

Dear President, representatives of EU institutions and colleagues, it is an honor, as Vice President of NEREUS, to open this General assembly.

We are living in challenging times, defined by deeply complex geopolitical landscape. It's in this environment that we have to see the EU space economy as a rapidly evolving ecosystem designed to secure Europe's strategic autonomy, boost industrial competitiveness, and fuel the green and digital transitions.

Hosted by the Emilia-Romagna Region, the 2026 NEREUS Regional Symposium will examine how space data, powered by AI and High-Performance Computing, can advance Europe's resilience, digital and green transitions and technological sovereignty, ruled out by EU as well as State legislation.

**In this context, it is crucial for NEREUS regions to bridge the gap between space service providers and regional needs through dedicated dialogue and matchmaking.**

**The EU space economy is moving from a traditional, centralized approach to a decentralized ecosystem,** urging regions to embrace space data as a utility for local economic and environmental progress.

**For regions, this means transforming from “passive users” and “financial providers of space technology” into active participants in the “NewSpace” agenda.**

For this reason, as President of the Basilicata Region, during the NEREUS visit to the European Space Agency's ESRI center in Frascati, Italy, **I launched the idea of developing a NEREUS/ESA**

## **pilot project: 'Building Skills and Capacity for Earth Observation and Testing Space Solutions in European Regions.'**

**The project stems from a clear need: a skilled workforce is key to a thriving European Space Economy.**

This pilot supports collaboration between regions, academia, industry, NEREUS, ESA, and the EC with **3** objectives:

- First raising awareness among politicians, as political will, is crucial for the uptake of EO and space solutions**
- Secondly, to build EO and space competencies in regional managers and officials and bridge the skills gap in EU regions.**
- Third, to facilitate the uptake of EO and space solutions in regional policies and services through “regional testbeds”, aiming to make public decisions, policies, funding, and innovation procurement more timely, effective, and sustainable.**

**The Basilicata Region, together with the NEREUS Secretariat, is coordinating the design of this pilot project with interested regions.** Following several rounds of stakeholder consultations, we decided to test the feasibility of this project idea in the framework of the ESA/NEREUS Copernicus4Regions initiative.

**Consequently, in the coming months, we are organizing a one-day pilot training program in Brussels—delivered in a hybrid format—for officials and managers from the Basilicata Region's Environmental and Digital Agenda Directorates, focusing on water monitoring via satellite data.**

During the session, experts will present 3 Copernicus4Regions User Stories, while ESA technicians will outline potential space-based solutions to the specific challenges and needs identified by our

officials. Interpretation in Italian will be provided, and the training will be open to all interested NEREUS regions. This pilot may be followed by further sessions to explore the topics covered in greater depth.

**We invite all interested regions to participate in the NEREUS pilot project.**

**The pilot project builds on the success of the first European Master's Degree in Earth Observation organized by the University of Basilicata.** This English-taught program attracts global talent and trains the next generation of space professionals, strengthening both regional and EU competitiveness through talent retention.

**In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that no single region or Member State can address the challenges of strategic autonomy, the space single market, digital transition, sustainability, and security alone.**

**Through its network of regions, universities, research centers, and SMEs, NEREUS provides a concrete platform to strengthen this cooperation and bolster Europe's competitiveness and resilience in the global space economy.**