

**WORKSHOP ON GMES OPERATIONAL CAPACITY**

**SOFIA**

**THURSDAY, 25 MARCH 2010**

Anrede

This is a great day for GMES.

Thanks to you, dear Bulgarian friends.

This is the first GMES – related event in the presence of a Prime Minister.

You succeeded to raise the level of awareness.

We are grateful for it.

GMES has been considered for a long time as a pure space project, of interest only for some Member States in the western part of the EU.

This event demonstrates:

GMES is more than space and GMES is able to deliver for all members of the EU.

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GMES stands for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as highlighted by the EU 2020 strategy which will be discussed today in Brussels by Heads of state and government.

GMES is more than just delivering services stemming from earth observation data. GMES has to be linked to the political identity of the EU.

The EU needs autonomous capacities in order to serve better the objectives of the EU in fields such as agriculture, environment, climate change, security.

That's why space is considered to be a strategic tool supporting our policy objectives.

Building this autonomous capacity does not mean that we start from scratch. We have assets in MS, national and European organizations. They need to be integrated, to be pooled in a GMES partnership.

Financially, technologically and politically.

I am happy to see that all these partners are participating in this workshop. Your presence underlines the will of a joint commitment. You Bulgaria took the initiative to organize this workshop in this southeast region of the EU. You are a very active member in our different fora.

We appreciate this regional focus of GMES.

The end-user is at the centre of our preoccupations. The closer you are to the end user the bigger the chances that you deliver according to his needs, may be even with tailor-made solutions.

It was a long way to go to move GMES from a research project into development, preparation and soon operation.

Committed people, the friends of GMES, if I may say so, have succeeded to convince member states and the European Parliament, and the point of no return has been reached.

Some days ago in a informal agreement between the co-legislator and the Commission was reached on the GIO regulation mobilizing operational funds for GMES before 2013. We are confident to make it in one reading.

This is a signal that everybody acknowledges the degree of urgency.

We need to establish the operational capacity as it is highlighted in the title of your workshop.

GMES delivers on priority policy objectives.

Climate change, security, innovation, growth, areas where the added value of GMES is obvious.

THE EU has capacities and scientific excellence in all these domains.

And GMES delivers inside and outside the EU.

Our global role and responsibility of the EU cannot be dissociated from an autonomous Earth observation capacity.

This workshop takes place at the right moment at the right place.

Sofia will give another boost to the development of GMES.

The high-level speakers today and tomorrow will demonstrate the will and the speed to go ahead.

My Bulgarian secretary told me that in this country there is a saying:

Measure twice, cut once.

We have measured several times, now it is time is to cut.

Thanks