



BSERVE

Strengthening and development of Earth
Observation activities for the environment
in the Balkan area

NEWSLETTER

No. 1 - March 2011

- Project Information, Objectives & Aims
- The Kick-Off Meeting In Thessaloniki



EDITORIAL

Dear friends of OBSERVE,



At the OBSERVE kick-off meeting, December 13-14, 2010 in Thessaloniki, Greece, it was decided to launch a Newsletter, according to the project Grand Agreement. In total there is planned to be six issues on 31/3/2011, 30/9/2011, 31/12/2011, 31/03/2012, 31/06/2012 and 31/10/2012 respectively.

Newsletters are going to be in an electronic form and are distributed through the OBSERVE website, through the ISPRS website and also through our extensive email lists of relevant stakeholders. The aim is to reach as many readers as possible and widely disseminate the project activities and deliverables.

Especially, the first issue of the OBSERVE Newsletter, published on March 2011, will be also printed and available at GEO Plenary in Istanbul 2011.

I am confident that we will achieve to reach out a wider reader community of interested individuals and institutions. I hope that this platform will be a good opportunity for us to exchange information and create awareness. Please do not hesitate to send your suggestions on this publication.

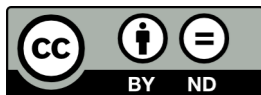
Petros PATIAS

OBSERVE Coordinator

The Newsletter is informative publication of the OBSERVE project for dissemination and promotion of project activities and results.

Editorial Board: Petros Patias, Orhan Altan, Petar Penev

Technical Realisation: University of Architecture, Civil Engineering & Geodesy Bulgaria; University of Haifa; Institute of Geodesy and Photogrammetry - ETH Zurich; University of Ljubljana



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OBSERVE project has the vision of establishing a new Balkan EO community of multilevel stakeholders that will make use of state of the art technological developments, products and knowhow from the existing European EO community and industry.

Please find more information on: <http://www.observe-fp7.eu/>

I. PROJECT BASICS

Theme: ENV. 2010.4.1.4-1
Identification and Networking of
EO activities in the Balkan area

Full title:
"Strengthening and Development of Earth Observation Activities
for The Environment in The Balkan Area"

Acronym: *OBSERVE*

Duration: from 01/11/2010 to 30/10/2012 (24 months)

Total Funding: 999,465 €

Funding scheme: Coordination and Support Action

Grant agreement no: 265282

II. VISION

OBSERVE has the vision of establishing a new Balkan EO community of multilevel stakeholders that will make use of state of the art technological developments, products and knowhow from the existing European EO community and industry.

III. MISSION STATEMENT

The OBSERVE project has the ultimate goal to raise awareness and establish firm links with the regional stakeholders on the importance of a mutual and enhanced EO application network on environmental monitoring.

IV. CONCEPT

Balkan countries do not have a coherent and continuous approach towards the challenge of implementing integrated Earth Observation (EO) applications in environmental monitoring and management. It should be mentioned that the Balkan countries, except Greece, are not ESA members. Besides, Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, FYROM, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina are also not members of the GEO.

The defect in the implementation of EO applications and their use in the environmental decision making are manifested through the limited synergies among national and regional institutions, ineffective technological means and discontinuous record of participation to international organizations and committees.

On the other hand, the increasing importance of a common approach towards effective environmental monitoring practices, for the benefit of the societal web of the broader Balkan region, calls for immediate action, setting as a starting point the built up of regional institutional capacity and spillage of technology transfer.

The aim of the OBSERVE project is to collect and compile all the necessary information for delivering an integrated analysis on the current status of EO activities and networks in the Balkans regarding environmental monitoring, the potential benefit from the full exploitation of an integrated capacity development strategy and the prospect of creating a relevant permanent EO Community in the broader region. OBSERVE project has the ultimate goal to raise awareness and establish firm links with the regional decision making bodies on the importance of a mutual and enhanced EO application network on environmental monitoring according to the principles of the GEO.

An additional key objective is to ensure a focus and strong dissemination strategy in the Balkan region. This includes EO and environmental decision makers, as well as national and regional government decision makers, the international research community, local stakeholders, the media and other valuable "multipliers".

The OBSERVE project consortium consists of:

- 15 institutions from 13 different countries,
- 8 of which belong to the Balkan region.
- 10 of the partners are Universities/Research Organizations while the other
- 5 are from private sector.

V. PARTICIPANTS

	Participant Organization Name	Acronym	Country
1	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	AUTH	Greece
2	Institute of Geodesy and Photogrammetry - ETH Zurich	ETHZ	Switzerland
3	University of Ljubljana	UL	Slovenia
4	GeoImaging Ltd	GEO	Cyprus
5	Infometria Ltd	INF	Greece
6	Istanbul Technical University	ITU	Turkey
7	University of Haifa	HU	Israel
8	University of Belgrade	FTTE	Serbia
9	University of Architecture, Civil Engineering & Geodesy	UACEG	Bulgaria
10	Polytechnic University of Tirana	UPT	Albania
11	University of Sarajevo	UNSA	Bosnia Herzegovina
12	GEOSAT Ltd	GSAT	Croatia
13	The Remote Sensing Technology Institute - German Aerospace Center	DLR	Germany
14	GISDATA Ltd	GDATA	Serbia
15	Ss Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje	SCMU	FYROM

OBSERVE Consortium



VI. CONTRIBUTION TO GEO

Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, FYROM, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina are also not members of the GEO, therefore any coordination and capacity development action deployed in those countries, targeting the active involvement of national government officials, decision makers and local institutions will subsequently lead to internal dynamic processes favouring the participation to the GEO.

VIII. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Build a spatial database and web inventory with all existing dynamic elements related to the scope of the relevant analysis in order to reinforce new synergies in EO solutions for the benefit of environment;
- Raise awareness on the need to harmonize policies and practices in the field EO applications in order to address the challenges described by the GEO societal benefit areas;
- Serve as an efficient mechanism for recording, monitoring and influencing policy in EO;
- Favour exploitation and development of EO activities and ensure coordination of these activities for the benefit of natural resources management;
- Promote the idea of permanent institutional links and mutual cooperation between Balkan states in the field of EO for environmental management;
- Ensure free access of Balkan countries to all advantages of Earth Observation techniques;
- Promote cooperation between Balkan States in the fields of training and sharing of staff and experiences in all aspects of EO.

VII. NEED FOR COORDINATION

Balkan countries, except Greece, are not ESA members. Therefore, space related activities, including Earth Observation and the related programs, are coordinated only at national level. GMES is the major joint EC and ESA space program, thus involving the need of coordination.

- Develop and implement awareness raising strategy so that the Balkan governments provide national budgets for geo-information;
- Institutionalize the existing community and relevant stakeholders to support proficiency in the development of EO applications and awareness of new applications;
- Improve data availability, access, and distribution;
- Improve access to regional and international EO communities;
- Improve infrastructure and knowhow for data access, analysing, and distribution, including IT, hardware and software development;
- Strengthen regional coordination of existing institutional structures;
- Implement monitoring and evaluation of EO programs and applications;
- Conduct further evaluation on EO business models, sustainability, role of other regional institutions and associations.
- Expand, extend and interlink data and information portals;
- Develop or enhance EO capacity and curricula at Universities and other institutions in the Balkans.



Strengthening and development of Earth Observation activities for the environment in the Balkan area

www.observe-fp7.eu

OBSERVE project is co-funded by the FP7 of EC

Our Mission

OBSERVE project has the ultimate goal to raise awareness and establish firm links with the regional stakeholders on the importance of a mutual and enhanced EO application network on environmental monitoring.

Our Vision

OBSERVE project has the vision of establishing a new Balkan EO community of multilevel stakeholders that will make use of state of the art technological developments, products and knowhow from the existing European EO community and industry.

The need for Coordination

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Contribution to GEO

Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, FYROM, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina are also not members of the GEO, therefore any coordination and capacity development action deployed in those countries, targeting the active involvement of national government officials, decision makers and local institutions will subsequently lead to internal dynamic processes favouring the participation to the GEO.

Project Coordinator:

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Contact Person:

Prof. Petros Patias
e-mail: patias@auth.gr

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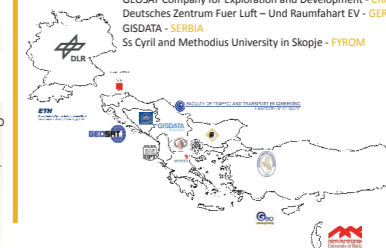


Partners:

Aristotelio Panepistimio Thessalonikis - GREECE
Eidgenossische Technische Hochschule Zurich - SWITZERLAND
Univerza v Ljubljani - SLOVENIA
Geolmaging Ltd - CYPRUS
Infometria Ipiresies Geopliroforikis - GREECE
Istanbul Teknik Universitesi - TURKEY
University of Haifa - ISRAEL
Univerzitet u Beogradu - Saobracajni Fakultet - SERBIA
University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy - BULGARIA
Universtiteti Politekniki Tiranes - ALBANIA
Gradevinski Fakultet u Sarajevu - BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA
GEOSAT Company for Exploration and Development - CROATIA
Deutsches Zentrum Fuer Luft - Und Raumfahrt EV - GERMANY
GISDATA - SERBIA
Ss Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje - FYROM



THEME: [ENV.2010.4.1.4-1, Identification and Networking of EO activities in the Balkan area]
Project acronym: OBSERVE
Project full title: "Strengthening and Development of Earth Observation Activities for the Environment in the Balkan Area"
Grant agreement no: 265282
Timetable: from 01/11/2010 to 30/10/2012
Instrument: Coordination and Support Action



Meetings

THE KICK-OFF MEETING IN THESSALONIKI

The OBSERVE kick-off meeting was held on December 13th and 14th 2010, when 25 associates from all over the Balkans and one EU representative gathered for the official initializing conference in a beautiful hotel in downtown Thessaloniki, Greece. The Vice Rector of AUTH, Prof. Sofia Andreou-Kouidou delivered the opening speech, followed by the greeting of the Project Coordinator, Prof. Petros Patias.

The meeting began with the OBSERVE project's main objectives and aims. Right after this, each partner presented a short background for his/her organization. Prof. Patias talked about the financial side of the project, with queries being answered by himself and a representative of the AUTH Research Committee. Following, the communication technique (SharePoint) and the project's logos were decided upon by the whole consortium. A leaflet was prepared for the GEO Ministerial exhibition in Beijing. The participants were introduced to the idea of GEO & Capacity building by Bruno Greco from the European Commission. Lastly, the Action Plan and the Meeting Schedule were appointed with the executive help of the project coordinator of **BalkanGEONet**, Vladimir Crnojevic.



The Kick-Off Meeting in Thessaloniki

CONSORTIUM MEETING IN ZAGREB

OBSERVE and **BalkanGeoNet** projects had their first cluster meeting in the Faculty of Geodesy in Zagreb, Croatia in order to undertake common action towards common objectives. During the cluster meeting the two sister projects investigated in depth areas of mutual interest especially regarding identification of relevant local stakeholders and future dissemination activities and events. In addition the second day of the Zagreb meeting, OBSERVE partners reviewed the progress of the project regarding the predefined goals and targets and set the work plan for the next meeting in Ljubljana.



Consortium Meeting in Zagreb

UPCOMING CONSORTIUM MEETING IN LJUBLJANA



Consortium Meeting

Date: 16th and 17th of June, 2011

Location:

*UL Faculty of Civil and Geodetic
Engineering, Ljubljana, SLOVENIA*



<http://www.observe-fp7.eu>

Online information can be found about the project details and objectives, the partners, deliverables and the contact information of the OBSERVE project coordinator, Prof. Petros Patias. In addition to that, the website features news and events rubrics, a member area and sections for the Knowledge Base Repository and the Spatial Database that are currently still under construction. One can also subscribe to receiving the issues of this e-Newsletter.



The screenshot shows the OBSERVE project website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Knowledge Base Repository, Spatial Database, Our Events, and Member Area. The main content area features a large map of the Balkan region and a section titled 'The OBSERVE Project' with a quote: "The aim of the OBSERVE project is to collect all the necessary information for delivering an integrated analysis on the current status of EO activities and networks in the Balkans, with the ultimate vision to create a permanent EO Community in the broader region". Below the map, there is a 'Welcome to the website of the EU funded project OBSERVE, "Strengthening and development of Earth Observation activities for the environment in the Balkan area".' section, followed by a paragraph about the project's mission. On the left side, there is a 'Menu' with links for Project Details, Objectives, Partners, Deliverables, and Contact us. Below the menu is an 'e-Newsletter' subscription form with fields for Name and E-mail, and a 'Subscribe' button. At the bottom, there is a copyright notice for 2010 by the OBSERVE consortium and a link to the website disclaimer. The footer also includes the European Union flag and the text 'OBSERVE project is partially funded by the EC'.

PROJECT DISSEMINATION

Information about the OBSERVE project has already been featured and published in several popular news magazine articles and websites:

EOMAG (ISSUE 24):
<http://www.eomag.eu/articles/1389/observe>

GIM International:
<http://www.gim-international.com>

ISPRS:
<http://www.isprs.org/news/newsletter/01-Jan-2011>

EARSC:
<http://www.earsc.eu/news/observe-quick-facts-sheet>

GEOCONNEXION:
http://www.geoconnexion.com/geo_news_article/Introducing-the-OBSERVE-Project/9677

1. Participation to [5th GEO European Projects Workshop](#), February 9-10, 2011, London, UK (P. Patias, S. Stylianidis)
2. Participation to [2nd EO-GMES Workshop](#), March 17-18, 2011 Sofia, Bulgaria. (P. Penev, V. Tsioukas)

Planned activities

1. Prof. Petros Patias is invited speaker to "[Gi4DN 2011 - Geoinformation for Disaster Management](#)" conference to be held May 3-8, 2011, Antalya, Turkey
2. Participation to [GEO EGIDA Workshop](#), May 9-11, 2011, Bonn, Germany (G. Schwarz)

CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries or suggestions:

Prof. Petros Patias (OBSERVE Project Coordinator)

School of Rural & Surveying Engineering
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki,
541 24 Thessaloniki, Greece

LAND LINE: +30 2310 99 6116; FAX: +30 2310 99 6128

EMAIL: patias@auth.gr, patias@uowm.gr