



Geospatial Services – Reaching out to New Markets

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EARSC (the European Association for Remote Sensing Companies) is the European trade association whose members are actively selling geospatial services largely based on satellite data. Formed in 1989, we have been acting for 26 years on behalf of the EO services industries in Europe. Our members are operating mainly in the EO services sector but some also are aircraft and Remotely Piloted Airborne (RPAS) Systems. Our mission is to foster the development of the European Geo-Information Services Industry.

The geospatial market is new and still not fully understood. Despite its importance to policy making, governments have not yet embraced this technology as a key information source and one of the roles of EARSC is to promote its wider use. But we are not constrained to government or public-sector use, our interests extend to promotion into other commercial sectors as exemplified by our work with the International Oil and Gas Producers Association (IOGP) and into export markets where customers may be from the public or private sector.

In this respect, the European Copernicus programme with its free and open data policy has its goal to provide geospatial information to European policy makers on an operational basis. It has at its heart a number of satellites and sensors, the Sentinels 1 to 5, but data is gathered from many sources including airborne, land-based and even marine sensors. One of the key programme objectives is to help structure the European market by organising public sector procurement. Since the public sector plays such an important role in the market (greater than 50% according to the last EARSC industry survey in 2013) the fragmentation that we see in Europe hinders the development of the industry by not helping it to achieve a scale to compete effectively on a global basis.

The 6 Copernicus services will certainly help in this respect but nowhere is there a buyer of the scale of the NGA in the US which can work at European level. To help try to overcome this barrier EARSC is heavily involved in promoting the services which the industry can supply and equally promoting a partnership between the public bodies involved in serving their governments with geospatial information and the private sector.

The services will need not just EO data but also that coming from airborne platforms and in-situ measurements. Hence the tools which we use are also open to all geospatial players since only with a coherent and organised approach will the European industry develop.

For example, remote sensing from a remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) is a maturing technology, which offers many complementary capabilities to satellites and aircraft. RPA is another form of platform to carry sensors tuned to observe various characteristics of the earth's surface. Whilst satellites provide a large-scale synoptic view, RPA complement this with fine-scale, local observations and flexibility to be deployed at short notice. Indeed, some large RPA may even operate autonomously for long periods and covering quite large areas.

Meanwhile other technologies such as cloud, crowd sourcing and mobile offer even more powerful means to gather and exchange data as the focus of interest moves away from data and towards information. The trends in the industry are fast and furious and offer a challenge to all stakeholders.



What does EARSC offer to its members? In addition to information on the sector “business intelligence” we organise meetings and workshops to help companies network and to meet their peers as well as European stakeholders, we offer companies the possibility to promote themselves and their capabilities. We have developed a web-site called *eopages* (www.eopages.eu), which provides a brokerage service for potential customers looking for services.

We have been working with some industry sectors to develop their knowledge of EO Services. Most particularly, we have worked with the Oil and Gas producers' industry association (OGP) to establish a platform for exchange through a Portal which we call OGEO. A particular part of the OGEO Portal is known as EO4OG (Earth Observation for Oil & gas) which presents a very rich collection of results from 4 projects run by ESA in 2014. At EO4OG you can find a complete set of requirements for EO products for the Oil and Gas industry as well as examples where they have been applied.

A core part of the EARSC Portal is the EOwiki where information can be found about all the types of products and services which EO applications can offer and the problems that they help to solve. Here you can also find information on key European projects and companies all organised according to the EARSC taxonomy of services.

Each of these actions is technology and especially platform neutral; our goal is to support members increase their business. Membership of EARSC is open to any company dealing in remote sensing technology and, although our focus is very much on the services being offered, understanding this market is equally important to developers of the systems. The mastery of information coming from any of these platforms will be an important competence for geospatial service providers in the future. Please visit our web-site www.earsc.org or to the EARSC Portal www.earsc-portal.eu to find out more.