



NEREUS Position Paper

on

the EC-proposal for a

REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on establishing the European Earth Observation Programme (Copernicus) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 911/2010COM(2013) 312 final

(Authored by NEREUS EO/Copernicus Working Group)

As voice of the European Regions, NEREUS not only serves as an advocate for the regions in matters of space uses but also as a direct channel to the regional users of space technologies (such as local authorities, SMEs, universities and research institutes and citizens). The network is the key interface between the regional level and national and European institutions. NEREUS currently unites 25 European regions and 40 Associate Members with the common objective to spread the use and understanding of space technologies across Europe for the benefit of regions and their citizens



NEREUS calls for highlighting the regional dimension of the Copernicus program. Regions as the political and economic decision makers of their territory are concerned with the program in two respects: firstly, they distinguish themselves as a major public **end-user group** of satellite based services and thus represent an already a significant part of the EO-product market. Local and regional authorities (LRA's) need services based on geospatial and space-based information for territorial management, implementing EU-environmental legislation and delivering public policies to Europe's citizens. While being a driver for sustainable growth, regions as the closest level to the citizens link space uses with numerous public policies and thus contribute significantly to make Copernicus a cornerstone of the ambitious objectives of Europe 2020¹.

Secondly, regions host and promote different business and science communities in their territory that use and develop Copernicus services (intermediate user). Consequently regional involvement is essential to ensure maximum user uptake by professionals in the field but also by citizens. In their role as policy makers, when promoting regional business development and innovation, Copernicus is an economic factor to regions. Foremost the development of the downstream sector offers their companies, in particular their SMEs, new business opportunities and a potential for economic growth. Thus regions are also concerned as regards the intermediate user.

With respect to the proposed Copernicus Regulation, NEREUS wishes to stress that the **end-user** is at the core of the program. Thus all aspects that are relevant to spread a broad **USE** of Copernicus data and services across Europe are fundamental: broad societal awareness, well defined Copernicus user-communities, guarantee of long term availability, rapid and reliable access, clear legislation that authorizes use of Copernicus data free of charge, strategic development and deployment of regional services.

Broad regional use: Copernicus is a user driven program and the uptake by potential end-users is not only the program's key success criteria but also a vital indicator to what extent the EU-investment succeeds in capitalizing for societal needs and economic growth. Further to this, the up-take by potential user communities and their experiences are crucial for advancing the system further and improve it to make sure that Europe has also excellent EO-capabilities in the future. In the regulation this significant role of the regional end-user should be also reflected by a share in the **governance** of the Copernicus program, being present in relevant bodies giving account on the user-perspective.

Bearing in mind the impact of Copernicus as a tool for better informed policy making and territorial management serving well defined "**Copernicus user communities**", NEREUS wishes to underline the need for promoting the program at public level. Europe's citizens need to better understand how Copernicus and its services can work for them and which benefits they may gain. A future Copernicus program post 2014 has to make provisions for increased awareness raising, communicating the benefits of Copernicus and enhancing the user-uptake.

Bearing in mind the commercial opportunities of Copernicus, NEREUS puts strong emphasis on regional and local SMEs as well as relevant business and science communities in the territories (intermediate user). A Copernicus program post 2014 has to set up framework conditions for them to optimally exploit the system for business and societal purposes. In this respect the Union needs to ensure the **continuous, easily and timely, reliable availability of Copernicus data**. The sustainability of the system is an important element for the private sector to engage in investing and developing space services and applications.

Regional aspects of data access: An indispensable prerequisite to enhance regional user uptake and the continuous development of downstream services at regional level, especially for near real time applications, is **rapid and reliable data access and reliable dissemination of data (Full, Open, Free and**

¹ Europe 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" COM(2010)



Easy (FOFE) access to Copernicus observation data and information products). Potential users across Europe need to be able to get access to Copernicus data in a fast and continuous manner. With Copernicus growing increasingly operational, data, products and services have to be delivered in an operational way all over Europe to foster the use of Copernicus information and increase the development of new services in a sustainable way. The amount of information to be managed will encompass a huge volume of space data (SENTINEL and the contributing missions). Allowing a large group of user from different EU Member States access to systems might become a serious challenge and implies interoperability of the information systems. The current Copernicus Regulation should outline more precisely the scenarios that will be put in place in the right time to grant user access and data dissemination across Europe. Overall, it should clarify how fast data access can be assured to regions with less developed or no space/ground infrastructure. In this respect it has to be underlined that the access to Copernicus information in all parts of Europe is a strategic economic and societal factor of the development of the downstream sector that can be guaranteed only by public (European and/or national) authorities. With respect to the two solutions scenarios that are currently under discussion, the “Push-strategy” that previews the deployment of specific dissemination facilities in the territories at Member State level and the “Pull-approach” to set up a joint facility at EU-level, NEREUS calls for focusing on the regional level. Also regional stakeholders in the territories need to have the same access as EU- and national players. Regional structures like the RCO-network (Regional Contact Offices Network) could be equipped and tasked to ensure this access for all regional players.

Recognizing that the access to Copernicus information is a strategic, economical and societal factor to the development of the system that in a wide dimension can only be guaranteed by public European and/or National Authorities, NEREUS proposes to establish a dedicated **European Copernicus Data Distribution Infrastructure - ECDDI** (which could be supervised, by the Copernicus Committee but should be based on a network of National/Regional nodes).

In order to engage in the optimal utilisation and commercial exploitation of Copernicus data for services and products, citizens and potential service providers need clear legislation that authorises them to use the data. In this respect a **free and open data policy (FOF)** is a sine qua non for the commercial exploitation of the system as well as the development of a rich, actually open and competitive market of Copernicus downstream services. Europe’s citizens have already paid Europe’s space flagship with their tax money and should not be made to pay for the same data several times. This means that the FOF data policy should be assumed (and included in the licensing conditions at the moment of third party data acquisition) for all Copernicus data and information.

As a new system, Copernicus has to struggle to get its place in the market and convince potential business players to invest in the system and develop services and products. Providing Copernicus data free of charge will result in a higher market competition and motivation to engage with Copernicus and enable service providers to deliver services and produce products at attractive prices which will then have a stimulating impact on their deployment by LRA’s.

Regional aspects of services: The proposed Copernicus Regulation lacks a long term strategy for the further development of services (six core services) in various application areas for the next program period. This joint European long term planning for services that allows a proper management of budget and work programmes is of particular importance for regional-users. Thus, including the overall Copernicus planning post-2014 is a vital orientation for the regional players (Local and Regional Authorities, SMEs) to prepare for the utilisation of Copernicus services in time. Further to this, the Union lacks **a systematic overview to which EU-legislation (Implementation of EU-Directives) Copernicus could bring an added value**. Since Copernicus was developed amongst others particularly for environmental purposes, a strategy for the development of regional services and their deployment should start at assessing the needs for environmental purposes and territorial management tasks. A systematic analysis and inventory of relevant EU-environmental legislation should be incorporated as part of such a strategy.