

Åpne geografiske data fra NLS Finland

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National Land Survey of Finland opened all geographical datasets to be used free of charge from first of May 2012. Decision that data could be open was done by government in late December 2011. All preparations had to be done only in four months. New open data license had to be implemented, data had to be prepared and data download system had to be build. After busy four months almost all was ready for opening. From the very start companies and communities have been very active to use NLS topographic data. How the data is used and how it has affected the markets is to be seen in following weeks and months

Key words: Open geographic data

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National Land Survey of Finland opened all geographical datasets to be used free of charge from first of May 2012. Process that lead to that decision started a couple of years ago. Demand for open governmental data was discussed widely in the academic and research communities. About two years ago also political interest was rising. Major breakthrough was when the former Government in March 2011 made a decision of principle on how to promote the usage of public sector information.

To gain some experience on how to deal with open data NLS opened few small scale datasets from the beginning of 2011. The Ministry of agriculture and forestry asked NLS to investigate what possibilities there are to open more data than already was opened. The question was that could NLS open all raster maps and how would that effect the financing, markets, data capturing and usage of data.

Interviews with all major added value resellers and partners showed that there are no possibilities to open only part of the information. That would lead to severe difficulties in markets. It was very clear that we either can't open more data at all or if we do, then we have to open all geographical datasets.

In September 2011 NLS made a strategic decision to propose new data policy where usage of geographical data would be free of charge for any purpose what so ever. One of

the main reasons that lead to that decision was that during the past couple of years there has been a rising trend that even public sector authorities started to use free datasets available in internet instead of using the accurate high quality data from a governmental body. That development was leading us to the situation where lots of information was collected by different authorities using all kinds of background maps. In the future that development would have cost a lot in cases where we want to reuse and combine those datasets. During the year 2011 we came to the conclusion that in the long run it is economically better to let all users to use the same reference data rather than limit the usage by charging for it.

Within the administration the proposition to open geographical data lead to intense discussion. There was no certainty that it would be accepted. Final decision was made only a week before Christmas when Government accepted the new Act of charges payable to NLS.

After the approval of the new Act we had only four months to get all in order and ready for the opening. A special project was established to take care of the technical and administrative issues needed to clarify before first of May. It was a laborious task to remove all such information from data that NLS was not able to open due to copyright restrictions. All present and new potential users had to be

informed, open data license needed to be implemented and file download service needed to be developed.

Experiences so far

While writing this article the data has been open over seven weeks. In a way all has gone quite well. Major datasets were ready and first large deliveries took place on the first working day in May. Private persons and different communities have been very active delivering data further on. After two days the whole topographic database was put into and delivered from torrent server. Within a week it was copied over two hundred times mostly by the Open Street Map community.

An association of Internet users implemented also a torrent delivery and within a

week they had released WMTS and WFS services from NLS data.

NLS own file download service was delayed few days and it was opened on 9 May 2012 with limited data content. New datasets were released in the download service every week, thus in the beginning of June all major datasets were also provided by the service. Within four weeks there has been over 15 000 clients and 260 000 ordered files. The highest Peak of dataflow from NLS servers has been 2000 Gigabytes in one day.

How is the data used? That is too early to say. We are waiting for the first new innovations to come in next few months.

Our next challenge is to guarantee that also updated data is readily accessible and put effort to guide other public sector bodies to use geographic data.

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