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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
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To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	14468/17
Subject:	The Mid-term Evaluation of the Copernicus Programme - Council conclusions (adopted on 1/12/2017)

Delegations will find in Annex the Council conclusions on "The Mid-term Evaluation of the Copernicus Programme" as adopted by the Council at its 3580th meeting held on 1 December 2017.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON

"The Mid-term Evaluation of the Copernicus Programme"

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING:

– The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) [1] which establishes an EU shared competence in Space;

– The Framework Agreement between the European Union and the European Space Agency (ESA)[2];

– The European Council Conclusions of October 2017 which highlight the importance of successfully building a Digital Europe[3];

– The Communication of the European Commission on a Space Strategy for Europe[4] and the Joint statement on Shared Vision and Goals for the future of Europe in Space[5], signed on 26 October 2016 by the Commission on behalf of the EU and by ESA;

1 In particular Articles 4 and 189
2 OJ L 261 of 6.8.2004, p. 64
3 doc. EUCO 14/17
4 doc. 13758/16
5 doc. 12808/1/16 REV 1

– The Council Conclusions on "EU Space Industrial Policy - Releasing the potential for economic growth in the space sector" of May 2013[6], on "Underpinning the European space renaissance: orientations and future challenges" of December 2014[7], on "The Global Strategy on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy" of October 2016[8] and on "A Space strategy for Europe" of May 2017[9];

– Regulation (EU) No 377/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 establishing the Copernicus Programme and repealing Regulation (EU) No 911/2010 and in particular Article 32 thereof[10].

Introduction

1. WELCOMES the Report from the Commission on a "Mid-term evaluation of the Copernicus programme", RECOGNISES the significant progress achieved in the implementation of the programme since 2014 as a result of which Copernicus has become an excellent example of European cooperation and the most comprehensive Earth Observation (EO) programme of global value, contributing to tackling challenges of global nature and RECONFIRMS the current objectives of Copernicus.

2. STRESSES that Copernicus has a key role in ensuring independent access for Europe to strategic geospatial information supporting many EU, national and regional policies and NOTES that public authorities in Europe as well as globally are increasingly integrating Copernicus information into their services and decision-making processes.

3. UNDERLINES the fundamental importance of further developing an effective, well-integrated and secure Copernicus infrastructure, including space and ground segments, and services, to secure their continuity and future evolution, while engaging closely with Copernicus users in understanding their needs and priorities, without prejudice to the next MFF.

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6 doc. 10295/13
7 doc. 16502/14
8 doc. 13202/16
9 doc. 9817/17
10 OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, pp. 44- 66

4. HIGHLIGHTS the need to provide long term predictability and planning certainty to all stakeholders involved in Copernicus and AIMS at ensuring the appropriate financing for the maintenance and evolution of all programme components, without prejudice to the next MFF.

5. WELCOMES the approach put forward in the Commission report which follows the data value chain of Copernicus: from data gathering and processing to data and information distribution, to user and market uptake activities, and INVITES the Commission to build on such an approach when shaping the future of Copernicus, while considering the user-driven nature of the programme and the potential for demand-driven commercial exploitation by SMEs at all points of the value-chain.

Data acquisition

6. UNDERLINES that the volume, consistency, continuity, reliability**,** management and quality of data and information, provided via free, full and open data policy, are very successful elements of Copernicus implementation and STRESSES the need to guarantee the long-term and secure continuity of free, full and open data provision.

7. ACKNOWLEDGES the progress made in deploying the Copernicus space infrastructure and CALLS upon the Commission and ESA for the timely completion and launch of the remaining Sentinel satellites, relying on European launchers as a priority; RECOGNISES that the Copernicus space infrastructure has been supporting the objectives of Copernicus users and services and STRESSES the importance of the continued provision of an effective and sustainable space-based infrastructure delivering accurate, reliable and high-quality data.

8. UNDERLINES that the evolution of the system, including current and future Sentinel missions together with data from contributing missions and in-situ data, should take into account the following aspects: recent trends, research, technological advances and innovations impacting the EO domain, including the perspective of the "New Space"; evolving user needs and services; Member States' investments and contributions into the EO domain; new challenges facing the Union, including but not limited to climate change, sustainable development and security.

9. RECOGNISES the importance of leveraging and taking maximum advantage of space assets in the Member States, ESA, EUMETSAT and other Entrusted Entities[11] and industry, including contributing missions and in situ monitoring capacity, and CALLS UPON the Commission and Member States to explore new operational and business models in order to further complement Copernicus' capacities and strengthen the availability of data sources required to meet emerging user needs.

Data and information processing

10. RECOGNISES the importance of ensuring the long-term sustainability and further development of the Copernicus services at the core of the programme in order to satisfy public sector needs and those arising from Europe's international commitments, and to maximise opportunities for commercial exploitation.

11. CALLS on the Commission and its Entrusted Entities to engage closely with different user communities across Europe in further developing the Copernicus services and products portfolio to ensure that evolving public sector and policy needs are met and thus the uptake of EO data can be maximised.

12. CALLS on the Commission to examine possible synergies between Copernicus and other EU programmes, in spreading the use of Copernicus data and services and to drive the demand for commercial applications and services, in case of integrated applications especially with Galileo and EGNOS.

[11] Entrusted Entities as referred to in Article 11 of Regulation No 377/2014 (OJ L 122, 24.04.2014, p. 56)

Data access and distribution

13. UNDERLINES that user needs are evolving, calling for a large-scale and user-friendly access to, processing and exploitation of Copernicus data and information, at various timeliness levels; RECOGNISES the limitations of the current data and information infrastructure and STRESSES the need for a new, more integrated approach, both at EU and Member States level, ensuring fast and easy access to Copernicus data and information and enabling its integration with other sources of data and information; in this context, URGES the Commission, in close consultation with Member States, to pursue an evolution of the programme that would meet such needs.

14. UNDERLINES the need to set up a comprehensive EO data eco-system in Europe to enhance the data offer from a wide range of European assets and provide for a globally competitive data management system. In this context, SUPPORTS the Commission's initiative to put in place Copernicus Data and Information Access Services (DIAS) to ensure fast and efficient access to Copernicus data and information; EMPHASISES the need to promote DIAS within Member States and establish synergies with their assets in order to maximise and strengthen market uptake of Copernicus data and information; ENVISAGES DIAS to constitute one of the main reference points for non-space communities and users, in particular SMEs.

User uptake

15. REITERATES that the future evolution of Copernicus should be based on evolving user requirements, particularly those of core institutional users, and that Copernicus should continue to maintain the principle of being a user-driven programme at its core. RECOGNISES the emergence of new user communities of non-space background, demanding access to data, information and products in a timely and user-friendly manner;

16. NOTES that the mere availability of data is not enough to maximise its envisaged socio-economic impact; thus CONSIDERS of critical importance for Member States and Commission to take a stronger approach to stimulate demand for Copernicus data and services by public administrations, as the key users, and by the private sector, in particular SMEs. In this context, INVITES the Commission and Member States to establish closer links between Copernicus and EU and national policies in order to drive the demand for commercial applications and services and to enable enterprises, particularly SMEs and start-ups, to develop applications based on Copernicus data and information aiming to develop a globally competitive EO data eco-system in Europe.

17. INVITES the Commission to enhance the coherence between the EU research framework programme and the EU Space programmes, in particular for the development of core services as well as downstream applications and services.

18. REITERATES the importance of targeted capacity building and outreach measures by Member States and the Commission, including but not limited to the new Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA)[12], to increase the ability of all Member States to fully benefit from the opportunities created by Copernicus and stimulate a competitive downstream sector, including public authorities, research community and private actors.

Conclusions

19. HIGHLIGHTS that the effective implementation of Copernicus' free, full and open data policy has been instrumental in driving strong demand for its data and information and has led to Copernicus becoming one of the largest EO data providers in the world. In this context, INVITES the Commission to explore ways to ensure European actors can optimally benefit from European investments in Copernicus, without infringing the free, full and open data policy; CALLS UPON the Commission to analyse the impacts of the free, full and open data policy implementation.

20. STRESSES that the design and the implementation of the next generation of the Copernicus infrastructure and services must be properly and timely addressed, in close collaboration with Member States, ESA, EUMETSAT and other Entrusted Entities.

21. UNDERLINES that unlocking the socio-economic potential of Copernicus remains one of key challenges for Member States and the Commission and a priority for the years to come.

22. EMPHASISES the need for a wider communication and awareness raising activities on the Copernicus programme for non-Space users, both at national and international level, focusing on its successes and potential benefits.

23. REITERATES that the continuity of the Copernicus infrastructure and the sustainability of services, data and information, complemented in a well-integrated manner with other sources of data and information, remain critical for the long-term success of the programme and for sustaining the emerging EO data eco-system in Europe.

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[12] A long-term cooperation mechanism between the Commission and entities in the Member States to promote and co-finance the development and uptake of EO-based services and applications

24. UNDERLINES the importance of Copernicus for the provision of public services; CALLS on the Commission to assess how appropriate funding as well as incentives for private sector involvement can preserve and further develop the European added value of the Copernicus programme; URGES the Commission, Member States and other actors involved to explore new partnership models and innovative ways of financing, for example a smarter use of the purchasing power of public authorities for creating markets of scale for applications.

25. RECOGNISES that global challenges require global efforts; therefore, EMPHASISES the importance of engaging with key international partners in pooling capacities for tackling these challenges in a coordinated manner; STRESSES the crucial role of Copernicus in supporting Europe's commitment in tackling global challenges while seizing the unique opportunity of becoming a leader in the fast growing EO market, providing in that context an effective tool to enable cooperation with non-EU countries.

26. CALLS on the Commission to prepare for the evolution and to provide a long-term vision for the future of the Copernicus programme, in close cooperation with Member States, ESA and Entrusted Entities, in order to provide for continuity, enhanced visibility and predictability to all actors involved in Copernicus, thus allowing them to contribute to creating a positive and predictable investment climate both in the upstream and downstream sectors; EMPHASISES the need for a structured dialogue with industrial stakeholders and civil society to provide greater visibility on the evolution of the programme.

27. WELCOMES the successful implementation of the existing governance structure, building on the successful partnership with Member States, ESA and Entrusted Entities; INVITES the Commission to explore potential operational synergies with other EU programmes and policies, where appropriate.

28. RECOGNISES the need to develop the civil security dimension of Copernicus in order to respond to evolving user needs and STRESSES that Copernicus should remain a user-driven civil programme under civil governance and control.