

Date

Monday 13th July 2009

Title of session

Breakout Discussion Group:

What are the impacts of economic turbulence on mapping in your country?

What are the impacts of economic turbulence on your institution/organisation?

What are the measures you have undertaken to cope with the challenge?

How do you think mapping (and your institution/organisation) can support your societies and countries in overcoming this period of economic turbulence?

Name of presenter/chair

Jarmo Ratia, Director General, National Land Survey Finland – Facilitator

Attendees: Dr Robert Moses; Ing Karel Večerě; Chaerul Hafidin; Mustafa HJ. MD. Kasim; Trevor Steenson; Marcel Grigore; Hans-Erik Wiberg; Kari Craun; Chris Steenmans; Geraldine Ruane; Prashant Shukle; Dr Mike Sanderson; Kestutis Sabaliauskas; Roslan ABD Ghani

Name of rapporteurs

Jevon Snell & Gillian Horner

The Facilitator introduced the session, inviting comments and discussion around the first three questions, which, he felt, were all interlinked.

The majority of delegates expressed the view that the current economic crisis had not had a major affect on their industry and that, in many cases, times were actually relatively good for the Geographic Information (GI) industry.

Canadian representatives from both the public and private sector stated that they were both doing fairly well at the moment despite the crisis. This viewpoint was also expressed by representatives of the Scandinavian countries present in the room. Hans-Erik Wiberg of Sweden expressed surprise at Godfried Barnasconi's presentation in the preceding plenary, which described the pressures the Dutch Kadastre were facing. It was stated that the pressures in Sweden were largely

confined to the construction sector and that demand for geographic information there was not declining. Representatives from Sweden and Finland also both felt that lessons had been learnt from the crises experienced in the 1990's and that this was standing the public sector in good stead.

Chaerul Hafidin also provided a fairly positive outlook in terms of the status of GI in Indonesia, stating that the Government's response to the economic crisis had been to try to increase the development of infrastructure and that this in turn had increased the demand for mapping.

Delegates from Finland and Lithuania commented that, whilst some effects of the economic downturn were being felt, the situation could be worse and it was stated that, in the case of Lithuania, new services had begun to be produced to cover losses elsewhere.

The delegates from Northern Ireland arguably offered the most sobering account of the impact of the economic downturn. However, whilst the construction sector had collapsed and cuts were being made in the public sector, Geraldine Ruane (Ireland) stated that they were trying to use this as an opportunity to drive the use of GI and to stimulate innovation.

In terms of so-called countries in transition, the Czech Republic expressed their support for the description presented earlier on this topic by Željko Bačić, that whilst some cuts were being made, key projects were still continuing. Romania's delegate felt that the situation in Romania was comparable to that described by the Czech Republic's representative.

From the perspective of a GI user, Chris Steenmans, European Environment Agency (EEA) identified three current trends in the field of GI:

1. There is a significant increase in the demand for GI
2. There is a change in mentality towards greater demand for citizen or voluntary data
3. Mobility of staff is decreasing, with lots of people looking for security

Turning to question 4 of the workshop and how mapping (and mapping institutions/organisations) can support societies and countries in overcoming this period of economic turbulence, a broad range of points were made. The Facilitator started the discussion by asking if Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs) represented the solution.

Prashant Shukle expressed his view that SDI's certainly weren't the only answer, mapping agencies have to make hard choices in these times; a key thing that organisations such as his can do is transfer dollars to hard-hit private industries. Approaching this from the other side, Dr Robert Moses stated that there were certain things that industry can do, namely decrease the costs of what they offer to the Government.

Discussion then focussed on the importance of the quality of information provided by National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies (NMCAs) and what the impacts were of the increasing popularity of free-at-the-point-of-use street level maps. Opinions

varied, though Hans-Erik Wiberg was quite confident that the quality of NMCA information makes it valuable and that given its use in public tasks, quality is vital.

The concluding remarks of the session expressed the fact that the current situation represented an opportunity for the GI sector as a whole, both public and private.

Questions/Comments	Answers