



Brussels, 17 November 2023
(OR. en)

15405/23

ESPACE 85

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 7-8 December 2023*
The future EU policy on space in a changing world
- *Exchange of views*

Delegations will find attached a Presidency note on "**The future EU policy on space in a changing world**" with a view to the exchange of views at the Competitiveness Council on 8 December 2023.

The future EU policy on space in a changing world

Space technology, data and services have become indispensable for European societies and economies. They are drivers of research, technological development and innovation, creating quality job opportunities and economic growth, increasing European competitiveness, supporting the green and digital transitions, protecting and safeguarding the EU and its citizens, and enhancing EU resilience and security. In recent years and in the current geopolitical context, a series of risks have emerged that highlight the need to protect EU space assets and to preserve the space-based services that guarantee our collective security and are cornerstones of EU's strategic autonomy now and in the long term.

Sustainability of space

The rapid increase of space activities, particularly in Low Earth Orbits (LEO), and its effect on the environment threatens the long-term sustainability of space. An EU approach to sustainability must lead to the establishment of measures and solutions to address specific challenges in the use of space: exponential increase of space debris, mega-constellations, limited frequencies availability or interferences with astronomical observations are some examples of those challenges. This will also strengthen EU's position to shape developments and foster the development of standards at global level.

Security and defence

Space has become a key enabler of growth and prosperity not only for our European societies and economies, but also for security and defence. Recognising that the EU's space assets are under civil control, and acknowledging the importance of the EU Space Programme, the Strategic Compass approved by the Council in March 2022 provides a common strategic vision for the EU's role in security and defence. The March 2023 EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence (SSSD) Joint communication aims to help the EU to build a common understanding of space-related risks and threats. The recently adopted Council Conclusions on the SSSD recognise the importance of developing dual-use space systems and services and reiterate the relevance of space-based solutions for security and defence.

EU strategic autonomy

Limited access to critical technologies and materials for space and global value chain disruptions aggravated by geopolitical tensions constitute another significant risk to EU's strategic autonomy and its ability to access and use space. Member States recognised that there is a need to reinforce the technological sovereignty, competitiveness and resilience of the EU space value chains through security of supply and unrestricted access to critical technologies relevant for space, while preserving mutually beneficial cooperation with like-minded partners.

Moreover, Europe currently faces an unprecedented crisis due to the lack of an autonomous access to space. The ceasing of Ariane 5 operations, the end of Soyuz launches from Kourou, the grounding of Vega C and delays in the development of Ariane 6 directly curtail the Union's ability to deploy and replenish the Union space flagships, Galileo, Copernicus and the upcoming constellation IRIS².

It is urgent to draw lessons, to secure Union's autonomous, reliable and cost-effective access to space based on European solutions. The European Union, as the first institutional customer of European launch services and programme manager of critical European space assets, as well as innovation incubator for new and diversified launch solutions, should work with Member States and the European Space Agency to that effect.

Ministers are invited to respond to the following strategic questions:

1. What do you think will be the impact of the SSSD on the future EU policy on space? How could security and defence aspects be incorporated in the various components of the EU space programme in the future that would remain under civilian governance?
2. What could be the role of the EU in ensuring the Union's autonomous access to space, beyond acting as a customer, in the long term?