

Union Secure Connectivity Programme 2023-2027

2022/0039(COD) - 17/03/2023 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish the Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) 2023/588 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027.

CONTENT: this Regulation establishes the Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027 in order to provide a **multi-orbital Union infrastructure for satellite communications for governmental use**, while integrating and complementing existing and future national and European capabilities under the GOVSATCOM component, as well as further developing the European Quantum Communication Infrastructure (EuroQCI) initiative and progressively integrating it into the secure connectivity system.

Programme objectives

The Programme will address emerging governmental needs for solutions offering higher security, low latency and global coverage.

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, situational awareness, external actions, crisis management and applications that are critical for the economy, the environment, security and defence;
- increase the resilience and the autonomy of the Union and the Member States, and reinforcing their satellite communication technological and industrial base, while avoiding excessive reliance on non-Union 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 is 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.

Environmental sustainability

The Programme will **minimise its impact on the environment as far as possible**. Procurement for the programme should include principles and measures on sustainability, such as provisions to minimise and offset the greenhouse gas emissions generated by the development, production and deployment of the infrastructure, and measures to prevent light pollution, such as the impact on ground-based astronomical observations.

The new European constellation should also satisfy space sustainability criteria and be an example of good practices in **space traffic management** and in space surveillance and tracking (SST), in order to reduce the amount of space debris produced, prevent on-orbit break-ups and on-orbit collision, and provide appropriate end-of-life spacecraft measures.

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 is **EUR 1.65 billion** in current prices.

The Programme will 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.

Principles of procurement

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

- 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.

The European Space Agency (ESA) will be able to provide expertise to the Commission, including in the preparation of the specifications and the implementation of the technical aspects of the programme. To this end, ESA will be entrusted with the supervision of the programme's development and validation activities and will support the evaluation of contracts concluded under the programme.

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