

## FIRE concludes the last round of targeted focus group discussions and opens pre-registration for the FIRE Forum 2022

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FIRE has completed the last focus group discussion series centred around the use of Earth Observation (EO) in each of the target sectors of the project – raw materials, urban development, agriculture, marine, energy, and infrastructure. Organisers, participants, and lead speakers of these workshops expressed their satisfaction for the richness of content and the outcomes, which will be integrated in the strategic, high-level roadmap for the Research and Innovation strategy for Earth Observation in Europe. These discussions will also contribute to the second FIRE Forum taking place on the 14th of June 2022. The FIRE team is inviting all professionals from the target sectors to save the date and pre-register for the FIRE Forum 2022 as of today.

Building on the [first round of the FIRE focus group discussions](#) and the [first FIRE Forum](#), the second round of six sectoral events was held online between February and March 2022. This series of expert meetups, one for each of the target market sectors, brought together again more than 70 professional users from these sectors. Like in the first round, each of the events was driven by an industry leader with a significant network in the sector. Participants could enjoy professionally relevant and useful discussions and were specifically satisfied about the use of modern online collaboration tools. *“I enjoyed the interactive organisation and the use of multimedia applications to allow everyone to participate actively,”* said Alessandro Bonella from [ANAS](#) after the infrastructure workshop.

One of the important contributions of FIRE and its working groups is the **exchange of valuable knowledge and information**. Helen Roth, CEO of [Vital Infrastructure Arena](#), the **infrastructure sector** lead, indicates that the FIRE project is *“of great value”* for VIA as they *“gain both increased knowledge about EO and the opportunity to expand our international network.”* Therefore, these focus groups have directly contributed to VIA’s efforts in advancing towards a safer and more sustainable transport infrastructure through collaborative actions.

Concerns related to **sustainability and innovation** were at the centre of discussions of all working groups. The **marine sector** lead Mr Ariel Fuchs, Marine Science & Technology Consulting Sea & Space Expert of “Connect by CNES” indicated that there is a much-needed shift towards a smarter and a greener maritime industry. Furthermore, EO is, according to Mr Fuchs, a *“significant driver for more innovative and responsible downstream services benefiting both the industry and the marine environment.”* Iván Pineda, Director of Innovation at [WindEurope](#), the **energy sector** lead, also pointed out the role of EO in assisting the continuous efforts of the wind energy industry to innovate and proliferate. He argues that it is *“thanks to the constant innovation in wind turbine and wind farm design”* that today, wind energy is *“one of the most affordable power generation technologies.”*

In the **agriculture sector**, where EO-based solutions are applied rather consistently and broadly, the sector lead [COPA-COGECA](#)’s representative Mr Daniel Azevedo highlighted the **rising pressure on combining the increasing sustainability and the competitiveness** of European agriculture industry. To that aspect, COPA-COGECA has joined forces with FIRE to *“ensure that all farmers and agri-cooperatives have access to a wide range of safe technologies”* such as Earth Observation. Mr Azevedo expressed his satisfaction with collaboration with FIRE helping *“to identify the farmers’ needs and discuss the potential of EO.”*

Focus group discussions also highlighted the need to pursue efforts carried out by FIRE such as **matchmaking between various stakeholders** in order to help with EO uptake in the target sectors. For instance, **raw material** lead [EIT Raw Materials](#) was represented by Mr Patrick Nadoll, Senior Advisor - Exploration and Resource Assessment, who highlighted that *“in addition to developing smart technical solutions, it is critical to connect relevant European stakeholders in a meaningful way, engage in knowledge creation and dissemination, and offer turn-key solutions.”* Bridging the gap between suppliers of EO solutions and their users was also one of the important challenges mentioned by **urban development** professionals, according to this [article](#) inspired by the discussions and written by Mr Remco Timmermans, the EO Evangelist for the sector. One of the paths towards easier achievement of these valuable cross-sectoral business-to-business contacts can be achieved through **improving the marketing efforts of EO providers**, according to the

inspirational speaker at the **raw material** focus group Mr Brendan Morris, Managing Director of [LTMS](#) (Lisheen Technical & Mining Services).

**Raising awareness about EO** within each sector is among the main objectives of the FIRE forum and the core aim of its **EO evangelists programme**, which launched last June 2021. Therefore, it was without surprise that during discussions at the **urban sector** focus group, this awareness was mentioned as key to ensure the use of EO for sector solutions. The sector lead Mr Evangelos Gerasopoulos, representing [SMURBS](#) initiative, invited the focus group attendees to investigate ways to multiply the added value of EO by raising awareness about the technology among the sector professions. According to Mr Gerasopoulos, this approach has a greater potential to inspire the actors directly operating in the urban sector actors to apply EO in solutions they are seeking to create.

“I would like to thank all the sector leads and participants for their active participation in the six workshops. It is not easy to conduct virtual hands-on workshops, but the FIRE team has managed to advance the discussions from last year and captured the sectors’ needs well. A detailed view on discussion results of all focus groups will be presented at the second FIRE Forum which will take place online on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2022,” says Natassa Antoniou, FIRE project coordinator.

The FIRE team is warmly inviting all professionals from the target sectors to join the project’s last user consultation to help shape the future of their sector and of EO. The pre-registration is open via the FIRE website: [here](#).

## 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. 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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