

EC Statement GEO XI

- Two main activities conducted by the European Commission provide direct support for the implementation of the GEOSS.
- One is the Copernicus Programme and the other is the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020)
- Regarding Copernicus, on 28 October 2014, the European Commission and the European Space Agency signed an Agreement for over €3 billion to manage and implement the Copernicus ‘space component’ between 2014 and 2021.
- The Copernicus space component with its six planned Sentinel missions is a unique contribution from the European Union to the monitoring and observation of the planet and a key space component of the Global Observing System.
- The Agreement signed between the European Commission and the European Space Agency comes just weeks after the first Copernicus satellite, Sentinel-1A, became operational. The satellite provides radar data for an array of services related to, for example, natural hazards, land and ice monitoring, as well as for scientific research.
- Copernicus services are gaining in maturity. Land Monitoring service and Emergency Management Service, implemented by European Environment Agency and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, have both been operational now for two years.

- Three further Copernicus services are on the way to becoming operational. These are the Atmosphere and Climate change services, and the Marine Environmental Service.
- Copernicus services and Sentinel data are available through the free and open data policy, in compliance with the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles, and provide economic benefits to many scientists and also to value-added companies. More than 4000 users have already registered.
- Our new multiannual Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020) was launched earlier this year and provides new opportunities beyond the funding of classical research activities to support the implementation and exploitation of the GEOSS.
- The innovation part of Horizon 2020 provides opportunities to develop the GEOSS information system further by proposing innovative solutions regarding data interoperability and access.
- This innovation part of Horizon 2020 has also the potential to contribute to the opening of new markets through the development of novel products, services, and applications integrating Earth Observation Data - directly addressing the increasing demand by citizens for information on the status of their environment.
- In this context, in our 2014 Work Programme we have included the Development of GEOSS-based smart internet applications by our Joint Research Centre in Ispra to inform European citizens on the changes affecting their local environment.

- These applications, which will also exploit the benefits of the mobile internet, will provide citizens with qualitative information on their changing environment (e.g. detection of change in climate, biodiversity, water bodies, coastal areas, the built environment, green areas, forestry, agricultural land and crops, and atmospheric composition).
- We also have launched our first Horizon 2020 calls for proposals specifically addressing in particular, the existing observational gaps in oceans and ecosystems.
- Regarding the ocean observational gaps, the call for proposals focussed on Observing Systems needed for the Atlantic Ocean. The selected proposal involves a large European Consortium with US, Canadian, Brazilian, and South African partners who will collaborate on an Integrated Atlantic Ocean Observing System. This will be another significant contribution to the GEOSS Blue Planet initiative on behalf of the European Union.
- We also will continue our effort in the technology domain with the development of the in-situ component of GEOSS through the 'Citizens' Observatory' concept by funding a series of demonstration activities of Citizens' Observatories in 2015.
- The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has provided strong support to the implementation of GEOSS by co-leading several tasks (BluePlanet, GEOGLAM, Global Urban Observation and Information).
- It also continued its support for making GEOSS a robust information system, playing a leading role in the formulation of Data Management

Principles and the extension of Legal Interoperability, as well as working towards a greater engagement of the Private Sector in GEO.

- In 2014, the European Commission will continue to contribute to the cost of the administration of GEO, the GEO Trust Fund, on behalf of our 28 Member States and we are making provision for a similar contribution in 2015.
- Now turning to the future I think it is worth recalling that the deployment of GEOSS requires the continued commitment of all GEO members to coordination and funding.
- The EC hopes that more commitment to support the strategic priorities of GEO is possible in the future as there is no other Global Initiative in the domain of Earth Observation that can replace GEO.
- Sustained operations of key GEOSS components such as the GEOSS information system will be required for a strengthened GEOSS post-2015: this system is relying for the time being on the active participation of too few GEO members.
- More commitment would also enable developing countries to benefit better from GEOSS. Leaving huge geographical areas without adequate observations in less developed countries, hampers the deployment of a real Global Earth Observation System of Systems.
- The Commission hopes that the current deliberations by the Implementation Plan Working Group will provide options to overcome those issues in particular regarding governance and funding mechanisms.

- As I draw to a close I would like to reiterate that the European Commission considers the benefits of GEO for Europe to be very significant. This has been demonstrated in a recent in-house evaluation we conducted and by the recently published Commission Staff Working Document on the GEOSS.
- Finally, the European Commission supports efforts being made to demonstrate the potential of GEOSS for the business sector.
- We have contributed recently to this effort by organising a workshop on GEOSS and the business sector in Europe.
- The high turn out at this workshop demonstrated the interest of this sector for GEOSS as a source of freely accessible Earth observation data and as a knowledge-base initiative.
- The European business sector is ready to collaborate more closely with GEO provided it is regularly informed and that the supply of GEOSS information becomes reliable and can be used on a routine basis.