



European Commission - Speech
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Speech by Commissioner Breton - EU Space: the Top 5 Priorities for 2024 and beyond

Brussels, 23 January 2024

Dear Prime Minister de Croo

Dear Ministers, Cher Thomas Dermine,

Honorable Members of the European Parliament,

Dear Josef,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am glad to inaugurate this **16th edition of the European Space Conference**, the last one under this mandate of the Commission.

It is always a moment to look at what we achieved, collectively, for Europe in space and reflect on where we want to take the space policy next.

We have indeed achieved a lot: agreeing on a new EU space programme like IRIS² was not a given, but we did it. Recognising space as an element of our collective security was a taboo, we broke it.

At the same time, we faced many crises: the war in Ukraine or the launcher crisis, which require bold responses and initiatives. These crises have demonstrated that to maintain Europe at the forefront of space innovation and **build “Europe as a power”**, we cannot be satisfied with past successes.

We need to protect, promote and also transform this heritage.

2024 will be a **year of projection** for the vision we want for Europe about space policy in the next 5 to 10 years.

In 2024, ambition, speed and leadership are needed more than ever. Let me highlight what we should do as Europe:

First, we need to build a true EU Single Market for space. This is the purpose of the upcoming EU Space Law.

Today, we have a very diverse space regimes across Europe (11 national space laws). This fragmented approach prevents us from acting as a bloc with the necessary size to matter. The EU Space law will set **common rules** related to space activities, focusing on 3 aspects: **safety, resilience and sustainability**, bringing legal certainty and stimulating innovation.

It is also a matter of security. In the current geopolitical context, **the protection of our space systems from systemic security risks is a must**, through minimum requirements for any space systems operating in the EU (whether EU or non EU). For instance on anti-collision, deorbiting standards but also on cyber security risks management, in line with and building upon the NIS framework.

This law will reinforce the position of Europe as a space power, the attractiveness of our single market and our ability to shape norms and standards globally. But I want to be clear: it will be designed in a way not to limit EU's innovation and the potential of European start-ups.

We will continue to work with the Member States – including the Belgian Presidency, the European Parliament and the industry to present this law in the coming months.

Second, access to space.

We are facing an unprecedented acute crisis: **Europe has lost its independent access to space**, putting at risk the sovereign deployment of the Union's flagships, Galileo, Copernicus and soon IRIS².

Regaining our sovereignty in terms of access to space is imperative if the Union is to remain a credible space actor.

Of course, **Ariane 6 and Vega C** will remain our baseline when they are ready. However, there are still too many conservatisms and postures that do not serve Europe. While recent decisions at ESA are important and a good first step, we need to go further, and join forces to radically change our European approach.

As I said in Sevilla, it is time for a paradigm shift so that we define and think a **European launcher policy within an EU framework**.

The European Commission is ready to lead and take its responsibilities in the **transformation of the European launcher policy around 3 main axes**:

First **aggregating European institutional demand** for launch services from all public actors: EU, ESA, Member States (including ministries of defence) with a **clear European**

preference. We are working concretely with Member States on such aggregation. I want it to be in place before the start of the next MFF.

More transparency will allow all public authorities to act as anchor customer encouraging European emergent players to mature and offer their services. As a precursor, we will sign the first framework contracts under the “*Flight ticket initiative*” developed together with ESA to support new and innovative solutions.

The second pillar is about boosting **game-changing innovation on launch services**. Work is starting today through competitive Challenges, pilot projects and preparatory action to contribute to the next generation of launchers (€50m).

The third pillar is investing into **critical ground infrastructures, including testing facilities**. These must be protected and modernised, including for security and defence. We are stepping up our work to develop an online platform to improve access to test facilities for new space transportation solutions.

Last but not least, the **current governance model needs to be transformed** and made fit for purpose in light of the current geopolitical and competitive landscape.

Working all together in the Union framework and under a common goal, it is the only way for Europe. **This is not against anybody, it is for Europe.**

My ultimate objective and ambition are clear: we aim to include, in the next EU Space Programme, a **fully fledged “access to space” component**, covering all the aspects of a **dedicated European Launcher policy from R&D to deployment**, including the security and defence dimension of it.

Third priority is the protection of our space systems through new capacities.

Space is an increasingly contested area. To protect our space systems and increase their resilience, we need to be able to **monitor our infrastructures** and **better detect potential threats in space** to ensure timely reactivity.

Certain Member States have national assets. Yet, they are not able to timely capture a complete situation. Today, we very much rely on third countries.

This is why I consider that we **must gradually develop – under the next Space Programme - a European “Space Domain Awareness” system to protect our infrastructures and monitor threats as a fourth space-based infrastructure**. This would build on the existing EU SST consortium, and on new space surveillance capabilities from space. We need to develop a common autonomous network, linking relevant national

and European assets together to ensure safety (protection against debris) but also security (detection of potential threats) in space.

At the same time, we need to develop our **capacity to 'Act in space'**. **In-space operations and services** - such as servicing, assembly, manufacturing and transportation of objects in space- are key for the resilience and security of our space infrastructure. Global players are already very active in this field. We should accelerate the development of European sovereign solutions.

Fourth priority is the defence dimension of space.

Space is a key enabler for security and defence. We should fully unlock the potential of the EU space programmes for defence. And boost the delivery of new services in support of security and defence.

Galileo's Public Regulated Service (PRS) is already being tested with defence users. It is a benchmark that has demonstrated the ability of a civilian infrastructure to propose military applications.

For IRIS², we have followed a 'dual use by design' approach, considering its potential for defence from the outset. It will ensure secured communication for our armies, it will support space surveillance from space, it will be able to embark military payloads benefiting from the LEO satellites. This constellation is a crucial asset in a conflict as demonstrated in Ukraine. The last step of the procedure is ongoing. And we will be in position to sign the biggest space contract of EU's history by easter this year.

We are also developing an **EU Earth-Observation governmental service** Today we are launching two feasibility studies to assess possible options for such a service under the next multiannual financial framework. In parallel, this year, we will start a pilot within Copernicus to test and build a governance that Member States can trust.

But to develop new defence services, we need to increase the synergies with the European Defence Fund projects. For instance, with the Odin's eyes capability which will constitute the first element of an early anti-missile warning system.

This requires also a change of paradigm in the space industry. If in defence we push for increase defence readiness, we must also push for space readiness.

Fifth priority is the commercialization of space.

Protecting our space common good, also requires ensuring a commercial market for our

industry. I made New Space a priority of my mandate. This is becoming reality, with Europe turning into the hub for space entrepreneurship.

One year ago, we launched the **Dynamic Purchasing system** of Copernicus with 9 start-ups, using anchor-customer contracts for them to become commercial Earth Observation data suppliers. The success of it could drive a major evolution in Copernicus as a hybrid constellation, combining EU-owned Sentinels and private satellite constellations to deliver state-of-the-art images and data as part of the Copernicus infrastructure.

Additionally, since 2021, **CASSINI has supported over 200 companies** through 1) access to finance, allowing these companies to raise a total of €1bn of private investment, 2) access to institutional contracts like in Copernicus and soon IRIS², 3) mentoring 4) support in industrialisation for instance for ISAR Aerospace or ICEYE 5) in orbit validation and testing of new space payloads.

Clearly, more is needed. We should unlock 10 billion euros of private investment in the upcoming 5 years to accompany the fast growth of our rising stars.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Space is now anchored into EU policy.

We have ahead of us a new programme and new budget for Space to prepare: A new EU space Programme and a new EU Multi financial Framework beyond 2027.

I would suggest a rendez-vous next year at the same space conference.

We should then be in position to stabilize a common view on where we want to take Europe further.

You can count on me. Thank you