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## PRESS RELEASE

The EXCELSIOR ‘ERATOSTHENES: EXcellence Research Centre for Earth SurveiLlance and Space-Based Monitoring Of the EnviRonment’ Horizon 2020 Teaming Project Phase I was launched during a two-day kickoff event that was organized in the premises of the Cyprus University of Technology, in Limassol. During 7-8 September 2017, this Horizon 2020 project started officially, setting up the framework for a one-year close collaboration between the **Cyprus University of Technology**, acting as the coordinator, the **German Aerospace Centre (DLR)**, the **National Observatory of Athens (NOA)**, the **German Leibniz Institute for Tropospheric Research (TROPOS)** and the **Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works (MTCW)** of the Republic of Cyprus, through its **Department of Electronic Communications (DEC)**.

In the first day of the kickoff meeting, representatives from all partners discussed in detail and agreed on the technicalities of a plan to reach effectively the target of the project which is to develop a business plan for promoting further the existing ‘**Remote Sensing & Geo-Environment Group**’ (Eratosthenes Research Centre) of the **Department of Civil Engineering and Geomatics at the School of Engineering and Technology of the Cyprus University of Technology** into a **sustainable, viable and autonomous Centre of Excellence (CoE)** for Earth Surveillance and Space-Based Monitoring of the Environment, which will provide the highest quality of related services on the National, European and International levels.

The second day of the meeting was an open event in which public authorities and institutions, private enterprises and the public were invited to participate. More than 120 participants joined the open event. **This event was under the auspices of the Honorable Minister of Transport, Communications and Works, Mr Marios**



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**Demetriades who has addressed the kickoff meeting.** In his speech, the Minister stressed the commitment of Cyprus to be part of the space development and to benefit from the space systems and that his Ministry strongly supports the EXCELSIOR Project by any means. The Minister stated that the Republic of Cyprus is actively supporting the efforts concerning the use of space related technologies and applications.

The Minister highlighted that:

‘...Cyprus has one of the best climate conditions for Earth observation. Together with the strategic location, the national infrastructure and expertise, we can develop innovative space technology services and attract investments. The Earth observation sector in Cyprus is one of our priorities. The opportunities that arise from the related EU programmes, especially Copernicus, should be fully taken for our advantage. It is very important that the expertise gained from the academia and the research to be transferred to the industry for the commercial development of related services’.

The event was also addressed by Prof. Andreas Anayiotos, **Rector of the Cyprus University of Technology**, who stressed the importance and value of the project for both the University and the island, followed by Mr Nicos Nicolaides, the **Mayor of Limassol**, who expressed his enthusiastic support to EXCELSIOR and the Municipality’s anticipation that the project will assist in resolving important issues in areas of particular interest such as maritime activities, cultural heritage and tourism. **Professor Diofantos G. Hadjimitsis, the coordinator of the EXCELSIOR project, presented the vision of the proposed Centre of Excellence in Earth observation**, by highlighting the ten-year activities of the group at the Cyprus University of Technology in the areas of space-based and Earth observation.

**The EXCELSIOR project is supported by more than 30 organizations from Cyprus and abroad (e.g., NASA, ISPRS, NEREUS, DLR, GEO, ACTRIS).** Several distinguished speakers from interested stakeholders have also addressed the open event, including: Mr Costas Galatariotis, President of the **Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry**, Mr Stelios Achiotis, President of the **Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ETEK)**, Dr Panayiotis Philimis, President of the **Cyprus Association of Research and Innovation Enterprises**, Dr Kleanthis Nicolaides, Director of the **Department of Meteorology**, Mr. Andreas Frantzis, Commander/Chief of the **Cyprus Civil Defence**, Ms Georgia



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Papathoma, on behalf of the Director of the **Department of Lands and Surveys**, Mr Nicos Neocleous on behalf of the Director of the **Water Development Department**, etc. Also, representatives from private sector enterprises addressed the event, such as the **Cyprus Research & Innovation Center Ltd**, the **Avanti Communications Group plc** and **GEOFEM Ltd**. A talk dedicated to the ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation under HORIZON 2020 work programme for Research and Innovation’ was given by Mrs. Constantina Makri, on behalf of the **Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation**. Finally, representatives from the five partners of the EXCELSIOR project consortium delivered brief presentations of their respective institutions. The launching of the EXCELSIOR project was carried out in the presence of a representative of the **German Embassy in Cyprus**.

The EXCELSIOR project aims also at **creating an inspiring environment for conducting basic and applied research and innovation in the areas of the integrated use of remote sensing and space-based techniques for monitoring the environment**. Environment has been recognized by the Smart Specialization Strategy of Cyprus (S3Cy) as the first horizontal priority for future growth of the island. The project is fully aligned with the Smart Specialization Strategy of Cyprus in many areas, significantly enhancing the impact of the targeted regional and national investments, namely, Environment and ICT. The **EXCELSIOR CoE**, with its expertise and infrastructure, could be a hub for the Earth observation activities in the eastern Mediterranean area, due to the key geostrategic position of Cyprus.

The EXCELSIOR Teaming proposal was ranked **1<sup>st</sup>** (attaining full marks **15/15**, “Excellent”) on a pan-European scale, among 208 proposals submitted to Programme “Teaming for Excellence” Phase I, which is part of the European Union’s (EU) Horizon 2020 Framework for Research and Innovation.



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