

Digital zoning

The digitization of land-use planning is accelerating. This is confirmed by a draft regulation on spatial data sets and metadata related to spatial planning, published on the website of the Government Legislation Centre. Although the title of the draft itself may not attract the attention of those outside the industry, this document represents another element of the changes being implemented as part of the spatial planning reform launched in 2023.

The new regulations are intended to define the rules for creating, updating, and making available spatial data sets and metadata related to spatial planning. In practice, the aim is to standardize the method of collecting and presenting data related to spatial planning documents. The collection of spatial data for spatial planning documents takes place immediately upon commencing the drafting of such a document or during the planning procedure, depending on what the data pertains to.

One of the most significant changes is the alignment of the spatial data set catalogue with the spatial planning system in effect as a result of the aforementioned spatial planning reform. The draft introduces a classification of planning documents (“app”) aligned with the current statutory catalogue in this area. In addition to spatial development plans at the provincial and municipal levels, it also includes general municipal plans. Furthermore, it expands the existing classification of datasets to include landscape resolutions and landscape audits.

The proposed solutions also regulate in detail the process of creating spatial datasets. They specify the steps to be taken during their creation and outline the relationships between the type of dataset and the data created for a specific spatial planning act. The timing for creating spatial data for a spatial planning act has also been clarified, as has the definition of what constitutes “commencing the preparation” of such an act.

Regulations concerning the scope of information and data structure play a significant role. Detailed provisions are included in the annex to the regulation, which specifies technical details regarding the scope and method of data entry. The draft also provides for the use of specific spatial reference systems and specifies the required data resolution. Regulations regarding data identification have also been introduced, including the obligation to use unique identifiers for both spatial data sets and the data they contain. Uniform rules for assigning identifiers are crucial for the effective functioning of spatial information infrastructure. The regulation also sets out rules for updating data and specifies the cases in which such updates will be mandatory.

A significant portion of the proposed provisions is devoted to the metadata of the spatial information infrastructure. Their scope and structure have been adapted to the requirements of EU regulations and the INSPIRE Directive (which implements the concept of ensuring access to knowledge about shared space for all who need it, whether at the local, regional, or national level, or across the entire European Union). This approach is intended to make it easier for local government units to develop metadata while simultaneously improving its quality.

Spatial data sets will be made available to interested parties free of charge through spatial data services. Spatial data are to be made available separately for each spatial planning document. This solution is intended to enable verification of the data's compliance with the required structure and scope of information. The transitional provisions are also noteworthy. According to the draft, until September 30, 2026, spatial data concerning spatial planning documents will, as is currently the case, be made available in the Public Information Bulletin. After that date, they are to be made available in the newly created Urban Planning Registry, which is scheduled to begin operations on July 1, 2026.

Although the proposed changes are primarily technical in nature, they clearly illustrate the direction in which the spatial planning system is evolving. Not only are spatial planning documents themselves playing an increasingly important role, but so are the data and metadata used to create and make them available. It therefore appears that, in addition to knowledge of the Act on Spatial Planning and Development, familiarity with concepts such as GML - one of the basic formats for storing and exchanging spatial data - as well as identifiers and metadata, will become increasingly useful. If this enables public authorities to manage data more efficiently and makes it easier for residents and investors to access the information they need, then a few new acronyms in spatial planning shouldn't be a problem. After all, the goal of these changes isn't the data itself, but more efficient information management and easier access to that information for all stakeholders.

Do you want to know more? Contact us!

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