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## Press Release - EXPANDEO and the FIRE Forum 2021

*Brussels, 18 June 2021*

On the **16th and 17th of June** 2021, EARSC held the annual **EXPANDEO 2021 & the FIRE Forum**, the conference where Earth Observation providers and users from different sectors meet, learn about market evolution and network. The event saw **830 attendees** from public institutions, the Earth Observation industry and other sectors. EXPANDEO 2021 & the FIRE Forum held **2 plenaries, 2 keynote speeches, 13 sessions** with **70 speakers**, as well as the EARSC awards ceremony. EXPANDEO provided **40 virtual stands** to our members, partners, and project leaders.

This year EXPANDEO attendees had the opportunity to have a concrete impact on the design of the DG RTD Strategic Roadmap during the **1st FIRE Forum!** The FIRE Forum pinpointed opportunities for Earth Observation uptake in six sectors: **agriculture, wind energy, infrastructure, marine, raw materials and urban development.**

The first day was opened with the welcome speech of the **EARSC Secretary General Emmanuel Pajot**, introducing the main track of EXPANDEO 2021: the FIRE Forum, the industry-led Forum for Innovation and Research in European Earth Observation. **Martina Sindelar** (DG DEFIS) shared with the attendees elements of the Space Program, the Horizon Work Program and the CASSINI initiative.

The FIRE Forum introduced for the first time **7 EO Evangelists**, who will act as “influencers” of EO uptake in their sectors. The FIRE Forum continued with **6 Parallel Sessions** for each targeted market, where sector leads kickstarted the discussions presenting where we are in terms of challenges and solutions for the sector, the EO Evangelist presented where we want to be as previously discussed with the Focus Group and then we had a round table discussion with the sector experts on how to get there.

The major outcomes of each discussion were presented during the two plenary sessions. **Fiammetta Diani (EUSPA)** closed the FIRE Forum with her keynote speech informing attendees on the upcoming user uptake activities of the new agency. The first day ended with the promotion of the **PARSEC**

**pitching championship** and the traditional **EARSC Awards Ceremony**. The winners of the awards were announced:

- PARSEC Pitching Championship - **Space4Fauna**
- The European Start-Up Award - **LiveEO GmbH**
- The European Partnership Award - "**Humanitarian downstream service**" by **Spatial Services GmbH and University of Salzburg (PLUS) | Department of Geoinformatics - Z\_GIS**
- The European Product Award - "**Industrial methane monitoring**" by **GHGSat Inc**
- The European Company Award - **Icye Oy**

**LiveEO GmbH** has been recognized as having successfully shown employment and revenues growth since its creation in 2017 utilizing satellite technology to monitor large infrastructure networks globally. **Spatial Services GmbH** and **University of Salzburg** for working for many years in a long-lasting collaboration between the department of geoinformatics - **Z\_GIS**, the humanitarian NGOs and the humanitarian downstream service "EO4Hum". **GHGSat Inc.** is awarded with the best Product award for their "Methane Infrastructure Monitoring product" working with industrial operators and regulators to ultimately mitigate those emissions. The jury recognised **Icye Oy** as having successfully developed EO services for a target market, having made strong contributions to a defining European Programme and exhibiting good revenue and or employment growth.

We started the second day of EXPANDEO with the **Annual General Meeting** restricted to EARSC members. The members accepted the new board of directors and the directors nominated and elected **Marc Tondriaux (TerraNis)** as Chairman. The term of **Chetan Pradhan** as Chairman of the Board of the Association came to an end at the AGM and we thanked Chetan for his dedicated work over the last years as the EARSC Chairman.

EXPANDEO continued with **2 parallel sessions**. During the first one, speakers from **4 markets (Oil & Gas, Agro-Insurance, Raw Materials and Insurance)** shared their views on how the Green Deal could be a catalyser for the EO service providers to develop new activities. Speakers in the second session discussed the strategic topic of skills development and addressed some of those challenges such as the increased demand for qualified personnel within the EO/GI sector to enable the growth of high value, innovative and knowledge-based services.

The afternoon started with **4 parallel sessions**. One aimed at linking the Earth Observation with the **Artificial Intelligence community**. It gathered a variety of stakeholders from the European initiatives who shared experiences on how to bridge the gap between the AI and EO communities. The other one was about **International Financial Institutions**, where it has been highlighted that EO provides a wide range of different types of information that are key to the effective planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Development Assistance activities. The third session about **e-shape** promoted **Earth Observation capabilities and EO services** with and for the users at European level, demonstrating how to integrate into users' daily workflows. In the last session '**Investing in EO**', experienced investors shared their expertise on the risk and opportunities associated with investments into the sector. The EXPANDEO journey ended with a speech from **EARSC Secretary General Emmanuel Pajot** thanking all the speakers and attendees for contributing to the success of this virtual event. If you have any suggestions or feedback for the next ExpandEO edition in 2022, please reach out to us and we will be happy to brainstorm it with you!

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