

Intergeo-East

The fifth Intergeo-East, the south-east European geospatial trade-fair and congress took place from 18th to 20th February in Belgrade. This well-established trade-fair held in and for a specific geographic market is of considerable economic importance for the region. It is intended to reconfirm existing relationships and to create new partnerships between international vendors and local partners.

As in previous years, this congress organised by the Serbian State Geodetic Authority and local organiser Congrexpo received support from the German Association for Geodesy, Geoinformation and Land Management (DVW) and the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ). Under the theme 'Recent Problems in Geodesy and Related Fields of International Importance', the congress addressed a variety of subjects including land management and cadastre, education and collaboration. Few presentations came from the public sector, most were from industry and research organisations. Most speakers were of Serbian, German or Czech origin. Twelve other countries provided one, or, rarely, two presentations.

Congress

Several papers dealt with Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDI) and geo-portals. DVW president Hagen Graeff pointed in particular to challenges and opportunities, while Mark Probert, of Geolink, UK, reviewed INSPIRE and pointed to challenges in transposing this into national law, an important topic for future EU member states. Indeed, the creation of SDI is important in view of the new European Commission INSPIRE initiative, and for the implementation of a modern cadastre and digital mapping technologies. Prof. Emeritus G. Konecny (Germany) discussed recent technological advances and their impact on cartography. He described how today's sensors could lead to 3D-modelling and how this created new opportunities for presentation, visualisation and analysis of geospatial information. Unfortunately, his paper was scheduled for the middle of the last day, which affected the size of his audience. Another interesting presentation dealt with monitoring land-cover change using both airborne and satellite imagery, and was presented by Prof. Kenneweg of Luftbild Umwelt Planung GmbH, Germany. He also showed applications in the areas of Natura2000 and the EU Habitat Directive. GISDATA, a local ESRI distributor and provider of geo-related services, and other ESRI representatives such as ESRI Europe, - demonstrated the use of ESRI software for geo-portals in several interesting applications. As with previous Intergeo-East events, the congress did not receive the attention it deserves, perhaps due to its being held outside the exhibition venue. The good number of participants (160) was not reflected in session attendance. The organisers acknowledged that more should be done to better align congress and trade-fair. The presentations are available on CD.

Exhibition

Eighty-five exhibitors from nineteen countries took part in the exhibition, mostly from Serbia. Three thousand visitors were counted: less than in previous years. Major survey vendors such as Leica, Topcon, Sokkia, Thales were all represented. GIS vendors were strongly represented by ESRI, with GISDATA as its partner in the Western Balkan. Also on show were TopoGIS and local representatives of Autodesk, the only exhibitor who organised a party. From its own huge stand, the Serbian State Geodetic Authority informed visitors about its activities and the status of map production. All over the exhibition floor there was abundant distribution of bags loaded with marketing material, but little food or drink. Presence at this exhibition would appear not to pay off for some companies. Some present at former events and highlighted in reports were noticeable by their absence this year, perhaps thanks to disappointing previous results. Other companies, especially from Germany, Hungary and China are appearing to look for new partners and explore the market in Serbia. Nevertheless, Intergeo-East still primarily has the character of an event at which relationships are established. No really new products were on show, in contrast to the scene at the German mother event; Intergeo has been established for many years and is the venue for the demonstration of real innovations. On the second and final day of the trade-fair schoolchildren and students filled the hall and exhibitors were unable to meet their expected professional audience. A 'media stand' enabled exhibitors to display promotional material here as well as on their own stands, and copies of the journals GeoConnexion and GIM International were available in plenty.

Reporter's Remarks

The location for this event changes each year. However, the market addressed is rather local, focusing on the former Yugoslavia in Belgrade, on Croatia in Zagreb, and on Bulgaria in Sofia. Intergeo-East has not yet realised its true potential to open up a fully south-east European market. This is also due to market structures. One area of effort necessary to effect such a change would be to increase the audience. The main organiser, Olaf Freyer, rightly considers the event a great success; it contributes to the development of the geo-information market and should be continued. "Now we must use these findings, experiences and the latest market parameters to take the concept to a new level," Freier said. One might expect that the main concept be strengthened by moving the event into more remote areas within the region and by changing its duration and frequency. For example, the trade-fair and congress could be better synchronised as a biannual event. Intergeo-East has the potential to provide more than just a platform for confirming relationships or finding new partners. In 2009 we may meet in Turkey or Romania.