

EARSC Events and the launch of the industry certification scheme

Last week we held the EARSC AGM and organised several events around it. It was a pretty intensive 2 days - as were the weeks leading up to it - but we had some great discussions and there is a lot to write about! I am not going to attempt to cover everything in one go so watch out over the next week(s) for further articles and news.

The evening before the AGM we held a workshop where I presented the first results coming from our 2015 industry survey. We closed off collecting data in May and are really just getting started with the analysis. Initial results confirm continued growth in the industry but it will take a few weeks more before we are ready to start publishing them.

In the evening we had our now annual cocktail at which we presented the EARSC Company Achievement award for 2015. The winner was GAF but it was very tight between them and the other finalists. All 5 finalists (Blackbridge, Deimos, GAF, GMV and Planetek) could have been worthy winners but the laureate and EARSC award goes to GAF who really merit the recognition of their peers in being nominated winners. GAF will celebrate their 30th anniversary later this year and were among the first few companies created in the 1980's to exploit the new remote sensing technology.

After the AGM we had yet another workshop which according to everybody I spoke to afterwards was really appreciated. One attendee even described it as maybe the best meeting that they had been to! It brought together representatives from each of the 7 EEE's (European Entrusted Entity) and industry to address the question of how to work more closely together on Copernicus. Industry wishes to become more involved and the EEE's (which are the public bodies with delegated authority from the EC to manage the procurement of the Copernicus Services) will need the industry to be active and supportive in order to deliver their missions. Hence it was agreed that there is a mutual interest to work together. Nevertheless, there are a lot of barriers to overcome which is the purpose of the discussions.

At the AGM we launched the EARSC Certification scheme which is designed to help companies obtain a management certification specifically adapted to the needs of the EO Services industry. The goal is to give more confidence to customers that companies are operating in a professional manner. The EARSC scheme is applicable to all sizes of company and allows the possibility of certification to scheme requirements with or without full ISO9001 compliance. We consider this to be an important step in bringing the industry out of a research and development culture into an operational and professional industrial sector. Full details can be found on our web site along with some details of the companies which have been testing it and, in the future a growing list of the qualifying companies which are recognised.

The scheme also includes a DRD – Document Requirements Definition – which provides a template for specifying products. It is open for all to use and we encourage companies and customers alike to make use of it.

Certification is a subject which we shall continue to work on and over the next few months we are studying how we could start to tackle the difficult topic of product certification. The study has been initiated and should report by the end of the year. Meanwhile we continue to advance to help the EO services industry develop through all the initiatives which I have mentioned above. I'll come back to talk more about these in the near future.