



AGISEE
Association for Geospatial Information in South-East Europe
<http://www.agisee.org>

The association invites new members

Press Release

AGISEE, The Association for Geospatial Information in South-East Europe has been established on 1st of October, 2004 in Sofia, Bulgaria, as a **non-for-profit organisation**.

The need for AGISEE was recognized as a result of the project GISEE (GIS Technology and Market in South East Europe), which studied and documented the status of the spatial data infrastructures in all countries of South-East Europe. GISEE was funded by the European Commission and ended in October 2003 with the **South-East European Spatial Data Infrastructure Conference** in Sofia, Bulgaria, where an agreement for the establishment of this association had been pronounced.

Spatial data infrastructures (SDI) aim at making geospatial data and thus content available for the benefit of the economy and of the society. An SDI encompasses the policies, organizational remits, data, technologies, standards, delivery mechanisms and financial and human resources necessary to ensure that those working at global and regional scale are not impeded in meeting their objectives. **Geospatial information** is information about the shape and location of objects on the Earth's surface. Examples of such information are topographic maps, satellite images of the earth, cadastre maps and ownership registers, town maps and many others.

The GISEE project showed that a lot of geospatial data exist in South-East Europe. However, these data are difficult to access, owners and access conditions are not clear. Data access would be made easy by meta data, which are descriptions of real data, but few meta data exist. Organizations do not collaborate, and few activities are coordinated for the detriment of the sector. Having said this, the sector of Geospatial Information (GI) is not well developed and organized in this region. This confirms the need for better coordination and collaboration in the sector, which is in fact the main objective of the Association.

The **promoters of AGISEE** are Associate Prof. Raina Pavlova, Technical University Sofia and project coordinator of GISEE and Mr. Ulrich Boes, director of URSIT Ltd. and participant in the GISEE project. Ulrich Boes has been elected President of the association, and Raina Pavlova has also been elected as member of the Managing Board of the Association, together with Georgi Valev (Bulgaria), lecturer of geodesy at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy of Sofia, Miljenko Lapaine (Croatia), lecturer of geodesy at the University of Zagreb and President of the Croatian Cartographic Society, Rahmi Celik (Turkey), lecturer at the Technical University of Istanbul, Florian Petrescu (Romania), lecturer at the Technical University of Bucharest, and Evgenia Karadjova (Bulgaria), General Manager of ESRI Bulgaria.

AGISEE is the only association for geospatial information in the whole region of South-East Europe. It addresses the countries Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro (with Kosovo), and Turkey. The **vision of AGISEE** is to establish spatial data infrastructures in the region and enable sharing of data for the benefit of the economic development of all countries participating. The association will have a double role: firstly in informing members about relevant issues such as technology development, standards,

best practice cases of using GI, world-wide actors, European initiatives, legal environment in member countries and abroad, possibilities to obtain financing; secondly in promoting the role of GI to the outside world and lobby for better use of spatial data.

To achieve its long-term vision, AGISEE has defined four main goals:

1. to unite the GI community and interested parties in South-East Europe.
2. to promote the use of GI and to contribute to building SDI in the region
3. to represent the GI sector in South-East Europe and outside.
4. to support and provide relevant information to its members; and to act as enabler for new opportunities to members.

AGISEE will be a point of contact for its members and the GI community. Workshops and conferences will constitute forums for meetings and discussions. The first **AGISEE conference** is planned for autumn of 2005 and will have the purpose to share ideas and give recommendations for further actions in respect to building Spatial Data Infrastructure in South-East Europe. From 2006 the Association will organize and conduct courses, workshops and seminars with educational purpose.

Invitation to membership is open and interested individuals and organizations can register for membership on the web site <http://www.agisee.org>. Until the end of 2004, AGISEE will not collect membership fees. From the beginning of 2005, members will have to pay fees according to the membership category to which they belong. The fee will acknowledge the manifold benefits members can obtain. These benefits are, amongst others to:

- receive Information about technology development, standards, best practice cases of using GI, European initiatives, legal environment in South-East European countries and abroad;
- have a permanent point of contact and representation versus other bodies such as the governments;
- understand the use of standards and new technology;
- have access to an information rich Web site, newsletters, promotional materials, books;
- participate in courses with educational purpose, in workshops and conferences;
- obtain consultancy on specific subjects for instance use of standards or relevant laws;
- informed about business opportunities and possibilities of European and world-wide funding programs;
- be in contact with all other members.

AGISEE is supported by many organizations and individuals throughout South-East Europe. It is an expression of willingness of these countries to move closer towards the European Union. For more information visit the AGISEE web site <http://www.agisee.org>.