

Raising awareness of Value

The recent announcement of cuts in the EU budget for the space programme discussed in my last blog, came at a critical time and indicates the pressure which EU leaders were under at the time. I expressed our disappointment at seeing a significant cut in the budget for Copernicus that amounted to nearly 20% from initial proposals (€6b down to €4.8b). It is likely that one of the new Sentinel missions will need to be cancelled or postponed.

But, as leaders cut the space budget, are they aware of the benefits which the investment brings? Overall, the impression is that leaders and governments in general are not aware and treat the space budget as a strategic investment securing a place on the geopolitical stage ie Europe's place in the world. Historically, the investment in the civilian space effort has been considered as a part of the R&D activities.

But the EARSC survey into the EO services industry shows that over 50% of the public sector spend is as a user of EO satellite data. This number has been consistent since we started the survey back in 2012 – and has even grown slightly over that period. This demonstrates that the use of the EO data by public sector decision makers is operational and supports public sector efforts.

But these users are not those investing in the space programme. They are in charge of other policies and public programmes and so they do not see the link between what they do and the investments made in space and in Copernicus. If they do see it, they see the size of the space programme as being too significant for them to support by themselves. I recall this very clearly in the very early days of GMES when we were trying to get DG Environment (DG-XI at the time) to support the proposal. DG Environment had to be told, and reassured, that they were not being asked to pay – but their support as a key user was necessary to move the proposals along.

These roles are many and varied ranging from understanding and combatting climate change, to supporting regulation, the building of roads, the move towards digital farming, the supply of essential goods through ice-bound waters etc etc. All these examples can be found within our work on demonstrating the value in EO through the programme we call SeBS (Sentinel Benefits Studies).

Indeed, the [SeBS cases](#) show that enormous value is being delivered which underpin and more than justify the investment by each European country in the Sentinels and Copernicus.

So, how do we ensure that our most senior decision makers are aware of this value?

More effort is necessary to communicate and more effort is needed to construct the case. In SeBS, we believe we have developed a robust methodology which can be used by anyone. We are working with other international partners under the umbrella of [GeoValue](#) to share our knowledge, to learn from others and investigate how to extend the methodology further. With ESA, under SeBS activities, we develop stories of how the cases work. Each case demonstrates value on its own but in combination we are able to obtain a truly rich perspective on how EO is delivering value to decision makers whether they are in the public or private sectors.

We also put effort into communicating the benefits, but it is clear that more is needed. We need to reach the most senior decision makers with this key message. Our work will come under more scrutiny, but we are happy to help others and to learn ourselves if we can improve our methodology further. Mostly, we seek help from our members and partners to spread the word and to inform us if there are new cases or specific topics which can hit home. Let's work together to