The National Geographic Institute (IGN for Instituto Geográfico Nacional) was created on September the 12th, 1870 and it was headed by General Carlos Ibáñez e Ibáñez de Ibero. The new institution inherited the tools, the staff and the works from its predecessor, the General Statistics Committee. Among other, its initial mission included “determining the Earth’s shape and dimensions, geodetic triangulations of various kinds, precision levelling, topographic triangulation, map and cadastral topography, and determining and preserving the international units of weights and measures.”

Over time, it underwent several organizational changes that modified its scope of work, sometimes extending it, and sometimes transferring some of its responsibilities to new specialized centres, such as (using their current name) the State Meteorology Agency, the National Statistics Institute, the Directorate General of Cadastre and the Spanish Metrology Centre.

In 2020, the current Directorate General of the National Geographic Institute, under the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, culminates a century and a half of geographic engineering. During its life, the IGN has conducted the observation, measurement, analysis, evaluation and representation of our territory and the outer space.

Over the past few decades, the Spanish society has experienced a deep social, economic and technological transformation and therefore the IGN has also deeply changed, as a scientific-technical institution, in the fields of Astronomy, Geophysics, Geodesy, Territory Observation, Cartography and the production and sharing of geographic information.

In 2020, various activities and events will take place on the occasion of the Institute’s 150th anniversary. Further information will be provided in due course through the websites: www.ign.es/web/ign/portal/150-aniversario and on social networks: @IGNSpain @IGNSpain IGNSpain IGNSpain IGNSpain

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The National Geographic Institute is created (September the 12th) under the General Directorate of Statistics, within the Ministry of Public Works, as a scientific institution with responsibilities for volcanic monitoring and alerts.

The first stone of the third and current headquarters of the IGN is set at General Halles de la Mer in Madrid, in a ceremony attended by His Majesty King Felipe VI.

Law 7/1986 on the Regulation of Cartography is published, assigning the creation and conservation of basic cartographic data a commercial nature, under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the National Geographic Institute’s Directorate General (Law 37/1988 of the General State Budget 1989, Article 122).

Creation of the National Centre for Geographical Information (CNE) as an autonomous body of a commercial nature, under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the National Geographic Institute’s Directorate General. (nowadays, a Primary Station of the International Monitoring System for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, CTBTO, United Nations).


Creation of the Astronomical Observatory of Yebes (Guadalupe) and Calar Alto (Almería).

Creation of the National Geographic Institute’s Real Time Positioning Service was developed.

Beginning of the implementation of the National Geodetic Network (SIGE, for its Spanish acronym) are completed, which becomes the geodetic reference framework ED50 (previous to the current ETRS89).

The first stone of the third and current headquarters of the IGN is set at General Halles de la Mer in Madrid, in a ceremony attended by His Majesty King Felipe VI.

The first sheet of the National Topographic Map is published at a scale of 1:50,000 (tile number 000-Health). The IGN is awarded the Communication Prize by the Spanish Geographic Society, an award presented by His Majesty King Felipe VI in 2019.

Law 44/2000 on the infrastructure and services of geographic information in Spain (LUGG) is published, assigning the presidency of the permanent and territorial commissions of the High National Geographic Council, as well as its Technical Secretariat, to the National Geographic Institute.

The National Geographic Institute takes on the presidency of the High National Geographic Council, as well as its Technical Secretariat, to the National Geographic Institute.

The Technical Secretariat, to the National Geographic Institute.

The first version of the Spanish Spatial Data Infrastructure (IDE, for its Spanish acronym) geopointer, managed and coordinated by the IGN, is implemented.

The National Geographic Institute’s Official Printing Office.

The International Monitoring System for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, CTBTO, United Nations.

Creation of the National Centre for Geographical Information (CNE) as an autonomous body of a commercial nature, under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the National Geographic Institute’s Directorate General. (nowadays, a Primary Station of the International Monitoring System for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, CTBTO, United Nations).

The first international seismic station is installed at the Yebes Observatory (Guadalajara). The IGN is awarded the Communication Prize by the Spanish Geographic Society, an award presented by His Majesty King Felipe VI in 2019.

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