy and mineral supplies as possible is needed. At present this information is hard to find and, in some cases, unreliable or not even available. Three main factors are responsible for this: differences in information format, lack of information harmonisation between countries and organisations, and large discrepancies in how often information is updated.

In response to the need for quality information, the European Union, through the Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP), has funded a three year 2.5 million euro project to design and develop an information and policy support system for sustainable supply of energy and mineral resources in Europe – EuroGeoSource. The system will contain information from at least 10 European countries on geo-energy (oil, gas, coal, etc) and mineral resources (metal ore and non-metallic minerals, industrial minerals and construction materials such as gravel, sand, ornamental stone, etc.).

EuroGeoSource will provide users with actual, reliable and harmonised information on the European scale. Furthermore, it will bring together economical, administrative and geological information related to energy and mineral resources. The system, which takes the form of a web portal, will also provide users with functionality to search, locate, view and analyse pertinent geographical information.

The data that is going to be served at the EuroGeoSource web system will be compatible with INSPIRE. Therefore several experts on data management from EuroGeoSource are also members of the INSPIRE thematic working groups for 'geology and minerals' and 'energy'. Furthermore the project is registered as an SDIC and will act as a pilot for the development of minerals and energy data within INSPIRE. 11 Geological Surveys are present in the consortium and other surveys are encouraged to join the project as data providers to maximize the coverage of Europe.

EuroGeoSource is currently in its second year. During the first year contact was made with a wide group of potential end-users to ask them what they would expect from an information portal like EuroGeoSource. An inventory of the current situation in the participating countries regarding availability, accessibility and management of energy and mineral resources data was made. All this information was used to build a first draft version of the portal, which was met with enthusiastic reactions when demonstrated at the first EuroGeoSource public workshop in Budapest in March 2011.

Using the inventory of available data, a first draft of key economic attributes that will be served at the portal was made. These data include general information (e.g. location, start and end of production), economic information (e.g. in situ reserves and (UNFC-) classification) and geological information (e.g. host rock). The attributes are compared and synchronised with the first draft of the INSPIRE data specification for minerals and energy.