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

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TACKLING EUROPEAN REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL NEEDS BY SPACE-BASED
APPLICATIONS

Abstract

In Europe Regions are regarded as an important player in implementing policies, in favouring growth, development and employment in a balanced manner throughout each country's territory as well as in looking after the environment and in responding to disasters and emergencies. To some extent they also have an important role to play in research, development and innovation policies. In this respect a considerable flow of money is channelled through Regions from EU (and ESA) Member States along with regulatory responsibilities. Regions within Europe differ very much in the way they are equipped, in terms of organisational structures and expertise, to successfully tackle all these tasks. Moreover some of the tasks are common to several Regions (also from different countries) involving a significant geographical extension. Space based systems (and/or data derived from them) can provide an optimal solution both in terms of applications to tackle regulatory or environmental issues or as a field for RD investment leveraging on the regional players (Academia, SMEs, Research centres etc.) and favouring the creation of highly skilled job and opportunity for economic growth. Efforts are on-going to raise the awareness among regional decision-makers about the opportunity offered by space-based applications in responding to some of the challenges faced by the European Regions. The paper will dwell on the possibility to stimulate Regions in Europe to define and fund their own space project or space related development, availing themselves of the funds entrusted to them, with the technical support of ESA (and possibly of the National Space Agencies). These can be, for instance, applications based on data derived from existing space systems or the exploration of a given research field that may have dual use (terrestrial and space). The Regions would be able to inject their own requirements and needs, favour to some extent the involvement of local SMEs and research centres and invest the funds available while, at the same time, take advantage of the technical expertise and support by space experts to ensure their proposed project is technically sound and viable. Overall this would contribute, next to the major space development programmes, to maximising the utilisation of space-based systems to tackle today's societal challenges.