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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: *Preparation of the Council (Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)) on 28-29 November 2024*
Draft Council conclusions on reinforcing European competencies in the space sector
- Approval

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Council conclusions on “Reinforcing European competencies in the space sector” have been prepared with a view to their approval at the Competitiveness Council (Space) of 29 November 2024. The conclusions recall the urgency of developing a holistic approach focused on reinforcing and advancing European competencies in the space sector to ensure the European Union's competitiveness, leadership, and non-dependency on the global stage.

2. The Presidency has put forward these draft Council conclusions in order to highlight the significant contribution of the space sector to the economic, social, environmental, technological, and security objectives. The document emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach integrating skills development, regulatory frameworks, and international collaboration to maintain Europe's competitive edge and independence in space technologies. It calls for proactive measures, investment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, and synergies between business, academia, and public authorities to foster innovation, sustainability, and resilience in the European space ecosystem. By doing so, the EU should reduce dependency on non-European technologies, safeguard its interests, enhance its capacity to act independently and effectively in the global space sector and foster a culture of innovation and excellence, prioritising continuous improvement and learning.

II. STATE OF PLAY

3. The Space Working Party examined the draft Council Conclusions on three occasions since 12 July 2024.
4. The text presented in the Annex to this Note is identical to the text circulated after the last Space Working Party meeting on this topic in doc. 13430/1/24 REV 1, that raised no comments from delegations. It represents an overall balanced package which could allow for its approval by the Council.

III. CONCLUSION

5. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to confirm the compromise text set out in the Annex to this Note and submit the draft conclusions for approval by the Council (Competitiveness) at its session on 29 November 2024.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON REINFORCING EUROPEAN COMPETENCIES
IN THE SPACE SECTOR

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- A. The Council Conclusions on “A Space Strategy for Europe” of 30 May 2017¹, aiming at strengthening Europe’s role as a global actor and reinforcing Europe’s autonomy in accessing and using Space in a secure and safe environment;
- B. The Council Conclusions on New Space for People of 28 May 2021², highlighting the strategic importance of space to the EU’s objectives;
- C. The Council Conclusions on an EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence of 13 November 2023³, stressing the need for a common EU resilience framework, enhancing the global competitiveness of the EU space industry, and encouraging the development and enhancement of skills in the area of space, security and defence.
- D. The Council conclusions on Strengthening Europe’s competitiveness through space of 23 May 2024, highlighting the space sector’s contribution to European competitiveness and societal challenges.

¹ 9817/17
² 9163/21
³ 14512/23

1. RECOGNISES the importance of reinforcing competencies in terms of capacities and skills in the European space sector, based on science, research, innovation, strategic expertise, including in areas with high risk of dependency, as an important aspect of space security, as well as regulatory knowledge, and international cooperation in view of the need for the Union to leverage and strengthen its capabilities and foster a culture of life-long learning; and EMPHASIZES the importance of increasing public awareness of career paths in the space sector to enhance the EU's competitiveness.
2. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of space as a strategic domain that significantly contributes to the key objectives of the Union, as articulated in the EU Space Programme (2021–2027)⁴, with space activities underpinning a wide range of services and applications essential to European citizens and for ensuring the Union's competitiveness, strategic autonomy in an open economy, preparedness, research and innovation, resilience, sustainability, security, and where appropriate for facilitating civil and defence synergies.
3. ACKNOWLEDGES that space is a sector where reducing and mitigating harmful dependencies on non-European technologies and services is crucial. Thereby, enhancing the capacity of the Union to act independently is vital for safeguarding European interests, while promoting innovation, and maintaining a competitive edge in the global space ecosystem.

I. Comprehensive approach to reinforcing competencies for the European space sector

4. RECOGNISES that to strengthen the European space sector, its agility and capacity to innovate where knowledge thrives and cutting-edge technologies address evolving challenges, the Union and its Member States need a strategic vision for up-skilling, re-skilling, attracting, and retaining talent.
5. In this context, EMPHASIZES the importance of a holistic approach that integrates technical, strategic, regulatory, diplomatic, business, scientific and training competencies based on the understanding of the strategic and competitive environment, including geopolitical considerations, international collaborations, security concerns, and regulatory frameworks.

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of 28 April 2021, OJ L 170, p. 69.

6. REITERATES the significance of public and private endeavours in the space-related fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and other relevant disciplines at all levels, particularly through initiatives enforced by the Pact for Skills.
7. STRESSES that it is imperative to ensure that existing and prospective endeavours are able to transfer technical, theoretical, and practical knowledge enabling capacity building initiatives and UNDERLINES the importance of disseminating expertise across Member States, leading to the nurturing of professional excellence in space-specific competencies with higher inclusivity and involvement of young professionals and underrepresented groups in the sector.
8. HIGHLIGHTS the critical role of business, academia and public authorities in advancing competitiveness and the need to exploit synergies by facilitating the development of intersectoral skills, bridging the gap between research and its practical applications that drive innovation, technological advancements, market growth, competitiveness and sustainability. NOTES that transnational alliances of higher education institutions can play a key role to achieve these synergies through greater student and staff mobility and the development of joint higher education programmes.
9. UNDERLINES the need to develop competencies and professional, transversal and technical skills, considering the means and capacities of Member States, supporting the development of the entire value chain and services associated with future space activities and services.

II. Regulatory framework and competitiveness

10. UNDERLINES the need to provide a predictable and competitive environment in order to ensure the development of space assets that attracts investment and fosters innovation, economic growth, job creation, resilience, safety and sustainability, taking into account the full potential of the European space ecosystem, including start-ups and small and medium sized enterprises and avoiding unnecessary regulatory burden on them and Member States.

11. RECALLS the importance of reinforcing space entrepreneurship initiatives such as CASSINI, without pre-empting the negotiations on the multiannual financial framework to provide steady support to New Space by allowing more agile access to investment and public procurement opportunities.
12. ENCOURAGES collaborative projects with international responsible space partners, especially those partners cooperating with the Union, including through agreements with the Commission to exchange best practices and foster innovation and RECALLS the key character of the transformation of space data and services into actionable applications and therefore EMPHASIZES the need for competencies to develop such applications.

III. Next steps

13. INVITES the Commission, with a view to the approach contained in the ‘Transition Pathway for the Aerospace Ecosystem’, to contribute to the development of the competencies and skills needed for the successful implementation of the Union space programmes and for enhancing the competitiveness and resilience of the European space sector, in cooperation with the European Union’s Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), Member States, industry and, where appropriate, reinforcing synergies with the European Space Agency (ESA), and in a context of skills shortage across the Union in the area of space security and defence, with the European Defence Agency (EDA).
14. INVITES the Member States and the Commission as appropriate to explore opportunities for enhancing schemes such as job placement and training at all levels to ensure generational turnover to overcome a possible shortage of skills, which is essential for preserving knowledge and advancing competencies in the space sector and WELCOMES initiatives securing a continuous supply of skilled professionals, including for space security and defence in line with the Council Conclusions on the EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence⁵.

⁵ Doc. 14512/23

15. WELCOMES Member States actions in creating national strategies dedicated to the development of competencies and skills that can benefit the ecosystem with the active involvement of industries, higher education, research and technology organisations and public authorities, including at local and regional level. ENCOURAGES synergies at all levels, which by leveraging available competencies can enhance Europe's capabilities and influence, and foster a culture of innovation and excellence, prioritising continuous improvement and learning.
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