

SOFIA CONCLUSIONS

On 25 and 26 of March 2010, 160 participants from 17 European countries as well as representatives of the European institutions and bodies met in the city of Sofia for the workshop “**GMES OPERATIONAL CAPACITY, the EU12 role**”.

Considering that

- The European Earth Observation Programme - GMES brings together the efforts and responsibility of EU Member States to preserve the environment, to protect the climate and to safeguard the security of its inhabitants;
- GMES is focusing on the delivery and appropriate use of information based on data provided by space and in-situ infrastructures;
- GMES will be based on the coordinated effort of the EU, its Members States and other European entities, all together working in a partnership;
- All EU Member States already own in-situ observation capacities and make use of Earth Observation based services;
- The development of GMES services is based on the needs expressed by communities of users, representing all EU countries;
- Data gathered, assessed, relayed and processed by GMES, will help us to improve the management of land areas, the preservation of the marine environment, the monitoring of the atmosphere and enhance public safety by providing preliminary risk management, early warning and real time data on natural disasters and citizen's security;
- GMES is progressively moving from a research to an operational phase.

The Member State participants at this event conclude that:

- A transparent and sustainable management framework should be ensured. It should consist of clear allocation of duties among GMES partners, namely, the European Commission, European Space Agency, European Environmental Agency, EUMETSAT, EU Member States and relevant entities at European, national and regional level;
- In order to achieve the objective of GMES on a sustainable basis, it is necessary to coordinate, on European, regional and national level, the activities of the various partners involved in GMES, and to develop, establish, and operate services and observation capacity, meeting demands of users. Being responsible for interfacing with the users, the EC shall establish clear processes to ensure that GMES Services and infrastructure meet the demand of users;
- In order to ensure that all Member States will benefit from the GMES, access to primary information generated by GMES should be open and non-discriminatory;
- As GMES is a system driven by public demand, the data provided should be a public good. The full and open access to information produced by GMES services and data collected through GMES infrastructure must be ensured, taking in due account security restrictions;

- The GMES data dissemination and related services are to be established recognizing the requirements and regulations of the Directive 2007/02-INSPIRE for European infrastructure of spatial data; The European Commission and the EU Member States are invited to ensure measures guaranteeing the consistency and validity of data provided through INSPIRE regulations implementation, and other proper tools, as for example the licensing approach, national and regional geo-portals or specialized applications in agriculture, forestry, environmental protection and municipal planning. Information generated by GMES will have to be completed by already existing reference data, mainly available at national level. Harmonisation and coherence of all these sources have to be ensured;
- Despite the fact that GMES is going to provide new data, occasionally its services could require archived data. In order to ensure harmonization of spatial data by the institutions and different EU Member States, and for constant monitoring of sustainable development, risk and security at national, regional and EU level, a reference information system (reference databases) for Earth coverage should be developed;
- A clear distinction should be made between Earth observation, related to environment and to emergencies, risk and security both in coordination and management aspects;
- Specific efforts to improve the participation and involvement of all member states in GMES components should be considered, in particular in the EU12 Member States;
- Efforts to develop the downstream sector, should also be considered with particular emphasis on the involvement of SMEs;
- Efforts should be made to improve awareness of GMES products in national and regional administrations, towards potential users;
- The progressive implementation of GMES services could be accompanied by existing networks of geographically related countries, facilitating sharing of good practice, coordination of take up of GMES capacities and ensuring synergy of capacities. Regional networking coordination of the resources and joint activities of geographically related countries is an asset for the efficiency in GMES operational phase and for covering the users needs;
- Special attention should be taken to the theme of establishing day-to-day monitoring of external EU borders, critical infrastructure and sensitive biotopes.

The Member States participants in the event support the proposal of the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria that the GMES operational capacity workshop is organised annually.

Adopted in plenary by the GMES workshop on 26th of March 2010.