

Citizens' summary

EC proposal for a Directive on the dissemination of Earth observation satellite data for commercial purposes

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- Satellite imagery enables the repeated observation of any region on Earth, at different scales, and without the need to enter into any territory on the ground. The newest generation of Earth observation satellites offer very high resolution imagery (i.e. objects of less than 0.5 m size are visible), daily monitoring and very quick access to the imagery. A good illustration for the use of satellite imagery is Google Earth or Bing-Maps.
- Earth observation satellite data and in particular high resolution satellite data (HRSD) and HRSD-based applications have become an indispensable tool for environment monitoring, urban planning, agriculture, natural resources management and disaster and emergency management, but are important for security and defence, too.
- Therefore, the production and dissemination of HRSD by commercial operators are regulated by the States where they are registered.
- The regulations for HRSD are different in the different EU Member States which leads to obstacles to market development by hampering access to HRSD for businesses in the HRSD value chain (data resellers/data processors/value-adding service providers/software developers) and customer businesses.

WHAT EXACTLY WOULD CHANGE?

- The Directive will establish a more reliable access to Earth observation satellite data, a good and sufficient level of information on accessibility in particular of HRSD for businesses in the value chain and customer businesses.
- Competition will be fostered by creating a transparent, predictable and fair legal framework across Member States and by ensuring the free circulation of data throughout the EU.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

- Besides the businesses in the Earth observation satellite data value chain the businesses activities of the customers would benefit from a better access to satellite data.
- Indirectly, every company or citizen using products and services from customer businesses will benefit.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- The EU does not seek to replace regulatory efforts taken by Member States individually. It seeks to approximate national regulations and ease cross-border business activities.
- For Member States alone it's much more difficult to approximate their regulations and to establish a "level playing field".
- This explains also why the initiative was raised from the side of Member States.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- This proposal is likely to become effective by the end of the year (2014) as this Commission proposal has to go through the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament before becoming law.
- Member States will then have to bring into force their national law, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive by end of 2017 at the latest.

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Title tag (<i>± 70 characters with spaces</i>)	EC proposal for the dissemination of Earth observation satellite data - citizens' summary
Description (<i>± 150 characters</i>)	EC proposal for an EU Directive on the dissemination of Earth observation satellite data for commercial purposes
Link name (<i>max. 5 words</i>)	Summary - EU EO-Satellite Data Directive
Keywords for url/filename	EU, space, satellite, data, Earth observation, high-resolution, remote sensing, reconnaissance, geospatial