

All together now

Norbert Glante says European decision makers must work together to transform GMES into a fully operational force

GMES – global monitoring for environment and security – is an earth monitoring initiative under the management of the EU, in collaboration with member states. It is about collecting and preparing reliable data with the help of satellites and terrestrial facilities. This data can be obtained free of charge in accordance with the relevant safety conditions. GMES will be a public infrastructure which is built on existing capacities of member states. The EU is building satellites in partnership with the European Space Agency, which will be launched into space, while member states will use air, ground and sea-based facilities to record and process data and make it available to users. In recent years intensive research has been carried out, and the project is now to pass into the operational phase through the commission's proposed regulation on GMES.

The aim of this initiative is to guarantee better management of the environment through information about the nature of the earth's surface, biodiversity, condition of oceans and composition of the atmosphere, and greater security for the population, for example in connection with natural disasters. In concrete terms this means that if an earthquake occurs accurate maps can be produced using proper satellite photographs resulting in improved management of rescue teams. Sea levels can also be accurately measured in order to observe the consequences of climate change and draw conclusions from this. GMES can track the spread of an oil slick if there is a tanker disaster and take the necessary steps to warn people on the coast.

The European parliament supports the commission's proposal through all fractions, as shown from the initial discussions with the industry, research and energy committee (ITRE). MEPs are aware of the significance of this project for the environment and society and in its varied applications they see an opportunity for the environment but also for the dynamic development of small and medium-sized companies, above all in the earth monitoring and associated industrial fields. My draft report is likely to be discussed at the next ITRE meeting early next month, with a determination of applications for amendments in the committee planned for the start of February. The agreement in plenary is currently planned for April 2010.



Norbert Glante is a member of parliament's industry, research and energy committee and rapporteur on GMES



GMES is a complex project which can only succeed in collaboration with many other players. The ultimate aim must be to prevent time wasting, which is what happened with the satellite navigation programme, Galileo, and to place the project on a solid financial basis which will enable us to supply user-orientated information from the very beginning. In addition to this we must continue to provide reliable data so that users have planning security and can develop stable business models. I am confident that, together with the decision makers in the commission and in the council, we can succeed in transferring GMES quickly from the research phase into the operative phase. To do this we must all pull together. ★