

GEOWeek 2019

The Melbourne cup had just been run and some 300 delegates were living the excitement of the race, standing around, sipping wine or juice and discussing business. This was the focal point and culmination of a year-long effort to prepare a strong, European industrial participation in the GEO Plenary in Canberra. It was a great success and enormous thanks to Eva, Phil and Graeme of Frontiersi, our partners in Australia and to Natassa and Rory from the EARSC team.

Prior to the race itself, 5 European and 5 Australian companies had presented themselves and after the race, a B2B event was arranged where each had a table at which to sit and meet prospective business partners. These tables seemed to be very busy for a long time into the afternoon. I hope some business relationships will emerge from those talks. I was really pleased to hear that this had indeed been the result for at least one company following the B2B event held last year at the GEO Plenary in Kyoto.

The last week has been the GEO week in Canberra and I am on my way back to Brussels. It has been a good week for EARSC with a number of successful events. We had 10 companies that were in Canberra under the EARSC delegation and as many as 10 further European companies which also participated through national delegations or through projects. We had been working with Frontiersi since the venue was announced and also with the Australian space agency in order to maximise their meeting opportunities throughout the week.

This year, the efforts of the Australian hosts to engage the industry were great. The industry track, introduced for the first time, included a much more extensive exhibition than had previously been the case, a number of dedicated workshops to gather industrial views and of course the EU-Australian business meeting held around the Melbourne cup.

Next years plenary will be held in South Africa in Port Elizabeth. Although we do not have a partner this time, we do have a number of good contacts in the South African Space Agency. We have assurances that the industry track will be maintained and made even better and we shall hope to take even more European companies to the 2020 GEOweek. Where else can you have the opportunity to meet with geo-aware representatives from 109 countries around the world? Further, if industry starts to attend in force, it can become a primary, global event in the calendar where global stakeholders and industry can meet to discuss business.

However, a message to my industrial colleagues, do not think of this as a sales event. It is not, it is a marketing event where you need to go to understand the clients needs. It will be pointless to list off all the products and services which you can offer. The chances of making a direct connection are rather long. But if you consider it an entry point into those 109 countries then it offers the potential to help you in export business and to develop international partnerships. Plus, if it develops in that way, other public representatives from the 109 countries will also be encouraged to attend which will make the meeting even more interesting.

As EARSC, we shall seek to maximise the opportunities which you may have to engage and to expose your company. For all who were there, let us have your views and feedback on what was good for you and what could be improved. There is a strong will within the GEO community to engage more with the private sector and a recognition that industry has a strong role to play in creating the Global Earth Observation System of Systems; serving society globally. As industry, we have a great opportunity to shape the relationship and create business partnerships. I look forward to seeing you next year in Port Elizabeth!!