

Environmental Information to be Currency

Participants at the fifth Intergeo preview all agreed that the geo disciplines need to be integrated more closely in the future in order to promote environmental protection. Geoexperts are faced with a special responsibility - "environmental information is always geoinformation," said Prof. Klaus Greve. At the event in Cologne, Prof. Greve, Executive Director of the Department of Geography at the University of Bonn, highlighted environmental information as "the currency of environmental policy, without which environmental protection measures cannot be implemented in the long term".

Dr. Jens Riecken, Vice President of the DVW, was not slow to emphasise the key role played by Cologne. Cologne is a centre for geoinformation, he said, and North Rhine-Westphalia generates innovation on the geoinformation market that goes far beyond the state's boundaries. "In North Rhine-Westphalia, we embrace the concept of partnership and competition to provide a powerhouse for the industry," explained Riecken, "and that's how I see Intergeo in Cologne too".

At the Intergeo preview Greve called for a special lobby for driving forward environmental policies - namely, the informed citizen. It was a matter, he argued, of pooling the wide range of information already available on the environment and condensing it into relevant, planning-related and politically sound messages - not just to monitor the environment, however, but also to provide support for communicating environmentally relevant facts. Greve said Enviroinfo2010 would make a necessary contribution to reducing the complexity of environmental information. The international conference on information technology for environmental protection is taking place at the Koelnmesse exhibition centre on 6 October alongside Intergeo. Industry professionals will then meet in Bonn on 7 and 8 October.

At the Intergeo preview headlined "Data from the universe - future for the environment", Dr. Andreas Mütterthies focused on the European initiative "Global Monitoring for Environment and Security" (GMES) and the European satellite navigation system GALILEO. Dr. Mütterthies, a specialist from EFTAS Fernerkundung Technologietransfer GmbH, provided information on the operational status of GMES in 2014 and painted an impressive picture of the potential for integrated use of the two space projects. Key aspects of his presentation included precision farming, where fertiliser is applied exactly where it is required, precise safeguards for ground movements and accurate control procedures to protect dikes. "If we harness technology and use it appropriately and users also deploy it appropriately, we will succeed in safeguarding the environment," said Mütterthies.

"Work processes are changing. The boundaries of processes for simply recording positional data are becoming blurred in areas such as nature conservation, disaster protection and environmental protection," said Jörg Amend, sales manager of Survey Deutschland at Trimble GmbH, the long-standing sponsor of the Intergeo Conference, in his presentation on "New approaches to positioning solutions and GIS".

If the boundaries become more and more fluid and need to be stretched even further - not least in the field of geoexpertise - to promote the cause of environmental protection, the annual Intergeo event will become even more important in establishing a "connected community". Olaf Freier, CEO of Intergeo organiser Hinte GmbH, referred to the special status of the conference trade fair as a communication network and forum for presenting topics. He said the event generates around 1.2 million contacts through the conference, trade fair, press and other media, naturally including the Internet. Impressive coverage is achieved through some 50 media partnerships throughout the world and Intergeo makes use of around 200 media outlets around the globe, Freier added.

The expansion of new technologies and formats will intensify communication in the future, he said.

At the close of the preview, the range of Intergeo topics presented begged the follow-up question "What should young people now study?" Speakers felt that every form of training was useful in the geoinformation sector - the unanimous view was that there is ultimately a serious shortage of students. Mütterthies reminded those present that the geoinformation industry is one of the world's fastest growing sectors, notably in Germany. Courses leading to qualification as a geo-engineer or geomatician will also become increasingly relevant as these professions grow in demand. "The industry is rewarding. The market is rewarding. It's a field that is very interesting. There are many areas where you can play your part."

Intergeo will take place at the Koelnmesse exhibition centre in Cologne from 5 to 7 October 2010, taking as its theme "Knowledge and action for planet Earth".