



The system of Regional Contact Offices for promoting GMES services and the use of Space Technologies in European Regions.

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In 2005, the EU made the strategic choice of developing a space-based programme, called Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES). GMES is an independent Earth monitoring initiative led by the European Union and carried out in partnership with the Member States and the European Space Agency (ESA). Its primary objective is to provide information services that give access to accurate data and information in the field of the environment and security and are tailored to the needs of users. However, at the regional level, stakeholders are often not aware about the potential benefits of services Europe's GMES initiative can provide; yet Europe's ca. 350 regions represent a large reservoir of potential GMES users where GMES services can add value to existing services. Refining data, products and services from global GMES services in the various domains (i.e. land, marine, atmosphere, emergency response, security and climate change), GMES downstream services may be customised to individual user needs, many of which are to be found at the regional level. Within a number of regions, links between the different types of stakeholders have grown over the years. Often, individual actors have developed inter-regional links but their linkage is in most cases not formalised. When looking at the European scale, that overall awareness of GMES downstream opportunities is still very low with respect to the potential benefits regions could draw from a wider participation. However, being aware of the potential of GMES, of the important role they can play and of the need for exchanging experiences, pioneering Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) intending to retrieve benefit from space technologies, including GMES, have now started to collaborate within structured networks, NEREUS being the most advanced example. The logically next step is that LRAs engage in a dialogue with service-industry and European decision-makers to maximize the benefits from these innovative tools which have significant impact on the economy, environment and the quality of life of the citizens

To this aim since 2011 the system of Regional Contact Offices (RCOs) was promoted by the EU FP7 DORIS_Net (Downstream Observatory organized by Regions Active in Space – Network, <http://www.doris-net.eu/>) project as the regional link to the services provided by the European GMES programme. Since then a first nucleus of 12 pilot European Regions were working together establishing 6 first RCOs around Europe. This paper will present RCOs network goals, achievements and perspectives as well as its planned actions devoted to improve quality of Space Technology products from one side, to promote awareness and use of them by potential end-users (and particularly LRAs), from the other side.