

# Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) *Industry gathers for ESA/EC global monitoring initiative*

*GMES is a decision-support system for use by the public and public policymakers, with the capability of acquiring, processing, interpreting and distributing useful information related to the environment, risk management and natural resources. At a global level, GMES will provide new verification tools to contribute to the precise monitoring of compliance with international agreements, such as the Kyoto protocol on climate change, as well as security and international aid agreements. At the EU regional level, GMES will provide objective data to support a broad range of public policies, including regional development, transportation, agriculture and the common foreign and security policy. GMES also will help local authorities pinpoint environmental problems and minimize the risks and consequences of environmental changes on local populations.*

Representatives from 10 industry consortia met earlier this year to plan the next phase of the ESA's contribution to the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) programme.

The consortia were selected following an evaluation of proposals received last year for the GMES Services Elements (GSE), the initial stage of ESA's five-year, 83 million commitment to the GMES programme.

GMES is an initiative co-sponsored by ESA and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring capability for Europe's policymakers and other end users. Total GMES funding is expected to reach 400 million to develop and implement the programme by 2008.

The GSE consortia include more than 125 companies, university and other research firms, consultancies and end-user organisations that include international, national and other government agencies. Each consortium is headed by a prime contractor and consists of up to 20 organisations with an ESA-mandated mix of operational service providers, strategy consultants, system developers, R&D partners and end users.

The groups will focus on developing capabilities and identifying the needs of end users under two-phase, 20-month contracts totalling 15 million. Funding will be split evenly among the 10 consortia.

The exact composition of the consortia will be announced as the contracts are finalised and signed over the next few months. A week-long meeting in mid-March at ESA's ESRIN facility outside of Rome brought the groups together for the first time to outline end-user requirements and define which existing and future Earth observation services to include in the GMES Service Elements.

ESA has tasked the 10 GSE consortia over the next 20 months to convert the high-level GMES strategy into a concrete portfolio of reliable environmental information services, and there will be plenty more to come in the future. Each of the 10 groups will start delivering services immediately, and will back this up with a blueprint for delivering long-term monitoring for themes including forests, water resources, disaster risk assessment and relief, agriculture, polar regions and urban areas.

*On 15 July 2002, ESA and the European Commission launched a consultation forum on satellite-based Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES). By combining spaceborne, land-based and airborne technologies, GMES seeks to make better use of Europe's existing and planned capabilities and infrastructures and to develop mechanisms for improved collection and distribution of information. It therefore responds to growing concerns among policy makers about timely, free and independent access to information on the environment and security at the global, regional and local levels. GMES will support European Union policies in areas such as sustainable development, global climate change and the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).*