

Mapping Data for European Disaster and Crisis Response

Emergency services working in the immediate aftermath of disasters will benefit from fast access to pan-European mapping created from interoperable, geospatial data thanks to an agreement between EuroGeographics and the European Environment Agency (EEA).

The agreement, signed on 16th November 2011 at the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) plenary in Istanbul, Turkey, will improve access to data from national mapping and cadastral agencies in Europe to help provide a common operational picture for those involved in crisis management to work from. Civil protection agencies, national and local emergency services, humanitarian aid organisations and European Union bodies will all be able to use the rush-mode mapping and damage assessment maps created as part of the GMES emergency management service. This service may be activated on any day at any time and aims to provide reference maps just six hours after gaining access to earth observation data and damage assessment maps within 24 hours.

Jacqueline McGlade, executive director of the EEA, said that disasters in Europe are more frequent and more damaging than ten years ago and that there is a need to be able to respond more quickly to all kinds of disasters, such as floods, storms, earthquakes and industrial accidents.

The importance of GMES is to provide easily, accessible information at the global level by acquiring and analysing precise and useful data for those involved in environmental monitoring and civil protection. The value of the GMES emergency management service has already been recognised particularly in response to flooding and humanitarian disasters. One of the key aims of the GMES emergency management service is the provision of pre-emergency asset information in affected areas, in particular infrastructure, impact extent delineation, quantification and grading of damage. It will also provide information to follow the evolution of the emergency situation in the hours and days after the service activation request.

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