

# SPACE FOR THE OECD

## TACKLING SOCIETIES' CHALLENGES WITH SPACE APPLICATIONS

In the coming decades, our societies will face a whole host of enduring societal challenges, such as changes to the environment, the management of natural resources, the impact of increasing international mobility, and the move to the knowledge society. Technologies can contribute significantly to tackle those challenges, in particular space-based applications. They provide a global vision of the world and the ability to spread information over broad areas. Space, and man's relationship to it, has captured the human imagination for centuries, and today, dozens of countries and their industries, in particular in the OECD area, devote major resources to space programmes.

In 2002, in collaboration with the space community, the OECD International Futures Programme (IFP) launched a project to explore how space technologies could potentially contribute in finding solutions to Earth's problems. The IFP is a forward-looking multidisciplinary group with the mission to alert the Secretary-General and the Organisation to emerging issues by pinpointing major developments and analysing long-term concerns with a view to helping governments map their strategy.

Motivated to investigate the economic dimensions of space activities, twenty-five organisations from both public and private sectors (i.e. space agencies, space-related corporations) participated in this innovative project. The project was also enriched by an important consultation process, which led to discussions and

comments from more than a hundred experts, international organisations, private actors and users of space applications.



Two publications came out of this first extensive and intensive OECD look at the space sector. The first one *Space 2030: The Future of Space Applications* (2004) explores promising space applications for the XXIst century. The second one, *Space 2030: Tackling social challenges* (2005) assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the regulatory frameworks that govern space and formulates a policy framework that OECD governments might use in drafting policies to ensure the full potential that space offers is realised.

This project used a broad socio-economic demand-oriented approach to explore how space could be -- or not -- useful to tackle major XXIst century societal challenges. And the IFP team found that indeed space applications will increasingly

concern domains beyond the traditional scientific and military: security, the environment, disaster relief, health, education, communications, remedying the digital divide, transport. Space applications already facilitate access to information and management of natural resources, while satellite telecommunications can provide telehealth and distance learning in areas where no or only limited communications infrastructure exists. But for space to deliver its full potential, consistent, sustained and co-ordinated efforts will be needed. Space systems may be able to support public action only if applications are developed that meet users' needs in a timely manner.

Following the project, there was strong encouragement for OECD to continue to be involved. A number of institutions, especially space agencies, asked the IFP to continue exploring the economic dimensions of the space infrastructure. In that context, an innovative platform for international dialogue on the social and economic aspects of space activities was launched in February 2006: the OECD Global Forum on Space Economics. This original forum aims to provide evidence-based analysis to assist

agencies and governments shape policies to contribute to ensuring that the potential of space is more fully realised.

A first publication *Space Economy at a Glance*, to be available in spring 2007, is in progress. A major milestone will come in February 2007 when the Steering Group and the Working Group of the Global Forum on Space Economics will meet at OECD headquarters in Paris to discuss the long-term development of official space statistics.

For more information, please visit our pages on the OECD external website.

And of course, watch this space...

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