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COVER NOTE

From:	European Economic and Social Committee
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To:	General Secretariat of the Council
Subject:	Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Space Services Agency and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/696 *- Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee*

Delegations will find attached the opinion adopted by the European Economic and Social Committee on the above proposal.

Other language versions, if needed, will soon be available on the following website: DM Search v5.6.1.

European Economic and Social Committee

OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

European Union Space Services Agency

European Union Space Services Agency
(COM(2026) 152 final)

TEN/887

Rapporteur: **Miroslav HAJNOŠ**

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Advisor	Filip ŠANDOR
Legislative procedure	EU Law Tracker
Referral	European Commission, 4/6/2026
Legal basis	Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
European Commission documents	COM(2026) 152 final Summary of COM(2026) 152 final
Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG 9
Section responsible	Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society
Adopted in section	24/6/2026
Adopted at plenary session	15/7/2026
Plenary session No	607
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	218/0/2

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC):

1.1 welcomes the proposal to establish the European Union Space Services Agency through a self-standing founding act. The EESC considers the Commission proposal to be both timely and necessary, as it moves the EU space governance framework towards a dedicated founding regulation for the Agency. Ensuring that the Agency's operational mandate is not subject to the time limitation of the seven-year Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) enables operations and activities to continue seamlessly beyond MFF cycles. This significantly strengthens the long-term legal certainty, operational continuity and institutional stability of the EU's critical space infrastructure.

1.2 emphasises that satellite Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) services, including those provided through the EU's Galileo and EGNOS programmes, together with Earth Observation (EO) services, are vital assets for the EU single market and directly underpin the competitiveness of European industry, transport networks, energy grids, banking and agriculture. The EESC stresses the need to develop a service-oriented approach that combines EU space components as part of coherent solutions tailored to user needs.

1.3 recommends that the Agency prepare for future cooperation with the upcoming European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) by designing streamlined access procedures and targeted support measures for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups. These enterprises drive downstream software and application innovation but often face high entry barriers to public procurement.

1.4 expresses concern over the growing structural shortage of qualified engineers, data analysts and cybersecurity specialists within the EU space sector. The EESC urges the Agency to work closely with academic institutions and social partners to foster STEM education and vocational upskilling and reskilling initiatives.

1.5 supports the introduction of 24/7 operational and crisis-management mechanisms to protect EU space assets against hybrid, cyber and space weather threats. However, such measures must strictly uphold EU labour standards and working time rules, while guaranteeing adequate compensation, rest periods and predictable shift rotation for the staff members concerned.

1.6 insists that the proposed framework whereby the Agency collects charges and fees for services must be structured cautiously in order to avoid creating financial barriers for smaller European innovators. This will safeguard free, open and guaranteed access to core civil space data, information and services, including Copernicus.

1.7 endorses keeping the Agency's headquarters in Prague while allowing the transparent establishment of local technical offices near ground-based infrastructure. However, this geographical decentralisation must avoid unnecessary fragmentation of human and financial resources.

1.8 calls for a balanced and transparent approach to the phased transfer of new tasks (including Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) and Space Weather Events (SWE) as elements of Space Situational Awareness (SSA)) and operational and security-related tasks linked to emerging EU space services (including Radio Frequency Interference (RFI), Earth Observation Governmental Service (EOGS) operations and IRIS²), where appropriate. The EESC stresses that such transfers should build on the Agency's experience with established EU space components, notably Position, Navigation and Timing services, in order to ensure continuity, avoid duplication, maximise existing investments, support a coherent operational model and make efficient use of the EU budget. It will also ensure that the relevant components and services are operationally ready and that the Agency has adequate human resources before assuming responsibility for these complex services.

1.9 underlines the importance of the strict structural independence of the Security Accreditation Board (SAB) within the Agency, as this will prevent conflicts of interest between operational deployment and security accreditation assessments. The EESC views with caution the proposed three-month tacit approval mechanism intended to prevent procedural deadlocks, insisting that any mechanism addressing SAB inaction must not compromise technical safety or the independence of accreditation decisions.

1.10 advocates that the proposed budget of EUR 979.6 million for the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) be fully maintained and, where necessary, strengthened by the co-legislators. Significant funding cuts could jeopardise security accreditation, operational continuity and the resilience of the EU's satellite constellations.

1.11 emphasises that the Agency's tasks must be defined with sufficient legal certainty, avoiding vague formulations that could blur responsibilities or weaken the Agency's operational mandate. Formulations such as 'subject to', 'all or some of', 'all or part of', 'certain', 'specific', 'when necessary' or 'subject to the readiness of the Agency' should be avoided where they may create uncertainty or blur the Agency's responsibilities. Where readiness conditions are required, they should concern the readiness of the relevant component or service, not the general readiness of the Agency. The EESC also points out that community networks of users should be open to all relevant user communities and not limited to governmental users.

2. EXPLANATORY NOTES

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.1

2.1 Embedding an agency's permanent framework into a time-limited spending programme (Regulation (EU) 2021/696) creates unnecessary legislative uncertainty at the end of each financial cycle. By anchoring the European Union Space Services Agency in an independent founding act, the EU decouples vital technical management from cyclical negotiations on the MFF. This will give the Agency a stable legal horizon stretching clearly beyond the targeted implementation timeline starting on 1 January 2028. This approach is welcome, as it reflects the need to bring the Agency's role forward under a dedicated founding regulation and to ensure continuity for the operational management of EU space services.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.2

2.2 The data and services provided by PNT and EO represent an invisible infrastructure underpinning the EU single market. Financial networks depend on precise timing, transport fleets rely on synchronised positioning, and modern agricultural practices increasingly depend on satellite imaging. Disruptions to these services could cascade into substantial industrial and economic damage, underscoring the importance of assigning core operational security risk and threat monitoring directly to the Agency's internal mandate. A service-oriented approach would help ensure that EU space investments translate into integrated, user-facing services for public authorities, industry and individuals, rather than remaining limited to infrastructure components alone.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.3

2.3 Barriers to entry in space-related public procurement remain high for small-scale commercial ventures, partly due to compliance and administrative costs. Working in synergy with the 'Space systems and space policy implementation' window of Chapter VII of the upcoming European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) Regulation should enable more streamlined access procedures, dedicated validation opportunities and support measures. This will help European software developers and start-ups capture market value from the integration of data ecosystems, downstream applications and user terminals.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.4

2.4 Expanding the Agency's role to include complex services such as the Secure Connectivity component (IRIS²) requires highly specialised human capital that is currently scarce in Europe's labour pool. A weak skills pipeline would increase reliance on external technical expertise, threatening the Union's strategic autonomy. The Agency should therefore act as a central hub connecting specialised academic pathways, vocational training and industry requirements. It should explicitly capitalise on its mandated cooperation with ENISA regarding cybersecurity skills and ICT supply chain security.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.5

2.5 Modern state-sponsored hybrid interference, cyber-sabotage and signal-spoofing create unpredictable operating conditions. Enabling the Agency to organize 24/7 operational readiness is proportionate to the severity of the threat landscape and essential to safeguard the uninterrupted operation of critical infrastructures. However, staffing arrangements must remain subject to a balanced administrative review that strictly upholds civil service protections, standard EU working hour directives, appropriate compensatory rest mechanisms, and formal internal crisis management rules.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.6

2.6 Allowing the Agency to generate revenue through specific fees for commercial or governmental services, introduced under the harmonised budgetary framework of Article 24 (Establishment of the budget), may be acceptable provided that its scope is strictly defined. Fee-based services must not under any circumstances undermine free, open and guaranteed access to basic civil space data and open services, particularly where such access supports European downstream digital innovation, research and SME commercial scaling.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.7

2.7 Centralising core functions in Prague safeguards operational coherence and historical investments. However, Union space assets rely on geographically dispersed ground-based infrastructure centres, including Galileo and EGNOS facilities. Allowing technical teams to be located close to physical infrastructure can improve network maintenance and service continuity, provided it does not trigger unnecessary structural overheads or organisational fragmentation.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.8

2.8 The phased transfer of advanced capabilities such as Space Surveillance and Tracking and Space Weather Events (elements of Space Situational Awareness) prevents institutional overstretch. The Agency should not take over responsibility for complex data streams or service-provision tasks prematurely. This approach would allow the Union to extend proven operational models to include new services, including RFI, EOGS operations and IRIS², without creating parallel structures or unnecessary administrative costs. Building on the Agency's experience with established components, notably PNT, would support operational continuity between existing and future EU space services and strengthen its role as a Union-level operational actor capable of integrating multiple space components into reliable services. However, such transfers should be accompanied by sufficient staff, technical capacity and service-level preparedness, so that new responsibilities do not undermine the quality or reliability of operations.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.9

2.9 An institution should not be placed in a position where operational pressures could influence security accreditation. Retaining the strict structural independence of the Security Accreditation Board (SAB) is a necessary legal safeguard. While welcoming the administrative capacity for the SAB to issue a single security approval for entire satellite constellations, any corresponding pressure to accelerate timelines via the proposed three-month tacit approval mechanism must be viewed with caution. It must be applied only under strict procedural conditions, ensuring full Commission and Board access to underlying technical files without lowering technical safety requirements or the applicable security accreditation requirements for Union space components and subcomponents.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.10

2.10 The transition towards supporting multiple space systems and services scales up the Agency's technical and operational requirements. The proposed EUR 979.6 million financial envelope for the 2028–2034 period represents a balanced baseline for the Agency's enlarged mandate, reflecting the necessary allocation of officials, temporary agents and external personnel required to oversee new subcomponents such as the Earth Observation Governmental Service (EOGS). Significant funding cuts would risk delayed accreditations, weaker security monitoring and gaps in operational continuity. Given the scale of the Agency's future operational and security responsibilities, the proposed envelope should therefore be maintained and strengthened where necessary. The Agency should be gradually equipped with human resources commensurate with its enlarged mandate and workload, in order to deliver its operational and security-related tasks effectively.

Arguments in support of recommendation 1.11

2.11 Legal certainty is a precondition for stable operational management. Ambiguous or overly conditional wording in the Regulation could make it more difficult to determine when the Agency is responsible, when the Commission retains direct control, and how other actors are involved. This is particularly sensitive for operational activities, where unclear mandates may delay implementation, weaken accountability or duplicate existing structures. A broader approach to user communities is also necessary because the benefits of EU space services depend not only on governmental uptake, but also on their use by industry, SMEs, researchers, civil society organisations and downstream service providers.

3. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Amendment 1
linked to recommendations 1.3 and 1.6 (Article 25(1)(e))

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
(e) charges for publications and fees for any service provided by the Agency.	(e) charges for publications and fees for any service provided by the Agency. ***The Agency may charge fees for commercial or governmental services, strictly excluding baseline telemetry, PNT and Earth Observation datasets. EU SMEs and academic institutions shall be exempt from these fees or, where fully justified, receive heavily reduced rates.***

Reason
The EESC strongly emphasises that free, open and immediate access to basic civil space data (such as the Earth Observation (EO) and baseline Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) services) is the foundational catalyst for the European downstream digital ecosystem. Monetizing baseline parameters would act as a barrier to innovation, disproportionately harming start-ups and SMEs that lack the capital depth of large third-country commercial space corporations. Clear legal safeguards must protect smaller European entities from financial barriers to entry in the data economy.

Brussels, 15 July 2026.

The President of the European Economic and Social Committee
Séamus BOLAND

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