

Space capabilities for European security and defence

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The European Parliament adopted by 446 votes to 156, with 71 abstentions, a resolution on space capabilities for European security and defence.

Members recalled that space policy is an **essential component of the strategic autonomy which the EU must develop** in order to safeguard sensitive technological and industrial capabilities and independent capabilities to carry out assessments. They stressed that space capabilities for European security and defence are **important** and, in some cases, even vital for a multitude of situations, ranging from day-to-day peacetime use to crisis management and more acute security challenges, including full-scale warfare. The development of future capabilities needs to be programmed when current capabilities are being deployed.

Role of space-based capabilities and services: Parliament considered that space-based capabilities and services play an important role in the context of European security and defence and EU policies in areas such as external action, border management, maritime security, agriculture, the environment, climate action, energy security, disaster management, humanitarian aid and transport.

In this context, Parliament reaffirmed **the importance and the added value of the Space Policy to the CSDP** and that space should be included in future Union policies (e.g. internal security, transport, space, energy, research). It also stressed the importance of:

- the use of space capabilities in the **war against terrorism** and terrorist organisations;
- improving **access to space-based satellite communication**, space situational awareness, precision navigation and Earth observation capabilities, and ensure European non-dependence as regards critical space technologies and access to space;
- the use of satellite capabilities to better assess and identify the flow of illegal immigrants and their routes, and, in the case of those coming from Northern Africa, to identify the ship-boarding areas in order to engage with them faster and save more lives;
- sufficient **financial investment** to guarantee the autonomy of the EU as regards space structures, while providing the resources necessary for that purpose.

Space Programmes: Parliament recalled that the two EU flagship programmes – [Galileo](#) and [Copernicus](#) – are civil programmes under civil control and that the European nature of Galileo and Copernicus has made these programmes possible and ensured their success. They wanted to ensure that European space programmes develop **civilian space-based capabilities and services with relevance for European security and defence capabilities**, particularly through the allocation of adequate funds for research.

Bearing in mind the dual-use capacity of EU space capabilities, Members considered that a **holistic, integrated, long-term approach** to the space sector at EU level is necessary, and that the space sector should be mentioned in the new EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy.

Parliament noted the importance of Galileo's Public Regulated Service (PRS) for navigation and guidance of military systems; calls on the High Representative and the EU Member States to increase their efforts regarding a possible revision of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty or to initiate a new regulatory framework

that takes account of technological progress since the 1960s and aims to **prevent an arms race in space**. Members encouraged the identification and development of security- and defence-related capacity needs for the next generations of the Galileo and Copernicus systems.

The EU's needs and strategic objectives: Parliament asked the Commission to come up swiftly with a definition of EU needs regarding the potential contribution of the space policy to the CSDP for all the main aspects: launching, positioning, imagery, communication, space weather, space debris, cyber security, jamming, spoofing and other intentional threats, security of the ground segment.

The development of European space capabilities for European security and defence should follow **two key strategic objectives**:

- **security on the planet** through in-orbit space systems designed to monitor the earth's surface or to provide positioning, navigation and timing information or satellite communications and
- **security in outer space as well as space safety**, i.e. security in orbit and in space through ground-based and in-orbit space situational awareness systems.

Operational coordination: the resolution stressed that cooperation between the Commission, the European External Action Service, the GNSS Agency, the European Defence Agency, the European Space Agency and the Member States is crucial to improving European space capabilities and services. The Union should coordinate and support such cooperation through a **specific operational coordination centre**.

Parliament also suggested, inter alia:

- stimulating space innovation and research for security and defence and innovative big data technologies to make use of the full potential of space data for security and defence;
- the development of the EU's various diplomatic initiatives in space issues, in both a bilateral and a multilateral context, in order to contribute to the development of the institutionalisation of space;
- setting up a permanent programme and to use the European added value of the EDA for military satellite communication as well;
- identifying any potential technological gap to facilitate EU-US cooperation on future space-based capabilities;
- strengthen EU-NATO cooperation in the area of security and defence policy and in collective defence;
- continuing to facilitate the establishment of an international code of conduct on outer space activities, in order to protect space infrastructure while preventing a weaponisation of space;
- ensuring that space situational awareness / space weather, satellite communication, electronic intelligence and early warning could benefit from greater cooperation between the public and private sectors, and additional EU-level support;
- assessing how to meet the operational need for very high resolution earth observation data under the Copernicus programme;
- the further development of the EU's own [Space Surveillance and Tracking](#) (SST) capacities;
- developing policies and research capabilities in order to provide future applications and develop a competitive European industry, capable of commercial success based on a healthy economic environment;
- establishing the correct regulatory and policy frameworks in order to give industry further impetus and incentives to pursue technological development and research into space capabilities.

Parliament welcomed the process and plans for the development of **new European launchers** Ariane 6 and VEGA, and considered the development of these launchers to be crucial to the long-term viability and independence of the European space programmes. It noted the strategic importance of **independent access to space** and the need for dedicated EU action, including with regard to security and defence.

Lastly, Parliament considered that creating in the long term **a legal framework** permitting **sustained EU-level investments** in security and defence capabilities could foster greater and more systematic European defence cooperation with a view to delivering key capabilities.