

## **Sustainability, resilience, and digitalisation at the core of the discussions of the first industry-led Forum for Innovation and Research in European Earth Observation**

*Brussels, 17 June 2021*

**On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, industry leaders and professionals came virtually together for the 1<sup>st</sup> FIRE Forum to discuss challenges in key sectors (Agriculture, Energy, Infrastructure, Raw Materials, Marine/Maritime, and Urban Development) and solutions Earth Observation (EO) can bring to them. The FIRE Forum event was held alongside EARSC's annual [ExpandEO](#) conference as a successful two-day event featuring 13 sessions, 70 speakers and attracting more than 830 people.**

FIRE Forum advanced the discussion and consultations with users on the sectorial challenges, user needs, and how EO can empower these sectors to make informed decisions and timely interventions. With an average of 40 participants for each of the six thematic sessions, a wide range of insights on trends, challenges and opportunities was exchanged. While the value proposition of Earth Observation has been strongly showcased in each of the six sectors, many barriers for its adoption remain to be addressed. In addition, there is still a need to bridge between communities so that providers understand what the users need and how they operate, and, conversely, users become aware of the capabilities of providers.

Overall, three main themes were identified as driving the evolution of all the six focus sectors – sustainability, resilience, and digitalisation. The forum provided a unique opportunity for practitioners, policy makers and solution providers active in these sectors to exchange on the implications of these themes.

Furthermore, FIRE Forum discussions highlighted various aspects of future developments and the role of EO. This includes some important business considerations as the power of simple user interface, efficient customer care, valorisation of and trust in EO data, as well as some high-level trends such as the shift from Earth Observation to Earth Intelligence with the help of AI-powered analytics. Various topics were identified of value for the strategic research and innovation agenda – innovation procurement, increased capacity development and piloting or testing of novel technological solutions. The output of these sessions as well as the subsequent focus group discussions and the second FIRE Forum 2022 will be used to draft a roadmap and a Research and Development strategy for EO in Europe.

As announced previously, this first large-scale event of the project was also an opportunity to publicly announce the winners of the Open Call for the Earth Observation Evangelists. Seven sectoral Earth Observation Evangelists will from this moment on promote the global benefits, business opportunities and the added value of EO to professionals of these target sectors: Dr Ilias Pechlivanidis for Agriculture, Mrs Miriam Gonzalez for Energy, Mrs Lucy Kennedy for Infrastructure, Dr Eva Haas for Marine, Dr Juan Peña for Maritime, Mrs Irene Benito for Raw Materials, and Mr Remco Timmermans for Urban Development.

Alongside sectoral sessions and plenaries the audience was invited to a number of inspirational talks. The event opened with a keynote speech by Ms Martina Sindelar (European Commission) on turning challenges into opportunities with Earth Observation. The closing sessions was complemented by the inspirational talk on the uptake of EO by user communities by Mrs Fiammetta Diani, Head of Market Development Department at the newly formed EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA). She encouraged the freshly announced EO Evangelists to accomplish their mission emphasizing how crucial their help can be in bringing more Earth Observation to user communities.

For more details about the FIRE project activities, please visit the [FIRE project website](#).

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## About FIRE

FIRE is the first initiative fully dedicated to bringing actors from key commercial sectors together to outline the now and tomorrow of their market and to use these insights to shape a strategic roadmap for the EO downstream sector. FIRE will focus on fostering the development of current and new markets and supporting capacity building activities to realise the EO-enabled benefits. During the next two years, the project will further engage sector community representatives and promote the benefits of EO among their sectors. Conclusions from these user-driven activities will ultimately be a major contribution in developing a roadmap and Research and Development strategy for EO to address the needs and challenges of the six FIRE focus sectors and beyond. The three-year project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 869634. Its consortium brings together four partners: [EARSC](#) is partnering with SMEs supporting innovation and user uptake ([Evenflow](#) and [Verhaert](#)) and the [National Observatory of Athens](#).

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