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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Council
Subject:	Outcome of the Presidency events dedicated to Space - Information from the Presidency

With a view to the Competitiveness Council on 28 and 29 May 2018, delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Presidency on the "EU Flagship Space Programme Copernicus information day" (Sofia, 17 April 2018) and on the "Regional workshop 'Space-based services for regional strategies in the digital economy: Balkan and Black Sea Perspective'" (Sofia, 18-19 April 2018).

**EU Flagship Space Programme Copernicus information day in Sofia on 17 April 2018 and
Regional workshop 'Space-based services for regional strategies in the digital economy:
Balkan and Black Sea Perspective' on 18 and 19 April in Sofia**

- Information from the Presidency on the outcome of the events

The Bulgarian Presidency acknowledges the strategic importance of the space sector for the implementation of key EU policies, strengthening the competitiveness of the economy and supporting the development of applications benefiting millions of people. To further support and increase the awareness of the numerous benefits provided by the development of space policy and programmes, the Bulgarian presidency cooperated with the European Commission and the European Space Agency in organising dedicated space events.

Information day on Copernicus was organised jointly with the European Commission. The event provided useful input and ideas for decision makers, business, entrepreneurs and scientists on the best possible ways to incorporate applications based on satellite data into their daily activities. The discussions focused on presenting the Copernicus programme as a source of growth and jobs thanks to the free and open data. A key element in that process is ensuring tools and funding for start-ups, developers and entrepreneurs to get them started with Copernicus. A special focus was given to the sectorial contribution of Copernicus data to agriculture by ensuring reliable information about the productivity of fields, the quantity of fertilisers needed, and the impact of climate change on the growth of crops. Copernicus delivers key data for regional air quality measurements and forecasts on a daily basis, provides information for the monitoring of sea surface temperature, chlorophyll, waves and currents, as well as forecasts for the Black Sea. Copernicus is also crucial for supporting an Emergency Management Service in cases such as forest fires, landslides and flooding by providing early warning, producing risk assessment maps, or monitoring and assessing the extent of damage from fires and floods. Copernicus supports the implementation of key EU policies and facilitates the development of new business opportunities by combining space data and digital technologies.

The regional workshop 'Space-based services for regional strategies in the digital economy: Balkan and Black Sea Perspective' was organised jointly with the European Space Agency. It provided a platform for pro-active discussions among national and local government staff, scientists, service providers - in particular SMEs, young entrepreneurs and earth observation specialists. Among the key topics of the seminar were the possibilities of ensuring and supporting smart growth through the space economy, innovation and science, blue growth for marine environment, and green growth for implementing EU commitments in the area of climate change and sustainability. Among the key outcomes of the discussions was the identification of the need to develop different applications that respond better to the needs of the public sector and business, taking into account the dynamic digital environment and the needs of regional communities. The application of effective space policy maximises the synergies between sectors, increases economic efficacy and supports competitiveness. Space-based applications are crucial to support sustainable development, mobility, crisis management, and to ensure stability and security. The workshop promoted dialogue among stakeholders, focusing on the Black Sea basin and Danube river, encouraging trans-boundary space-based services, particularly by SMEs, supporting satellite data uptake as well as fostering space-enabled digital 'skills for the future' among the young generation. Special attention was given to regional perspectives, such as the Danube strategy, the Black Sea and the Western Balkans.

Events have demonstrated the enormous potential of space for developing instruments to respond effectively and tackle successfully societal and regional challenges in the digital era. Earth observation is a valuable asset for providing new knowledge about our planet which enables policy makers, governments and other stakeholders to make better informed decisions on critical issues that occur all around the world and to deliver tangible results.