Resolution on the action plan for implementing the European space policy

2004/2508(RSP) - 29/01/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the action plan for implementing the European space policy. The resolution was drafted by Guido BODRATO (EEP-ED I). An extended space policy must include the strengthening of national commitments in support of the programmes already begun (particularly through the ESA). It must also involve increased Community commitment with a view to advancing in the exploration of space and the solar system, sciences of the universe and basic scientific research. Pooling resources and sharing investments is the most sensible way forward. The long-term objectives can be achieved only on the basis of Community projects which require a progressive increase in the resources made available to the Community space budget. The EU must make a supreme financial effort, including the development of space applications relating to global security. Parliament stated that it recognised the need for a more flexible and efficient system of enabling the returns to be reaped on an equitable geographic basis ('juste retour'). National space industries must continue to participate in appropriate and reliable ways in the market, without giving rise to any unnecessary duplication of structures. Parliament emphasised the huge importance of the Galileo project, which was launched under the aegis of the European Union and is jointly financed with the ESA. It called on the Commission and the Council, when setting up the supervisory authority for Galileo, to provide for efficient structures to ensure the transparency, smooth operation and safety of the system. Parliament also welcomed the participation of China in the Galileo programme. Parliament supported the intention to focus on satellite technologies as infrastructure so as to use to the full the potential offered by the available broadband technologies in order to bridge the digital divide, not only between the EU and the new Member States but also with the less developed partners of the EU, such as Africa. Parliament went on to state that it is essential to cement and extend the traditional cooperation with the US, in a sector that is suited by its characteristics to international scientific cooperation. It urged the Commission to specify what role it wishes to assign to the International Space Station (ISS), taking into account the new space strategy that the US is developing. As regards cooperation with Russia, Europe must become involved in installing the Soyuz system at the European base of Kourou, with a view not least to ensuring the availability of a manned capsule, which could open up the opportunity for Europe to be a full partner in international manned flight projects. Parliament called for the European Astronaut Corps based in Cologne to be opened to would-be astronauts from the new Member States with a view to their taking part in manned space missions, with specific financial support from the EU if necessary. Finally, Parliament felt that the new treaty would strengthen the Commission's responsibilities, making it necessary to unite the actions of the Commission, the ESA, the Member States and other institutions, while respecting differing areas of responsibility. This area is of vital importance for Europe's competitiveness.