

Europe's Space Policy - more than a Global Adventure?

The great take-off to the stars started once with a lot of euphoria and hopes. Today we take most inventions and possibilities as granted and see space rather from an economic point of view. Europe wants to be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world by 2010. But this will only be achievable if Europe becomes increasingly a global player. The space policy is a good example of how activities of member states can be linked and could merge into a competitive policy at the European level. Neither any European country alone nor a small group of member states can effort a successful space policy on a world wide level because costs are too high and markets too small. Only an ambitious and offensive common European Space Policy approach with an economic focus can assure Europe's role in the world.

There are four policy fields where Space plays an important role: industry, research, security and international cooperation. All of them are important to strengthen competitiveness and security and to create a knowledge-based society.

Industrial and scientific space research is a strong motor for new technical developments which can generate numerous applications. The society in general as well as the environment will benefit from these applications. Weather forecast, environment and transport supervision, applications in agriculture, navigation and toll systems, early-warning systems for floods - all these are examples for space technology applications becoming more and more important in our daily life. Space is therefore a strategic industrial sector for growth and employment, and thus part of the Growth and Employment strategy.

Space-based skills to detect dangerous situations and to react on them are of mayor importance in the field of security, especially if it comes to optimizing the European Crisis Management and coping with any other security threats.

Nowadays Europe has already three flagship activities of its European space policy which are the Galileo navigation satellite programme, the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security Programme (GMES) and the "i2010 initiative" for a European information society. In the latter long-term research programmes for satellite communication technologies play an important role. The development and the operation of Galileo, an alternative navigation system to the American GPS, will probably create more than 150.000 qualified jobs and increase the quality and the range of current possibilities regarding positioning of objects and human beings. The main concern of GMES is the integration of space-based systems for security issues into the European space programme.

International co-operation is a key element in the European space policy. Space activities are by definition global and can only be successful within an international context as costs are very high and often risky. The European Union is about to boost its partnerships in space policy for example with Russia. Areas of specific interest are space applications (satellite navigation, earth observation and satellite communication), access to space (launchers and future space transportation systems), space exploration and the use if the International Space Station (ISS) and last but not least space technologies development.

Space policy is still a very young field of activities at European level. It is not a long time ago that the EU and the European Space Agency (ESA) and its member states started elaborating a European Space Policy. Europe wants to extend its competences in this policy field. A common basis and appropriate practical rules for an efficient co-operation are to be created. The aim is a coherent and step by step development of a global space policy, able to coordinate the demand for services and applications and its satisfaction by supplying space systems und space infrastructure.

European Space Policy still stands at the beginning of its development and the efforts already taken must be continued and enforced over the next years for the sake of all European citizens. The European Constitution Treaty would entail a new dimension for the European Space Policy. It foresees space policy as a field of shared competences between the EU and the member states. But anyhow, European space policy must primarily be a tool to serve the interests of the citizens and it must act according to their needs and the challenges of our new century. The success will be measured by the benefit of new applications and an increased security in Europe. Therefore I believe that European Space Policy is much more than an adventure but not less exciting!

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