

SYMPOSIUM ON VISIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE FAR FUTURE (D4)
Contribution of Space Activities to Solving Global Societal Challenges (4)

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SPACE AT THE SERVICE OF CITIZENS – THE ESA VIEWPOINT AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

Abstract

What is common between an electricity provider, a container ship on the Oceans, an oil gas producer, an expedition during winter-over in Antarctica, a traveller in a city or remote area of the world or a policy-maker? These are examples of those that benefit or could benefit one way or another from spacecraft, and could benefit much more in the future.

The European Space Agency since now nearly 40 years, and its predecessors before, has developed and operated dozens of satellites for its Member States or third parties, as well as launchers, technology and ground segment. It is the only Agency in the world with competences over all space domains, space science, Earth observation, telecommunications, navigation, human spaceflight and microgravity, security.

In most of these domains, applications have been developed, putting satellites and their data at the disposal of the citizens and society. One can mention weather forecast, telecommunications services or navigation systems. But there are many more and they are often unknown, preventing many potential users, whether they are citizens, regions, states, industries or service companies from using them or identifying potential future capabilities. Many services also do not exist yet, because their need has not yet been identified or because the capabilities of existing space systems cannot yet provide them.

In order to support all users and potential users of space services, help them find out what is available and express their needs, and support the development of new services to increase the usefulness of its programmes, ESA has put in place a coordination of activities that could serve a certain number of “Earthly” themes to help solving global society challenges.

Themes include today Energy (energy production, distribution or efficiency), the Poles (Arctic – knowledge and economic development of the region - and Antarctic – support to the scientific community or safety of touristic development), or the Oceans (“maritimisation” of the world, exchanges, security and safety). Additional themes are added when deemed necessary. For each of them, an analysis is performed of the current activities across the Agency and identification of needs is done, via contacts within the “user” community or specific studies. Web pages inside the ESA web site have been created to ease the transmission of information from and to the users.

The rationale behind each theme, its status, main elements and planned activities will be presented.