



**TO:**  
Mr Toni TOLKER-NIELSE  
European Space Agency  
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Brussels, 13/01/2022

**Copy:** Simonetta CHELI, Director of Earth Observation Programmes

**Your Reference:** ESA-DEOP-LE-2021-170

**Subject: Interest of EARSC for the Sentinel Users Preparation Programme**

Dear Mr Tolker Nielsen,

In answer to your hereabove referenced letter, I would like to confirm, on behalf of the EARSC Board of Directors, the interest and the full support of our organization to the Sentinel Users Preparation programme to be proposed by ESA at the next Ministerial Council Meeting as a new Earth Watch Element.

We indeed consider that the European downstream industry must be involved as early as possible in the development of new potential applications made possible by this new generation of instruments in order to be ready for proposing to end-users operational solutions when these satellites will be ready for use.

For that, we strongly believe that a close link with ESA experts, having the appropriate knowledge of the capacities of these new instruments, both on the technical and on the operational aspects, are necessary. And we understand that this is specifically the purpose of the SUP programme, as the GES program was at the time of the preparation for the operations of the current Sentinel satellites operations.

With respect to the two concerns raised by some Member States, as expressed in your letter, our position is:

- 1) We don't believe that such a programme may introduce any bias to the downstream market, but, at the opposite, that it can make all downstream actors aware of the future capacities of this new generation of instruments, and, as such, create a fair and open competition for new ideas and new solutions, as usually handled by the ESA process. It shall indeed mitigate the risk of having differences of knowledge among the European services providers between

those who can get access to the appropriate information because of the involvement of their national agency or industry in the development of the satellites, and those who don't have. Furthermore, we can recall that the purpose of the SUP program, as far as we see it, is not to build a European Ecosystem but much more to help the European industry be prepared for the global competition. The priority is to avoid that the net result of the European upstream investment in Copernicus, associated with the Free and Open Data policy as a rule for its data access, benefits mainly to the non-European industry, sometimes heavily supported by national institutions.

- 2) We understand that a financial co-investment of the downstream industry could be considered for the development of applications closed enough to market opportunities. Still, we would prefer investigating other more innovative ways for triggering Public/ Private partnerships mechanisms, like end users' early adopters support and pre-commercial contracts for public institutions. We are, of course, ready to discuss it further with ESA, as we have already started to do with the European institutions.

Furthermore, we think that this can apply to the future Sentinels missions, only after having performed early studies related to the technical feasibility of their applications and having got a clear understanding and some commitment on the operational performances for the delivery of the images, which will result from these new sensors operations. Can we recall that the financing of these operations costs are supposed to be 100% born by the European and ESA budget?

We hope that these elements clarify our position for our support to this initiative.

Remaining at your disposal for any further questions,

Yours Sincerely,

Marc TONDRIAUX

EARSC Chairman.

