



The EU Space Ambitions



At the end of October, the European Commission released a new [Space Strategy for Europe](#). This has been the third communication on the sector since the EU obtained a competence in 2009 to coordinate Member States' actions under the **Lisbon Treaty (article 189)**. After focusing [on the benefits for the citizens \(2011\)](#) and on [the growth of the industry \(2013\)](#), the Commission now comes forward with a more general approach.

Part of this new opus elaborates on the Commission's wish to build up on the flagship programmes which have constituted the bulk of its efforts since the end of the 1990's:

- The European programme for Earth observation [Copernicus](#) (initially GMES - Global Monitoring for Environment and Security).
- The European global navigation satellite system [Galileo](#) (paramount to the US GPS).
- The European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service [EGNOS](#) designed to enhance GPS and Galileo data.



The objective? Optimise the benefits of these programmes by encouraging the **uptake of data and services** deriving from them. The private sector is also on board, as **satellite communications** are to be promoted to "foster ubiquitous connectivity in all Member States". In the same vein, the European Commission also insists on the **stability** and the **competitiveness** of the sector by committing to prepare the new generation of technologies and to deliver **state-of-the-art** services.

Another interesting focus of this new Strategy concerns the **dual-use space activities** which allow both civil and military applications. Agreed on at the European Council's meeting on Defence in December 2013, a specific programme is officially announced to prepare a new generation of satellites able to answer to governments' demand for **resilient satellite communication services**, branded "govsatcom".

This announcement, echoed in the recent [European Defence Action Plan](#) published in November, should lead to the adoption by the end of 2017 of a specific funding and governance model. An innovative field in which the industry has invested for a few years to prepare new systems.

The Space Strategy also elaborates on more traditional issues:

- The support to **innovation** through its research programme Horizon 2020
- The promotion of entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs and their access to finance
- The **protection of space infrastructures**
- The access of the sector to **spectrum resources**
 - And last but certainly not least, along with the Member States and ESA, securing a strategically **autonomous access to space**.

Among these recurrent themes, the presentation of this new Space Strategy has provided the opportunity for the European Commission to strengthen its relations with another main actor of the sector; the **European Space Agency (ESA)**, which gathers 20 EU Member States plus Norway, Switzerland and Canada and whose responsibilities include space exploration, meteorology programmes and the deployment of launch systems. By signing on the same day a [joint declaration](#), the two institutions expressed a common vision to ensure that Europe remains a world-class actor in space.

Published in the form of a **communication**, the Strategy is considered adopted without having to go through the legislative process. Yet the European Parliament has already vested German Social-Democrat MEP Constanze Krehl with the responsibility to prepare an opinion and Member States, which remain the main actors in this field, will adopt conclusions in the first half of 2017.

On the road to 2017

On October 25th, the European Commission unveiled its [2017 work programme](#). Where the Commission president's State of the Union speech in September (see [EU Snapshot #11](#)) exposed the next most important legislative and political milestones, the annual program is a more technical photography of the upcoming work.

The Commission mentions the challenges to be tackled: the "still-nascent economic recovery", a "heightened terrorist threat" and the aftermaths of the UK referendum. Three reasons to entitle its programme "**Delivering a Europe that protects, empowers and defends**".

First of all, it insists on the many decisive packages already launched in the last two years. A way to defend the progress made while insisting on the **implementation** road ahead. To name a few: in 2015 the **Digital Single Market**, the **Circular Economy**, the **Capital Market Union Action Plan**, the **International Trade Strategy**, the **Agenda on Migration** and in 2016 the **Energy Package**, the **Space Strategy**, the **Defence Action Plan** and the **VAT Action Plan**.

2017 will also see the publication of the **proposal for the next Multi-annual Financial Framework**, which will determine the EU financial wiggly room for the years to come.

In order to empower citizens and consumers, new measures are also announced: a complete overhaul of the

Consumer law rules, an initiative on **social rights** (dealing with work-life balance, social protection and working time), and an initiative to help **young people** access the labour market.

Data will remain in the limelight with a much awaited initiative to ensure **their free circulation in the EU** and the review of the **privacy protection rules in the telecommunication field**.

To defend and protect, new proposals include a **European Defence Fund** to promote R&D, a **Strategy for Syria** and proposals to deter money laundering (to fight against terrorism).

Interestingly enough on the international scene, the Commission will propose a new approach to its **relations with Africa**, to prepare the 5th EU-Africa Summit which will take place at the end of next year.

But the real game changer is less the content than the procedure. For the first time, the European Commission is not the only one to decide on its work priorities for next year. In compliance with a new interinstitutional [agreement on better law-making](#) adopted in April this year, the three institutions (European Council, Parliament and Commission) just reached a [provisional agreement on the proposals which deserve "priority treatment"](#). A novelty!

EU public consultations*

Social	European pillar of social rights	31.12.2016
Competition	Evaluation of procedural and jurisdictional aspects of merger control	13.01.2017
Research	Interim evaluation of Horizon 2020	15.01.2017
Taxation	Disincentives for intermediaries for potentially aggressive tax planning schemes	16.02.2017
Infrastructures	Mid-term evaluation of the Connecting Europe Facility	27.02.2017

* For an exhaustive list : <http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/>

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