South Central and Eastern European Regional Information Network (SCERIN)

Objectives

The South, Central and Eastern Europe Regional Information Network (SCERIN) provides a platform for collaboration among regional experts on remote sensing and environment; facilitates progress and consistent implementation of remote sensing methodologies in studying land-cover and land-use change; fosters regional collaboration for monitoring the dynamics, stability, and vulnerability of the major ecosystems in the region; and promotes effective sustainable management and preservation of natural resources at local, regional and pan-European level.

Priorities and accomplishments

SCERIN provides a coordinating mechanism for regional and international activities, information and data exchange, and a framework for long-term monitoring and sustainable management of forests and agricultural land.

SCERIN organizes annual workshops and, when possible, associated training for students and young professionals in collaboration with the Trans-Atlantic Training (TAT, ESA/NASA) initiative.

SCERIN members collaborate on joint research projects and exchange knowledge, new ideas, methods and techniques. The network facilitates the sharing of information, tools and teaching curricula, and enables short- and long-term exchanges of student and faculty in the region.

The upcoming joint network meeting, postponed to June 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, is being organized in collaboration with the GOFC-GOLD Mediterranean Regional Information Network (MedRIN). The countries represented by the two GOFC-GOLD European regional networks share similar challenges in studying land-cover/use interactions with climate fluctuations under anomalous heat waves, floods and droughts. Their collaboration will bring increased opportunities to strengthen accumulated knowledge and connections in the broader region.

A recent joint paper including contributions from 20+ SCERIN members is an excellent example of collaborative work:

Manakos, I.; Tomaszewska, M.; Gkinis, I.; Brovkina, O.; Filchev, L.; Genc, L.; Gitas, I.; Halabuk, A.; Inalpulat, M.; Irimescu, A.; Jelev, G.; Karantzalos, K.; Katagis, T.; Kupkova, L/; Lavreniuk, M.; Mesaros, M.; Mihailescu, D.; Nita, M.; Rusnak, T.; Stych, P.; Zemek, F.; Albrechtova, A.; Campbell, P.K.E. (2018). Comparison of Global and Continental Land Cover Products for Selected Study Areas in South Central and Eastern European Region. Remote Sens. 2018, Special Issue Remote Sensing for Land Cover/Land Use Mapping at Local and Regional Scales, 10(12), 1967.

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Connecting the dots: How the SCERIN network is facilitating collaboration and capacity development in South Central and Eastern Europe

A conversation with **Jana Albrechtova**, Charles University (Czech Republic), and **Petya Campbell**, University of Maryland and NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (USA).

What are, in your view, the main benefits and impact of the SCERIN network?

J. A.: SCERIN provides excellent opportunities for networking and connecting with experts in the region. Since its establishment in 2012, we have held annual meetings in seven different countries, and this has greatly helped expand the network.

The connections that have been developed through the years are crucial for collaboration in the region, and have enabled members to work together on publications and projects.

For example, if I am working on a project proposal under Horizon 2020 or another similar scheme, I can easily contact fellow SCERIN members to propose a collaboration.

P. C.: This is true for connections within the region, but also with the United States. Recently, a SCERIN member from the Polish Academy of Sciences visited the United States with colleagues from Poland. They are starting to monitor agriculture and forestry through new remote sensing approaches. In the United States they were able to meet and exchange information with colleagues at the University of Maryland, the US Forestry Department and NASA Goddard. The long-term relationship developed through SCERIN was crucial in securing these meetings.

How is SCERIN contributing to develop the capacity of younger generations?

P. C.: SCERIN meetings are often coupled with 3-day training courses, called "Trans-Atlantic Trainings" (TAT). These courses, organized by NASA and ESA, are not funded by SCERIN. However, the opportunity to host them in conjunction with SCERIN workshops is invaluable. The trainings are offered to groups of 30 to 50 students and young professionals participating in the SCERIN network, and include lectures and hands-on tutorials given by NASA and ESA experts, as well as SCERIN members, who have the opportunity to showcase their work, and to contribute directly to strengthen the capacity of the younger generations in the region.

J. A.: We do have other activities targeting university students, including student exchanges. These are funded through programs such as the European Union's Erasmus, but the connections established through SCERIN make these exchanges more efficient. For example, several institutions in the region are using the agreements they already have in place thanks to SCERIN, to organize university exchanges without having to sign additional contractual agreements.

As a parting thought, I would like to add that some of the members, including Petya and myself, had been working together since before the network, and we leveraged these existing connections to form and develop SCERIN. But there are so many new collaborations, opportunities and personal friendships that have emerged from the network itself, and this is the real value of SCERIN for the region.

Network members at the SCERIN 7 Meeting, June 2019, Novi Sad, Serbia