

# Current state of the German Environmental Information Portal PortalU

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## Abstract

The German environmental information portal PortalU<sup>®</sup> is currently more than three years accessible via [www.portal.de](http://www.portal.de) for both citizens and environmental experts. This paper aims at giving interim results of the long-term project PortalU. What was the starting point for PortalU? What was the motivation to build up the portal? Which features offer PortalU today? And which development perspectives arise for the technology from today's point of view? In the presentation the important technical aspects as well as important organisational and content aspects will be highlighted.

The German environmental information portal PortalU is the central gateway to publicly owned environmental information in Germany. It is open to everybody, 24 hours a day, free of charge and without commercials. The portal is a long term project of the German environmental administration and since May 2006 online. But the cooperation of the environmental administration on federal and state level within Germany can be traced back to previous initiatives. Before PortalU started former systems has been in use: 1991 the environmental data catalogues (UDK) were build up to provide information about public environmental data and in 1998 *gein*<sup>®</sup> (German Environmental Information Network) was build up to search public environmental websites. Both components are now integrated in PortalU. From this former systems a huge amount of data and metadata were transferred to PortalU: from *gein* about 400 000 web pages from around 90 information providers and from the UDKs over 30 000 metadata entries. Furthermore nine data bases were already connected to the PortalU software via interfaces straight from the beginning.

The PortalU software InGrid<sup>®</sup> was especially build up for PortalU and can be described as information grid which comprises several components. The first version of the software comprised already all current categories from Search over Service and Data up to Topics and the environmental almanac. All web pages, UDK metadata and data base entries were already accessible with the PortalU search engine. Since then, the integration of the metadata recording and editing in the software InGrid has been one of the most important developments. This component, which is called the InGrid<sup>®</sup> Editor was implemented in 2008. The InGridEditor is a comfortable tool for the web-based metadata recording, editing and maintains, especially in reference to the European INSPIRE directive. Thus currently PortalU comprises are fully functional metadata catalogue with the InGridEditor and the functionality of the PortalU search component to find the accordant metadata. Both components together can thereby also separately used as INSPIRE conform InGrid<sup>®</sup> Catalogue. In order to meet the demands of INSPIRE the former existing UDK metadata model has been adapted. Besides this the search index of PortalU was improved, several interfaces were added and

some functionalities were added within the last three years. The amount of accessible websites are currently over 2 million from over 240 information providers.

Until now the further development of the modular software InGrid has not ended yet. It is a productive reaction on the dynamic development of information and communication technologies and the demands of the users of public environmental information. Today, InGrid is thereby already used for further applications besides the German wide PortalU on state level in Germany (Saxony & Rhineland-Platinat) and on communal level in Lower Saxony. Moreover PortalU will play an important role by the provision of environmental metadata for INSPIRE and the technology will have the potential to play an important role in the SEIS process (*Shared Environmental Information System*).