Resolution on the European space policy: how to bring space down to earth

2008/2664(RSP) - 20/11/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 19 November 2008, the European Parliament adopted by 443 votes to 65, with 16 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy on the European space policy: how to bring space down to earth. It refers to the Council resolution of 26 September 2008 on taking forward the European Space Policy (ESP) and welcomes those conclusions as a useful political commitment towards the development of an ESP which contributes strongly to a European identity. Parliament reiterates its intention of being constructive and participating fully in its implementation, as if the Treaty of Lisbon were in force.

It agrees with the Council that the **current priorities** are the timely implementation of the Galileo and EGNOS and GMES/Copernicus programmes. The Commission and the Council are asked to set a **precise calendar** for the creation of an efficient governance structure regarding the GMES/Copernicus programme and clearly establish a roadmap for this programme with the aim of improving its efficiency and specifying its budget allocation. Parliament takes the view that the Commission should undertake to commission an impact assessment of the potential benefits, the costs to be incurred and the long-term evolution of the GMES/Copernicus programme, and then submit to Parliament and the Council an action plan covering, specified aspects, inter alia, the legal framework of the GMES/ Copernicus programme; GMES/Copernicus governance, including the role of EU and non-EU bodies; and funding of the programme.

Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to encourage **synergies between civilian and security developments** in the field of space. It points out that the European security and defence capabilities depend among other things on the availability of satellite-based systems and that access to these is crucial for the EU.

It agrees with the Council that international cooperation on space must serve the interests of Europe and that, with this purpose, should contribute to global initiatives. Parliament stresses the importance of ensuring Europe's political, technological and operational autonomy. It also stresses the importance of developing a space-related industrial policy, a crucial element in this policy being the regulatory framework and the standardisation programme which contributes to the emergence of new European downstream markets. It recalls that the Galileo Regulation sets a benchmark for the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in European space-related industrial policy. Members recognise the unique contribution of space programmes which make available important data for research into climate change, and provide the evidence base for key decisions to be taken in environment policy. They also recognise that space can contribute to reaching the Lisbon goals and the need for the EU to take practical steps to pursue the reduction of Europe's dependence concerning selected critical space technologies, components and operations.

Accordingly, Europe should develop a common vision and long-term strategic planning for space exploration to play a role in international programmes (such as the Global Exploration Strategy) for human and robotic space exploration, including the possibility of a human expedition to Mars. Parliament urges that consideration be given to a possible new specific budget line for the ESP in the EU budget in order to reflect the strong commitment of the EU towards the ESP and to increase the clarity and transparency of this policy, should the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty relating to space policy enter into force.

The Commission is called upon to do the following :

- take the appropriate initiatives for developing the use of space for the collection and distribution of information and insists on the need to encourage technological developments in the field of surveillance and observation of space;
- take the necessary measures to avoid pollution of outer space;
- produce a study on the impact of space tourism and its necessary relevant safety, security and regulatory framework;
- with the Council, initiate a large-scale effort of reflection on space exploration, defining a vision of what should be Europe's position in, and resources for, future worldwide exploration endeavours. In this respect, Parliament wishes to be closely associated with the forthcoming high-level conference on exploration proposed by the Commission;

Lastly, the resolution stresses the value of space exploration for inspiring young Europeans to choose a career in science and technology and to strengthen research capabilities in Europe.