

smeSpire network: the future looks bright for geo-ICT SMEs!

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[smeSpire](#), a two-year European Union-funded project enabling geo-ICT Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to turn the INSPIRE challenges into business opportunities, is approaching a turning point. After its first year of life, the smeSpire network has grown from 15 to 230 geo-ICT SMEs in 20 countries and has started the process of drawing-up an inventory of gaps in the skill sets that are needed to address in a cost-effective manner all aspects of modern geospatial information management in an e-government setting. In the next six months, the consortium will finalize the gap analysis, following which solutions will be proposed to smeSpire network members to mature their skill sets, and thus to increase their market potential.

The value of the smeSpire network is not only in the acquisition of new knowledge, but also in bringing it into fruition. The network bridges SMEs and other, non-SME organizations that key players in the development and implementation of INSPIRE. This will create new opportunities for SMEs participating in the network.

“We are very happy to have joined the smeSpire network” said Ken Harkin, Business Development Manager at Sparx Systems, from Victoria State, Australia. “I’m confident that networking with smeSpire will be mutually beneficial. Australia is looking with great interest to INSPIRE, and we feel that with Sparxsystems involvement we give an international dimension to smeSpire that we hope will lead to even more business opportunities.” Sparx Systems develops Enterprise Architect, the industry standard for the modelling of data and systems.

Two additional upcoming opportunities are reserved for the geo-ICT SMEs:

- The [CEN/TC 287 award for excellence and innovation at the INSPIRE Conference 2013](#) in Florence from the 23rd to the 27th of June, co-sponsored by smeSpire, Sparx Systems and GiStandards, with the most innovative SME receiving €2500.
- The dialogue session “Leveraging SMEs' strength for INSPIRE” at the [Geospatial World Forum 2013](#) in Rotterdam from the 13th to the 16th of May, jointly organized by Geospatial Media and Communications, JRC and smeSpire, where selected SMEs will receive from JRC a financial contribution to partially recover their participation costs.

“SMEs will have a vital role in the success of INSPIRE and its evolution. These events are a recognition of that fact, and form an excellent opportunity for geo-ICT SMEs to showcase INSPIRED innovation, but also to voice the obstacles they encounter in implementing and using INSPIRE,” said Paul Smits of JRC.

“What is very promising this year is the award’s additional track reserved for geo-ICT SMEs presenting innovative applications. Besides the academic institutions, the private sector, and particularly SMEs, can be innovation leaders as well”, said Martin Ford, Secretary of CEN/TC 287 European standards body for geographic information, in unison with Danny Vandenbroucke, Secretary of [AGILE](#), Association of Geographic Information Laboratories for Europe, who is in charge of the award evaluation process.

At the other extreme of the spatial scale covered by the smeSpire Network, two different national events are worth a mention: the [4th HUNAGI Conference](#), in Budapest, on the 4th of April 2013 and the two workshops organized in Germany by the smeSpire partner PSU.

“We are very glad to have a representation of the smeSpire project at our 4th Conference, in order to strengthen our membership in the smeSpire Network and to attract more Hungarian geo-ICT SMEs into the INSPIRE implementation processes” said Gabor Remetey, HUNAGI Secretary General.

“During the two workshops held in Munich the 19th of March and in Munster the 20th of March, several German geo-ICT SMEs have learnt the opportunities offered by INSPIRE” said Johannes Gnädinger, PSU managing director.

Not yet member of the smeSpire Network? Join us at www.smespire.eu