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Regional cooperation in space: policies, governance and legal tools (1)

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COPERNICUS – EUROPE'S EYE ON EARTH

Abstract

The Copernicus programme is a cornerstone of the European Union's efforts to monitor the Earth and its many ecosystems, whilst ensuring that its citizens are prepared and protected in the face of crises and natural or man-made disasters. Building on the foundations of deeply rooted scientific knowledge and on decades of EU investment in research and technological development, the Copernicus programme is exemplary of European strategic cooperation in space research and industrial development. The Copernicus programme places a world of insight about our planet at the disposal of citizens, public authorities and policy makers, scientists, entrepreneurs and businesses on a full, free and open basis. The programme is able to support various policy areas important for the EU and its Member States such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, biodiversity and environmental protection, climate and energy, civil protection and humanitarian aid, public health, tourism, transport and safety, as well as urban and regional planning. Moreover, Copernicus has strategic importance since it provides capacity to support the EU as a global actor. For example, Copernicus is designated as one of Europe's main contributions to the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). In addition, Copernicus provides the EU with tools for participating in international efforts such as strengthening the global climate observation system. It will contribute to the EU Strategy for Africa through the development of an African observatory and the implementation of the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development initiative. Copernicus has also been highlighted in the EU's dialogues with USA, Russia, China and India. By making the vast majority of its data, analyses, forecasts and maps freely available and accessible, Copernicus contributes towards the development of new innovative applications and services, tailored to the needs of specific groups of users, which touch on a variety of economic and cultural or recreational activities, from urban planning, sailing and insurance to archaeology. The Programme marks the beginning of a new era in Earth observation and will represent the most sophisticated and advanced civil Earth observation system in the world. Sentinel satellites are being launched, operational Copernicus services are available, and the first green shoots of the "Copernicus Economy" are starting to be seen in the form of value-added ("downstream") applications.