

European-funded FIRE project concludes with the presentation of the strategic research and development roadmaps and discussions on the future of Earth Observation innovation

Brussels, 8 February 2023

For the third edition of the FIRE Forum in 2023 – the culmination of the project – FIRE gathered industry professionals, Earth Observation experts and policy and market development executives from European institutions. During a series of six events (1-3 February 2023), they discussed the Research & Development Roadmap for each of the six FIRE focus sectors and the way forward for the future of innovation of European Earth Observation before an audience of 432 attendees representing 300 entities and 56 countries.

The event, yet again, **highlighted the important potential of Earth Observation (EO) data and technology**, including the benefits of ‘more EO’ when tackling the various challenges faced by the six focus industries – **agriculture, infrastructure, marine & maritime, raw materials, urban development and wind energy**. Speakers identified opportunities to support key policies with solutions in existence or achievable in the short- to mid-term, admitting that application of sophisticated technology is not always required and can rather be counterproductive. Instead, being accurate and clear about what EO data and technology can achieve is crucial for long term fruitful collaborations between EO experts and professionals of other sectors – ‘EO users’.

In line with the values and goals implemented throughout the project, **users remained in the spotlight of the discussions**. Seasoned professionals highlighted changes in user profiles over time, with EO data now being increasingly more widely used by managerial and strategic users, not only by technical professionals addressing operational needs. To this end, it was crucial that downstream market development officers from the EU Agency for the Space Programme ([EUSPA](#)) were prominently present during the FIRE discussions, highlighting both the ongoing work of the agency when it comes to involving users (e.g. via the [User Consultation Platform](#)), but, also, the alignment of the goals of the agency and needs identified within the sectoral roadmaps.

Overall, the FIRE team was delighted to receive **positive feedback concerning the value of the work done**. Doris Marquardt from DG AGRI emphasized how the FIRE experience could contribute to the implementation and further development of the new and future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including aspects such as policy performance assessment. Looking forward, speakers were invited to **reflect on the next steps** and how elements highlighted in the roadmap may soon be, or are already being taken into account within the strategies and work programmes of the institutions represented at the event.

Many of the **discussion points were transversal across all FIRE sectors**, for instance, the **green transition and sustainability** of each sector, bridging the gap between EO data/service providers and sectoral users, or the role of EO in the development of **Digital Twins**. Multiple sessions discussed the **digital transition** and how it cannot be taken for granted that all users have acquired the newest technological skills and capabilities, especially in more conservative or complex industries where change may progress slowly. In addition, issues such as a general shortage of technical and IT skills were highlighted.

Some aspects, similarities and interactions appeared linking more closely the issues of some of the sectors, e.g. marine spatial planning used for marine and wind energy sectors, or social acceptance as a crucial aspect for wind energy and raw materials. In both cases, a clear role of EO was put forward. Furthermore, individual sessions complemented these topics by highlighting particularities and issues facing each sector.

One of the **next important steps** identified during multiple sessions by professionals from FIRE target sectors as well as the EO industry was the need for moving **from discussions to concrete collaborative actions**, bringing EO and sectoral industries around a common research and development project solving an identified problem. Helen Roth (VIA cluster) for Infrastructure and Lars Landberg (DNV - Energy Systems, ETIPWind, WindEurope), representing the Wind Energy industry, both emphasized the value of such projects in ensuring the most advanced and efficient EO solutions in tackling sector challenges.

[Download the full FIRE roadmap.](#)

In the table below, find the full list of recordings of each of the six FIRE Forum 2023 sessions and the digital version of each of the sectoral roadmaps developed by FIRE:

	Wednesday, 1 February 2023	Thursday, 2 February 2023	Friday, 3 February 2023
Morning session 10:00-12:00 CET	Agriculture Recording Roadmap (PDF)	Urban development Recording Roadmap (PDF)	Wind energy Recording Roadmap (PDF)
Afternoon session 14:00-16:00 CET	Raw materials Recording Roadmap (PDF)	Infrastructure Recording Roadmap (PDF)	Marine & Maritime Recording Roadmap (PDF)

For more details about the FIRE project activities, please visit the [FIRE project website](#) or contact us:

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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, the industry-led Forum for Innovation and Research in European Earth Observation, started its activities in December 2019 and concluded with the FIRE Forum 2023 this February. Throughout three years of action, the project established a user community across several different industries, namely **agriculture, infrastructure, marine and maritime, raw materials, urban development and wind energy**, to shape the Research and Innovation Strategy for Earth Observation solutions in Europe. FIRE also designed a novel 'EO Evangelist' programme through which seven 'EO influencers' promoted the adoption of EO solutions in FIRE focus sectors. Two rounds of focus group events were each followed by a FIRE Forum, advancing in the discussions and identification of gaps and challenges, the future evolution of each of the sectors, as well as the Earth Observation capabilities. The result of these consultations has been thoroughly analysed and incorporated in delivering the FIRE Roadmap, which was presented and discussed at the FIRE Forum 2023.

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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