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Integrated Applications End-to-End Solutions (2)Author: Ms. Alexandra Jercaianu
EURISY, France

HOW CAN INNOVATION HUBS ADVANCE MARKET GROWTH FOR SATELLITE BASED APPLICATIONS?

Abstract

Satellite applications are expected to enable and deliver a plethora of innovative services, providing socio-economic benefits across a range of multi-disciplinary sectors. The numerous business incubators, start-up challenges and innovation hubs show that there is no shortage of innovation when it comes to satellite applications. The R&D sector also enjoys a wide institutional support, with numerous funding schemes being made available for scientists and companies across Europe and beyond. However, market penetration and large scale take-up of satellite applications have remained limited.

Case studies, observations and reports confirm that both developers and users face difficulties in converting one-off pilot projects into operational services. While end users appear sceptical in grasping the usefulness of the technology they are being offered, developers may encounter challenges in providing sustainable economically viable products on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, despite positive technology results, users appear unconvinced when it comes to adopting satellite services beyond project frameworks. Furthermore, a service that has spent years in the making in the context of a demonstration project with one user can prove completely unsuitable for another, while off-the-shelf products can prove incompatible with their daily operations. Few users would change existing practices to make way for new technologies, unless there is a clear benefit to doing so. Concurrently, many Start-ups and SMEs within the space industry are a product of, or have emerged from, research environments which are traditionally disjointed from private commercial services.

Eurisy, a non-profit association of European government space agencies, has been working to understand not only the factors that influence satellite service take-up, but also the challenges encountered on both sides of the aisle.

The paper will aim to show how policy initiatives at a European level can support coordinated and sustainable technology diffusion across various sectors. EU Directives, such as the EU Water Framework Directive or INSPIRE have proved successful in driving data sharing and use. European support programmes can thus act as exemplary platforms to assemble congruent user needs and test innovative satellite based services. Drawing on interviews and field research, the present paper will highlight case studies on how cross-sector innovation hubs can help products and services move beyond R&D by better integrating market requirements and user needs.