



GMES Space Component: Status and prospects

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Based on observation needs expressed by user communities in the environment and security domain, ESA member states have, in 2005, decided to invest in the build-up of the necessary space infrastructure as a complementary capacity to those available in its member states. The GMES Space Component programme provides the initial space capacity needed to deliver an effective global monitoring system by accessing two types of Earth observation missions; those held at national and EUMETSAT level, called Contributing Missions, and those developed by ESA as GMES dedicated missions, called Sentinels. Integration of these into a harmonious data stream to users is a major challenge and is carried out as part of a distributed ground segment design allowing interoperability with these missions.

The GMES Space component will complete the development of the initial series of five families of Sentinel satellites and will continue to provide operational access to Earth observation data from other contributing missions needed by the user community. The GMES Space Component is co-funded by the EU and serves the needs of operational services, including Emergency Response, Land and Marine monitoring and Atmospheric Composition.

The data policy for access to data from Sentinel missions has yet to be defined, but some principles are already stated in key programmatic documents. Free and open access to GMES and European national users is identified as a key element of this policy, obviously within any identifiable restrictions that might emerge from, for example, security considerations. Data policy will also be defined in the wider context of establishing an appropriate governance scheme for GMES which is planned for the 2009-2010 timeframe.