

A busy Summer

This week, containing the public holiday for the Assumption Day, is the quietest of the year in Brussels apart from Xmas/New Year. It also marks the ending of the summer holiday period for many and the start of the coming back to work. But things have not stood still over the summer and two things stand out for me which have each been subject to significant development over the summertime.

Firstly, we have managed to get the ITT issued for the development of eoMALL. Most of you will know that eoMALL is the concrete manifestation of the project we have initiated to establish a Marketplace for EO services. It is being guided by the Marketplace Alliance (MAEOS) which is the group within EARSC formed to co-operate on the venture. ESA agreed to procure the eoMALL for us and over the last few months we have been working with them to prepare the technical specification and the statement of work. We have asked for an innovative procurement process and I think we have achieved this with a 2 phase approach. For the first phase, lasting only around 3 months, 3 “winners” will be selected from those proposing solutions. A small fee will be paid to come up with a working prototype (demonstrator). At the end of the 3 months, a single winner will be selected to go on and develop the full solution. This will enable creative ideas to be put forward. We plan that this will allow us to meet our first target to have a beta version running by end January, and to follow a progressive development over the following 18 months. We are grateful to ESA for agreeing this approach and also for their support to the industry.

Secondly, the winners of the competition for the DIAS (Copernicus Data and Information Access Service) have been selected. No announcement has yet been made as the EC wishes to do this, probably after the holiday period, but it is a fairly open secret, even if I am not going to reveal the answers here! DIAS will be a major element to help build future services based on Copernicus data – but not just – and we shall learn how far each proposal has managed to push the boundaries in due course. Each or all of the services proposed will encourage the emergence of an ecosystem of service providers. The eoMALL will enable those providers to reach a wider market than would otherwise be reasonable. That eoMALL is backed by a co-operative venture should remove competitive issues and allow it to become the foremost site and tool to promote the European industry.

Both these initiatives are designed to help overcome the fragmentation of the industry in Europe. Both should help “ecosystems” of service providers to develop and partnerships to form to build upon prior and future investments. There is still a great deal of work to do – for anyone who has not seen our recent position paper on Copernicus Evolution it is available on our web-site – but the DIAS and the eoMALL are two important steps forward. The autumn should bring more; but that is for another blog.