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**Federal Office of Topography swisstopo**

## Free basic geodata (OGD)

swisstopo provides its official data and products online, free of charge and for open access use. This step is being taken within the framework of the Open Government Data (OGD) Strategy. On 3 April 2020, the Federal Council decided on a partial revision of the Geoinformation Ordinance. On 17 December 2020, by approving the 2021 budget, Parliament approved the reduction in revenue associated with the free provision. Thus, since 1 March 2021, swisstopo's standard digital products have been available online free of charge.



### What is at issue?

swisstopo already provided numerous online tools and geodata free of charge before 1 March. These could be obtained directly from swisstopo or via the [opendata.swiss](https://opendata.swiss) platform.

Today, all swisstopo's standard digital products, such as digital maps, aerial photographs and landscape models, are available free of charge as Open Government Data and are freely usable. These will be made available in such a way that users can acquire them independently from the Internet.

The Federal Council took a first step on 3 April 2020 with the amendment of the Geoinformation Ordinance. This forms the legal basis for the free distribution of all swisstopo's standard digital products as Open Government Data. The associated annual revenue shortfall of CHF 4 to 5 million was approved by Parliament in the budget debate of December 2020. Since 1 March 2021, swisstopo digital standard products have therefore been available online free of charge.

## Where can I find the data?

The digital geodata from swisstopo which can be downloaded free-of-charge from the Internet or used via geoservices is primarily aimed at professional users.

Are you an engineer, architect, programmer or planner? Or do you work in research or science? [This link \(/en/geodata.html\)](/en/geodata.html) will take you directly to the current data for your requirements.

If you need earlier versions of data, you can obtain this from [geodata@swisstopo.ch](mailto:geodata@swisstopo.ch) (mailto:geodata@swisstopo.ch). In this case, you will be charged for the costs of processing the data.

If you just want to view geodata or print it out at home, you will find over 850 datasets on a wide range of topics on the map viewer of the Swiss Federal Geoportal [map.geo.admin.ch](https://map.geo.admin.ch).

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Origins and reasons

#### ✓ What does “free of charge” mean exactly? Are there any additional processing fees?

Free means without costs or fees for the standard digital products. These can be downloaded free of charge from the Internet by users without additional processing.

#### For geodata:

Free of charge means that no fee is charged for the use of the data. It is also free if the user downloads the data from the Internet him or herself. However, if the data must be prepared and sent by a swisstopo employee, a fee is charged for the preparation of the data. From 1 March 2021 onwards, not all swisstopo geodata is available for self-download. The number of datasets will be gradually expanded.

#### For geoservices:

swisstopo geodata are integrated into the various geoservices of the Federal Geoinformation Infrastructure. These services can be used free of charge and without registration. For the use of service-based data via the geoservices, a maximum number of requests per time unit is set as a usage limit. Within this limit, the use of the data services is free of charge. The usage limit is to be observed as far as possible ("fair use").

If the specified number of requests per time unit is repeatedly exceeded, swisstopo may conclude a contract with the data user for a higher number of requests. This use is then subject to a charge.

#### ✓ Why will there be 11 months between the positive decision of the Federal Council (3 April 2020) and the amendment to the Geoinformation Ordinance (1 March 2021)?

There are three main reasons why the period until entry into force is so long:

- The amendment of the Geoinformation Ordinance will result in an estimated decline in swisstopo's financial income of CHF 4 to 5 million. This decline requires the approval of Parliament. The decision was made when the 2021 budget was approved in December 2020.
- In order to be able to provide geodata free of charge subsequent to a positive decision by Parliament, swisstopo will need to adapt its IT systems. The adaptation will take a certain amount of time so that data can be obtained free of charge from 1 March 2021 at the earliest.
- The early announcement of the free delivery of data also has the advantage that customers who formerly paid for geodata can adapt to the new situation and make the necessary preparations.

#### ✓ Would swisstopo not have been able or obliged to provide its tax-financed data free of charge a long time ago?

Until the end of February 2021, swisstopo was obliged by law to charge fees.

## Data provision

### ✓ How and where can the swisstopo data be obtained?

The first geodata which is exempt from charges is available from 1 March 2021 via swisstopo.ch and opendata.swiss. The remaining fee-based products and services (printed publishing products) will still be obtained via the existing swisstopo online shop.

### ✓ What datasets will swisstopo provide free of charge from 1 March 2021?

The use of all swisstopo digital standard products has been free-of-charge since 1 March. The provision of the digital standard products for free independent download will take place in rapid succession from 1 March 2021.

Which data sets are available in which form can be found on the respective [product pages](#).

### ✓ Are digital products which cannot be independently downloaded subject to a fee?

For the purchase of products in a form which is not made available for independent downloading, provision fees will continue to be charged.

### ✓ Which data time statuses can I obtain via the internet?

The most recent data from swisstopo is available for download. Through the WMTS service, older versions of the National Map, from the Dufour Map to the present day, as well as old versions of the aerial photographs (SWISSIMAGE) are also available. With the other services, the latest data from swisstopo is available.

### ✓ Can I also obtain an earlier time status for an aerial photograph or a national map?

In principle, yes. Older datasets can be obtained from [geodata@swisstopo.ch](mailto:geodata@swisstopo.ch). However, as these have to be processed by swisstopo, costs will be incurred. However, the data can then be used freely and without restriction.

✓ **How high are these costs?**

The costs depend on the effort required for the processing. There are no unit prices per image or per map. The fee is CHF 160 per hour (excluding VAT). The minimum cost is CHF 64 + VAT. swisstopo will provide you with an individual quotation when you enquire about obtaining data.

✓ **Will it be possible to obtain older datasets free- of- charge via the Internet or to use them as a service at a later date?**

A solution for downloading the old individual aerial photographs should be implemented by the end of 2021. The free WMTS service is available for obtaining old maps or orthophotos. A download solution is not planned at present.

✓ **Which geoservices does swisstopo provide free of cost?**

- The services swisstopo geoservices - WMS, swisstopo web access - WMTS are integrated into the basic services of the Federal Geodata Infrastructure. Access to these services is open and free of charge.
- [WMS-GDI](#)
- [WMTS-DGI](#)
- Further services: [api3.admin.ch](https://api3.admin.ch)

✓ **Is it now possible to order paper maps free of charge from swisstopo?**

No, all printed products and commercial products and services will continue to be subject to a charge. This also includes paper maps.

✓ **Is the swisstopo app for mobile devices also free?**

The swisstopo app is free charge available at the Apple App Store for iOS devices or from the Google Play Store for Android ones. All functions of the app and offline use of the maps are included.

✓ Will the paper maps be cheaper in the future once the fees are dropped?

No. The costs for the production of paper maps such as printing and paper are not affected by OGD. Nor are the margins for the resellers. Therefore, the retail prices will not be changed.

✓ What criteria are used to select the data supplied by swisstopo free-of-charge?

The data offered free of charge is that which can be acquired online independently or automatically by users via the Internet and which therefore does not require any effort on the part of swisstopo (= standard digital products). During the first step, the most popular standard digital products are available for online acquisition. In future, however, the service could be expanded to include other federal geodata that are the responsibility of swisstopo.

✓ Will new or existing swisstopo datasets as well be submitted free of charge?

All standard digital products and data which can be downloaded independently are provided free-of-charge.

Old data, including digital data which has been prepared by swisstopo (e.g. special data formats or special sections), made available and to which access must be enabled, are subject to a fee.

✓ Will the high quality of the swisstopo data be maintained even if the data is supplied free of charge?

Yes, the free provision has no influence on the quality of the geodata. The aim of OGD is to increase quality in the users' fields. This strengthens demand.

✓ Who/which target group should be addressed by the swisstopo datasets?

The free, standard digital products are available to everyone as a public service. The aim is to achieve the broadest possible and most versatile application of the available data. However, the target groups primarily addressed are those who work with swisstopo data. This includes private and professional users and the public sector.

✓ **What is not free of charge?**

The special preparation of data; special formats; data not (yet) downloadable; commercial products and services; printed products; swipos.

✓ **Why is swipos not free of charge?**

The Swiss Positioning Service (swipos) is a value-added service which calculates correction data in real time for the current location of the customer from the measurement data (= geobasis data) of the Automatic GNSS Network Switzerland (AGNES), enabling centimetre-accurate positioning. In addition, swipos also integrates the transformation between the various position and height reference frames. The data made available to customers via this service is specially prepared.

## Use of data

✓ **May the data obtained be published and used commercially?**

Yes. The aim is the widest and most versatile usage of the available data.

✓ **Do fees have to be paid for the use of swisstopo geodata?**

No, no fees must be paid. The digital standard products are provided free of charge to everyone as a public service.

✓ **Is authorisation necessary to use swisstopo geodata?**

No, no authorisation is required. However, the source must be indicated upon use as "Source: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo" or "© swisstopo".

✓ **Must the source be indicated when using swisstopo geodata?**

Yes. The Terms and Conditions provide free use for all purposes. However, they oblige the user to indicate the source as "Source: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo" or "© swisstopo".

✓ **Do I need an OGD license to use the data? And if so, which one?**

The use of Creative Commons licences, as they are commonly and widely used today, is not compatible with the legal basis (GeoIG, GeoIV). swisstopo geodata is supplied with conditions of use which comply with the legal basis. The conditions of use allow free use for all purposes and oblige the user to indicate the source as "Source: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo" or "© swisstopo".

✓ **Under what licence is the geodata supplied by swisstopo?**

swisstopo geodata is supplied with conditions of use which comply with the legal basis. The conditions of use enable free use for all purposes and oblige the user to indicate the source as "Source: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo" or "© swisstopo".

✓ **What happens to my geodata usage agreement?**

If you have a standard user contract (Terms of Use for Private Licence, Business Licence, Business Licence Plus, School Licence) for geodata which is now covered by OGD, the new Terms of Use for swisstopo geodata will automatically apply from 1 March 2021. These allow much more than the existing user contract. If you have a special contract with swisstopo, you will be contacted by swisstopo. Normally the contract is cancelled with the introduction of OGD and you may continue to use the data or services.

✓ **What happens to my geodata subscription? Do I continue to receive automatic deliveries of updates?**

The geodata subscription will no longer be continued after 1 March 2021. Update deliveries are no longer provided. Users download the latest data themselves from the swisstopo website, from map.geo.admin.ch or from opendata.swiss. Automatic delivery of updates on data support is still possible for a fee.



- ✓ Can I now use geodata that I have already purchased free of charge? Are the terms of use that I agreed to when I purchased the data still valid under OGD?

The geodata purchased before the introduction of OGD may be used free of charge from the introduction of OGD. The new conditions of use for OGD geodata from swisstopo apply.

## Finance, personnel, law, politics

- ✓ Isn't swisstopo giving away its "crown jewels" by giving away its geodata free of charge?

No, swisstopo is not giving away its crown jewels. The production of swisstopo's geodata is financed by public funds and the data should therefore be openly available to the public free of charge.

- ✓ Is it justified that swisstopo makes its data available free of charge to the major international players (Google, Amazon, Apple, ...) through OGD? They then do what they want with it, without Switzerland getting anything out of it!

Today, many people already use the "supposedly" free geodata of the large international corporations. With the fees previously charged, we as a state were driving customers into precisely the arms of these corporations since the free availability of geodata on the Internet has become established as standard. In principle, the state should make it possible for those who wish to do so to use swisstopo's geodata under the same conditions and thus to have a real choice.

- ✓ What is the added value for swisstopo of providing its digital geodata free of charge?

swisstopo is not creating any added value for itself. However, it does create added value for the economy. The free and unrestricted provision of digital geodata creates a potential for social benefits and can lay the foundations for operational and economic growth. Innovative private individuals, companies and organisations can use it to develop new applications and information services. swisstopo has no legal mandate for such applications.

- ✓ How much income is swisstopo losing by providing the data free of charge?

The total decrease in income amounts to 10-12 million, of which 4-5 million have an effect on financing and 6-7 million on internal cost allocation.

▼ What does this loss of revenue mean for swisstopo?

In accordance with the costs-by-cause principle, all administrative units of the Confederation are required to charge for their services appropriately (equivalence principle). At the DDPS, the budget guidelines require that the revenues for the next estimation period correspond to the average of the last 4 years.

With the introduction of OGD, swisstopo will not be able to comply with this budget requirement. The cost recovery ratio of swisstopo will therefore fall below 20%. The financial result of the Confederation will be less attractive accordingly. The impact of swisstopo on the federal financial result is, however, very small in terms of amount.

▼ Do I have to pay more taxes due to the loss of income to swisstopo?

No. With the free provision of geodata, swisstopo has a financially effective reduction in its income of CHF 4-5 million every year. This amount is covered by the Federal treasury. However, this amount is a very small part of the total financial result of the Confederation and has no impact on federal taxes.

▼ Is it not economically irresponsible to forego this income?

A large proportion of swisstopo geodata is produced within the framework of government activities. Revenue from user fees is not the main focus. Income from the sale and fees for swisstopo data is already low from a business management point of view in comparison with the costs of production. However, the free provision of the data should enable new products and applications to be created which ultimately generate added value from a macroeconomic perspective.

▼ Why is swisstopo competing with the private sector by providing tax-financed data free of charge?

Data from public authorities is created or collected in the course of administrative activities. It is therefore financed through tax money and is a public good. The legal mandate of a public authority, the processing stage of the data and the cost of any publication influence which data is published and how. The private sector can, in turn, develop new business models with this

raw material by further processing/refining it. According to various studies, the economic potential of this further processing of data is considerable.

▼ [Is the continuity of the data guaranteed, for example with regard to the development of long-term applications?](#)

Yes, in principle all data is available for a longer period of time under the given link if it is stored by the data producer.

## Milestones

### Milestones for the implementation of Open Government Data at swisstopo

Date	Milestone
03/04/2020	Federal Council decision to amend the Geoinformation Ordinance.
December 2020	Budget debate in the Federal Parliament
01/03/2021	Entry into force of the amendments to the ordinance
Since 01/03/2021	Data can be obtained free of charge on the Internet

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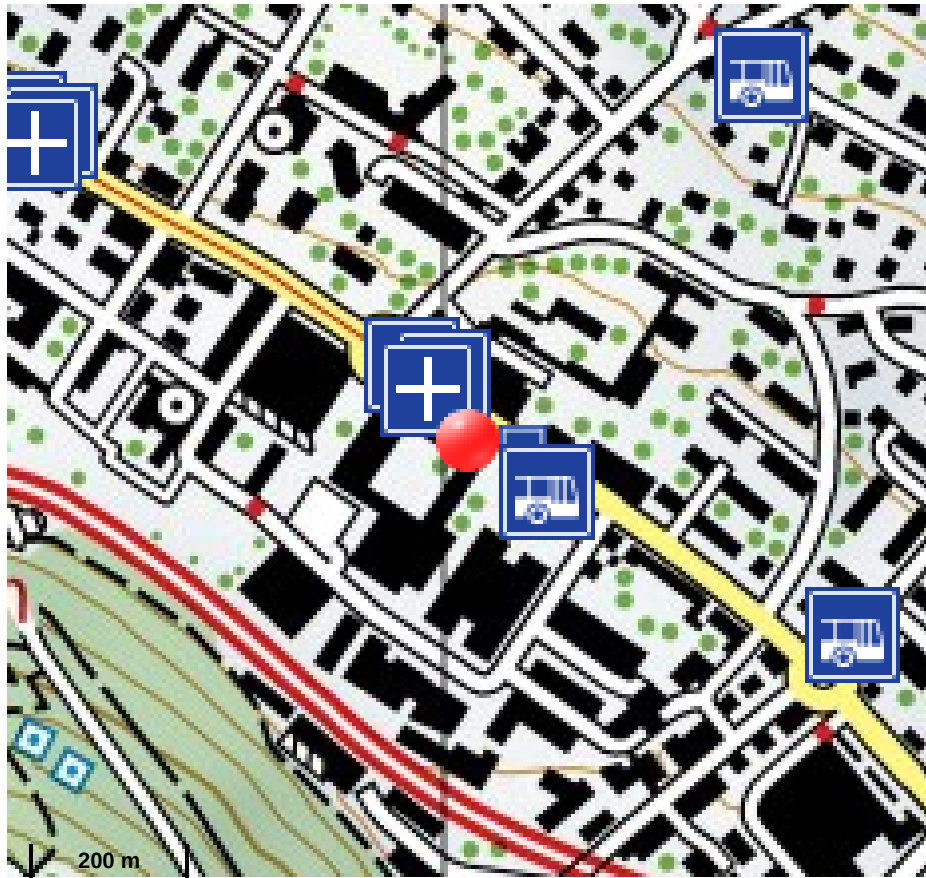
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