

FIRE sets out to shape the future of Earth Observation solutions for Europe's industry

Brussels, 30 January 2020

The European Association for Remote Sensing Companies (EARSC) is leading a project in response to a call from the European Commission to develop a strategic roadmap for the Earth Observation sector. This project, FIRE, the industry-led Forum for Innovation and Research in European Earth Observation, has now started its activities to shape the Research and Innovation Strategy for Earth Observation (EO) solutions in Europe. It will establish a user community across different sectors, starting with agriculture, energy, raw materials, infrastructure, marine, and urban spaces. A dedicated 'EO Evangelist' programme will promote the adoption of EO solutions in these sectors. Open dialogue with the demand side will guide the development, delivery and uptake of EO services in Europe.

The European EO sector today stands at an important junction. Twenty years after the "birth" of Copernicus, it has every reason to gaze into the future with confidence. This is driven by significant milestones achieved in these 20 years, which offer a wealth of EO data in support of numerous economic and societal areas. The gradual development of a vibrant and innovative downstream sector is bringing the benefits of EO to various user communities. Currently, the sector is experiencing a significant shift, driven by the advent of Big Data, and spearheaded by Copernicus' free, full and open data policy, and the emergence of new EO business models relying on large fleets of small satellites. This has triggered the proliferation of platforms that facilitate access to EO data and services, whilst also offering advanced Cloud Computing and processing tools. The Big Data era presents an enormous opportunity to boost productivity, innovation and competitiveness in European industry, especially emerging industries, and in response to key socio-economic and environmental challenges. To that end, it is fundamental that the relative disconnect between the supply and the demand side, which characterises the EO market today, is fully overcome.

Moving from a situation where service providers are developing innovative solutions whose market potential is not fully realised, and where users are not fully exploiting EO services because they don't realise their potential, requires coordinated, cross-sectoral collaboration. It also strongly relies on bringing non-EO actors within the bigger picture. EO innovators strive to move to downstream integrated information services addressing citizens' needs directly within the context of their day-to-day lives. Answering to this challenge, FIRE will support building a collaborative future for the EO sector.

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.

"By implementing the FIRE activities, we aim to support Copernicus user uptake by breaking out of the usual silos and to spread the word on the EO-enabled benefits in terms that resonate with the different user sectors, rather than in technical language", highlighted Natassa Antoniou, FIRE project coordinator.

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](#).

For further information

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