Union Secure Connectivity Programme 2023-2027

2022/0039(COD) - 14/02/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 603 votes to 6, with 39 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027.

The regulation establishes the Union Programme for Secure Connectivity for the remaining period of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027.

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amends the Commission's proposal as follows:

General objectives of the programme

The programme will:

- ensure the provision and long-term availability within the Union’s territory and worldwide **uninterrupted access to secure, autonomous, high-quality, reliable and cost-effective satellite governmental communication services** to government-authorised users, by establishing a multi-orbital, secure connectivity system under civil control and by supporting the protection of critical infrastructures;

- contribute to **strengthening the resilience and autonomy of the EU** and the Member States, and reinforcing their technological and industrial base in satellite communications, while avoiding excessive dependence on non-EU based solutions, in particular for critical infrastructure and access to space;

- enable the provision of commercial services, or services offered to government-authorised users based on commercial infrastructure at market conditions, by the **private sector** in accordance with the Union’s applicable competition law. The objective will be to facilitate, *inter alia*, the further development of worldwide high-speed broadband and seamless connectivity as well as removing communication dead zones and increasing cohesion across Member States’ territories, while bridging the digital divide.

Programme activities

The provision of the governmental services should be ensured through the following phased activities, which should complement and integrate the GOVSATCOM component into the secure connectivity system:

- the definition, design, development, validation and related deployment activities for the construction of the space and ground infrastructure required for the provision of the first governmental services by 2024;

- the gradual deployment activities to complete the space and ground infrastructure required for the provision of advanced governmental services, to meet the needs of government-authorised users as soon as possible, aiming to achieve full operational capability by 2027;

- the development and deployment of EuroQCI for the purpose of its gradual integration into the secure connectivity system;

- exploitation activities providing governmental services, comprising the operation, maintenance, continuous improvement and protection of the space and ground infrastructure, including replenishment and obsolescence management.

Budgetary contribution

The financial envelope for the implementation of the Programme for the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2027 and for covering the associated risks shall be **EUR 1.65 billion** in current prices.

The amount should be distributed indicatively from the MFF 2021-2027 as follows: (i) EUR 1 billion from Heading 1 (Single Market, Innovation and Digital); (ii) EUR 0.5 billion from Heading 5 (Security and Defence); (iii) EUR 0.15 billion from Heading 6 (Neighbourhood and the World).

The Programme should be complemented by an amount of **EUR 0.75 billion** implemented under the Horizon Europe Programme, the GOVSATCOM component and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) for a maximum indicative amount of EUR 0.38 billion, EUR 0.22 billion and EUR 0.15 billion, respectively.

Environmental and space sustainability

The Programme should be implemented with a view to ensuring environmental and space sustainability. To that end, the contracts and procedures should include provisions on:

- the minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the development, production and deployment of the infrastructure;

- the establishment of a scheme to offset the remaining greenhouse gas emissions;

- appropriate measures to reduce visible and invisible radiation pollution caused by spacecraft, and that can hamper astronomical observations or any other type of research and observations;

- the use of appropriate collision-avoidance technologies for spacecraft;

- the submission and implementation of a comprehensive mitigation plan regarding space debris before the deployment phase, including orbital positioning data, to ensure the avoidance of space debris by the satellites of the constellation.

The Commission should ensure that a comprehensive database of the Programme's space assets, containing, in particular, data relating to environmental and space sustainability aspects, is maintained.

Principles of procurement

In public procurement procedures for the purpose of the Programme, the contracting authority should:

- promote the widest and most open participation possible by economic operators, in particular **new entrants, start-ups and SMEs**, including in the case of subcontracting by the tenderers;

- ensure effective competition in the tendering process, and where possible, to **avoid reliance on a single provider**, in particular for critical equipment and services;

- protect the security and public interest of the Union and its Member States, including through a reinforcement of the strategic autonomy of the Union, in particular in technological terms, by performing risk assessments, for instance when only one supplier is available;

- enhance the safety and sustainability of outer space activities.

For **contracts above EUR 10 million**, the contracting authority should ensure that at least 30 % of the value of the contract is subcontracted by competitive tendering at various levels of subcontracting to companies outside the group of the prime tenderer, in particular in order to enable the cross-border participation of SMEs in the space ecosystem.