OGC Testbed Europe: From Free Riders to Fair Partners: A Wikimedia Enterprise Model for European Geospatial Data

A Collective Framework for Sustainable Revenue, System Modernization, and Sovereign Data Control

Across Europe, National Mapping Agencies are facing similar pressures: industrial users such as global tech platforms and major location providers depend on your data, but they do so in ways that strain your infrastructure, stretch your budgets, and raise new questions around security and openness.

At the same time, the political environment is shifting. The "as open as possible, as closed as necessary" discussion is becoming very concrete, especially where national security and critical infrastructure are concerned. Many agencies are being asked, implicitly or explicitly, whether their current data access models are still appropriate for the new geopolitical reality.

Under Testbed Europe, OGC – as an international, not-for-profit standards body that works for and with its members, and a long-standing trusted partner of the NMA community – would like to collaborate with you on a structured approach to capitalize on this situation. The idea is inspired by the Wikimedia Enterprise model: Wikipedia remains publicly available, but a professional, contract-based channel is provided for companies that require industrial-grade access.

For European NMAs, this could mean creating a similar tier for authoritative geospatial data: a predictable, high-performance channel for major platforms and aggregators, aligned with your national policies on openness and security, including any constraints on critical infrastructure data.

Importantly, this would not replace your existing open, machine-readable channels (such as WFS and other INSPIRE-style download and view services) or a possible transition to Web APIs. Those continue to satisfy open data regulations. The proposal is to add a separate "performance class" of access that the global tech platforms would value beyond the baseline open data channel that already meets most user needs.

Specifically, this would mean transitioning from ad-hoc bulk or WFS-style downloads and legacy formats to a shared European API layer designed for industrial use. This layer would be:

- high-performance and streaming-oriented, tailored to the needs of consumers such as Google, Overture, Meta, Apple, and others;
- flexible enough to respect each NMA's policy choices on what remains fully open, what is controlled, and how sensitive layers are exposed;
- governed under common terms and conditions, so that large users do not "pick off" individual NMAs with separate, asymmetric arrangements.

Based on conversations with several agencies, we understand that many NMAs are already planning major revisions to their back-end systems in the coming years. This makes the timing particularly favorable: OGC can guide NMAs on how to migrate towards state-of-the-art architectures that support your national mandates and security requirements, while simultaneously aligning with the specialized APIs needed to underpin a Wikimedia Enterprise-style

solution. In other words, the unavoidable investment in modernisation can be leveraged to create a shared, future-proof platform for industrial data access.

OGC would take the lead on the technical and contractual framework, coordinating closely with EuroGeographics to ensure that existing relationships, experience, and trust are carried forward rather than disrupted. This approach would also ensure that the overall architecture and negotiations are managed in a coherent, standards-based manner by an organization you already know and work with.

The financial dimension is just as important as the technical one. Instead of large consumers taking your data at scale with little or no return, they would contribute to a common framework that supports:

- The modernisation and resilience of your own systems;
- The additional costs of secure, reliable, high-volume access;
- The long-term sustainability of civilian mapping as a public, authoritative function.

In this way, you retain control over your data, your policies, and your mandate – including the ability to treat critical infrastructure data with the care it requires – while gaining a collective, professional channel through which industrial users can work with you on fair and transparent terms.

We would like to explore this direction together with you at **OGC Innovation Days (iDays) in Frankfurt / Bad Nauheim, 9–10 December 2025**. On the first day, immediately after the opening session, we are planning a dedicated **Testbed Europe session** that will bring together:

- NMAs and other public authorities,
- NATO HQ, and
- key private-sector actors, including Google, the Overture Maps Foundation, and others.

We are aware that some of you have already indicated that you may not be able to attend iDays personally. Even so, it would be extremely valuable if your organisation could be represented, allowing your perspectives to contribute to shaping this potential Wikimedia Enterprise-style channel for NMA data and the modern back-end architectures that will support it.

If this concept resonates, iDays will be the right setting to test it together, compare national constraints and opportunities, and decide whether there is appetite to move forward on a shared framework under the leadership of OGC.

Testbed Europe centres on three complementary components: the Wikimedia Enterprise–style high-performance access channel described here; coordinated support for NMAs as they transition from existing systems to modern, state-of-the-art platforms with flexible Web APIs tailored to user needs; and more efficient national and pan-European map production through systematic reuse of common building blocks.

Ready to Transform Data Demand into Strategic Advantage?

Don't let this opportunity pass by. Whether you plan to attend iDays, send a representative, or want to explore how this framework aligns with your modernization plans, I welcome your questions and input. You can reach me anytime at isimonis@ogc.org.

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