

**Committee of the Regions****ENVE-V-013****93rd plenary session
14-15 December 2011****OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions****TOWARDS A SPACE STRATEGY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION
THAT BENEFITS ITS CITIZENS****THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

- points out that local and regional authorities make a significant contribution to the development of the space technologies sector by creating clusters and competitiveness zones that bring together manufacturers (including SMEs), higher education institutions and scientific research. They thus play a key role in the processes of innovation and technology transfer;
- highlights the fact that local and regional authorities also have a key role as users;
- expects that, now that the EU's competence has been expanded, local and regional authorities will be sustainably and comprehensively involved in drafting and implementing European space policy;
- urges the Commission to propose how long-term funding for the operation of GMES infrastructure can be guaranteed within the EU budget in future, and rejects the Commission's proposal that it be financed outside the EU budget: GMES, like Galileo, is a European project and therefore belongs in the EU budget in order to guarantee both financial sustainability and transparency and democratic oversight of the funding;
- emphatically recommends that the establishment of regional GMES development and application centres should be promoted and that European networks such as NEREUS should be supported and helped to develop.

Rapporteur

Hermann Kuhn (DE/PES) Member of the Bremen City Parliament

Reference document

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards a space strategy for the European Union that benefits its citizens
COM(2011)152 final.

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. welcomes the fact that, in its communication "Towards a space strategy for the European Union that benefits its citizens", the Commission has taken a first key step in developing a future European space policy on the new basis provided by the Lisbon treaty (Article 189 TFEU);
2. is convinced that a common European space policy will strengthen Europe's economic and political independence and capacity for action, boost the general innovativeness and competitiveness of its industry and society, and make a wide-ranging and varied contribution to environmental protection, combating climate change, public security and civil protection, humanitarian aid and communication, and the dissemination of information to the public;
3. notes that the goals of European space policy come up against the huge differences in social, economic, environmental and territorial circumstances at regional level, and that it is only local and regional authorities that will be able to implement large parts of European space policy in practice;
4. points out that a wide variety of innovative developers and end users of space technologies are already operating in the regions. Local and regional authorities make a significant contribution by creating clusters and competitiveness zones that bring together manufacturers (including SMEs), higher education institutions and scientific research. They thus play a key role in the processes of innovation and technology transfer. Local and regional authorities take care of the installation, development and maintenance of space infrastructure such as launch pads, satellite integration, equipment and software, and ground segment infrastructure in general;
5. highlights the fact that local and regional authorities also have a key role as users. For example, they may act as town and country planning bodies and as bodies responsible for the environment and civil protection, or undertake other tasks that involve collecting and processing satellite-based data. Moreover, it is the regions and their citizens that are actually the market for the application and use of space technologies. Local and regional authorities use a wide variety of space technologies and services to administer their territories, provide public services and support regional developments;
6. has therefore consistently taken a close interest in space policy issues and made repeated reference in its opinions to the practical significance of European space programmes;
7. expects that, now that the EU's competence has been expanded, local and regional authorities will be sustainably and comprehensively involved in drafting and implementing European space policy;

8. therefore finds it particularly regrettable that the Commission's communication completely ignores the role of local and regional authorities in developing European space policy, despite the fact that its development is highly dependent on their contributions;
9. notes that the subsidiarity principle is observed in the Commission's communication, but that the significance and role of local and regional authorities in the further development of space policy needs to be better taken into account;

II. PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR A EUROPEAN UNION SPACE POLICY

10. supports the development and implementation of a comprehensive and ambitious European space programme that builds on past achievements and promotes and develops the priority areas of environmental monitoring, climate change, security, competitiveness and space exploration;
11. is convinced that this programme will produce significant economic and social benefits for the regions. As well as giving Europe a high profile on issues surrounding the environment, climate change, security and basic and applied research, it is expected to improve European competitiveness in the latest technologies, in promoting innovative businesses and in creating highly skilled jobs;
12. recommends that operational commissioning of the flagship programmes Galileo and GMES should be brought forward, in order to realise their economic, social and environmental potential as soon as possible;
13. suggests that space exploration programmes and programmes to ensure that Europe has autonomous access to space should be incorporated as additional priorities in a European space programme;

European satellite navigation programmes (EGNOS and Galileo)

14. supports every effort to finish, if possible by 2014, building up the reliable capacity of the Galileo programme, in order to realise the economic, social and environmental benefits that this project can provide, particularly for local and regional authorities;
15. is concerned that, to date, no proposals have been made to amend the current multiannual financial framework to provide additional support for the EGNOS and Galileo programmes, even though this will be necessary in order to avoid further delays and additional costs;
16. believes that the EU needs to guarantee funding for the operational phase of Galileo (including maintenance and replacement of satellites, safeguarding the integrity of the system,

ground operations and access to data) post-2014 as the only way of ensuring that the expected economic effects are sustainable;

17. urges the Commission to provide greater support and assistance for the development and preparation of functional location-based services and associated products, in particular demonstration projects;
18. stresses that the long-term governance and management structure of the global navigation satellite system should be democratic, completely transparent, financially sound and socially responsible. Ensuring that this is the case is the responsibility of the European Commission, in close cooperation with the key stakeholders, including those at local and regional level;

European Earth observation programme (GMES)

19. sees the GMES programme as an indispensable EU tool in providing the data that is vitally needed, in particular, for environmental monitoring and civil security, which makes it significantly important for local and regional authorities;
20. welcomes the measures to strengthen a GMES climate change service and highlights the importance of this service to the European regions in combating climate change and mitigating its impact (e.g. in terms of global food security);
21. calls for the necessary infrastructure to be developed promptly by 2014, for work to be stepped up on developing and preparing functional services – including services using Galileo and new telecommunications systems such as the planned European Data Relay Satellite (EDRS) – and for the sustainability of the planned services to be guaranteed. This should include the work of existing national services and of the European satellite meteorology service EUMETSAT;
22. urges the Commission to propose how long-term funding for the operation of GMES infrastructure can be guaranteed within the EU budget in future, and rejects the Commission's proposal that it be financed outside the EU budget: GMES, like Galileo, is a European project and therefore belongs in the EU budget in order to guarantee both financial sustainability and transparency and democratic oversight of the funding;
23. in this connection, once again highlights the key importance of Europe's regions in developing environmental and public security services, in spreading applications of space technology at local level and in exchanging experience and best practice;
24. therefore emphatically recommends that the establishment of regional GMES development and application centres should be promoted and that European networks such as NEREUS should be supported and helped to develop;

25. is critical of the fact that the services already provided by the GMES and Galileo programmes cannot always be easily adapted to the needs of local and regional authorities;
26. recalls that the Regulation on the European Earth observation programme (GMES) and its initial operations (2011-2013) – provides for free access, free of charge, to satellite data and calls for this to continue to be provided in the operational phase from 2014. Issues in that regard concerning data protection and the protection of applications must be resolved;

Security and Defence

27. stresses that GMES is a civilian project and focuses on civilian applications;
28. notes that the aspects of security and possible links with defence are highly politically significant. The Commission's communication, however, is still too vague on this central point, and the CoR therefore sees an urgent need for more precise statements;
29. advocates taking account of the security component in the GMES programme, but feels that this field needs to have a clearer civilian definition and to be distinguished from military applications;
30. thinks it necessary to clarify carefully whether, and to what extent, national civilian (and also military) observation capacities can be used to reinforce the security component of the GMES programme in order to improve results and avoid unnecessary duplication of structures;
31. thinks it necessary to clarify fundamentally the legal basis and political framework for using data and services from GMES infrastructure to support European defence policy;

Space exploration

32. endorses the 2008 Space Council's resolution that Europe needs "to develop a common vision and long-term strategic planning for exploration, ensuring key positions for Europe, therefore, based on its domains of excellence". Europe has become a reliable partner in the global space sector on the back of scientific space research. Space exploration programmes produce new knowledge, stimulate innovation and technology, make a significant contribution to the competitiveness of the European space industry and awaken young people's pioneering spirit;
33. therefore calls for a strategy of this kind, and associated action, to be drawn up and implemented without delay, with the aim of highlighting space exploration as a peaceful global challenge for humanity and embedding it in a global context as a distinct component of European space policy;

34. urges the EU and the ESA, in conjunction with the Member States and local and regional authorities, to adopt a joint roadmap setting out the principles for future European space exploration (e.g. the Moon, Mars);
35. considers maintaining and financing the operation of the international space station (ISS) until 2020 to be an integral part of a European space strategy. Alongside preparatory systems such as specialist clinics, sounding rockets, drop tubes and parabolic flights, use of the ISS for both basic and applied research (including new materials, biology and medicine) should be a key element of a European space strategy;
36. therefore calls for a clear definition of the EU's role in determining research requirements, taking into account research activities in the Member States, so that local and regional authorities also have an opportunity to formulate their needs, expectations and contributions;

Access to space

37. considers it very important to ensure that Europe retains autonomous access to space, as this boosts, or even creates, major commercial opportunities for the European economy;
38. calls in this connection for funding for the European spaceport in Kourou to be secured over the long term and for a long-term European launcher strategy (Ariane family) to be included in Europe's space programme;

III. COMPETITIVENESS AND EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

39. agrees that European initiatives to support space technologies may be, and should be, a key factor in achieving the EU's research and innovation policy goals. For example, the GMES programme and the applications it generates will primarily serve environmental and security policy, but will also make a significant contribution to the growth, innovativeness and competitiveness of Europe as a whole. Other areas, such as education, culture, communication and the energy sector, will also benefit from space-related innovations. Space technologies and their applications have become an increasingly important element of people's everyday lives;
40. therefore stresses that the sustainability of European space policy is a key element in the overarching Europe 2020 strategy, as it is linked with the latest technology, innovative businesses and highly skilled jobs. The development of basic infrastructure in the European regions is particularly important in this context, as it creates sustainable growth and employment;
41. supports the Commission's intention to draw up a space industry policy that fully reflects the specific needs of each sector, dealing with aspects of European independence, support for SMEs and the coordination of European, national and regional programmes;

Boosting research and innovation

42. welcomes the fact that the Commission's proposed common strategic framework for research and innovation funding highlights the space sector as a key technology. This particularly relates to the development of advanced materials, nanotechnology and automation (robots and intelligent systems) as key areas in maintaining European competitiveness;
43. expects effective financial support instruments to be provided, for example to promote the launch of innovative applications and their dissemination in the regions;

Satellite-based telecommunications

44. sees satellite-based telecommunications as a key factor for the European space industry;
45. highlights the significance of the downstream economic effects of satellite telecommunications, particularly for Europe's regions: they make a vital contribution to territorial cohesion in giving individuals, administrations and businesses access to the digital world;
46. therefore expects European space policy to include the further development of satellite telecommunications. As well as ensuring that appropriate frequencies are made available, this involves guaranteeing long-term support for new innovative communications-based services – including in combination with Galileo and GMES – and possibly launching new systems (e.g. a satellite-based Automatic Identification System (AIS) for monitoring shipping traffic worldwide);

IV. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF EU SPACE POLICY

47. endorses the Commission's view that international cooperation must be a vital and indispensable element of the EU's space policy;
48. takes the view that the European space programme enables international cooperation on an equal footing and improves the position of European products, systems and services in international competition;
49. recommends providing expertise and infrastructure to Africa, in particular, in order to help improve living conditions there (relating to land use, food resources, water management, etc.);

V. TOWARDS A WELL-STRUCTURED GOVERNANCE

50. expects the EU's new space policy competences under the Lisbon treaty to lead, among other things, to changes in governance. The EU now has the task of developing a strategic EU-wide space policy and of driving forward its implementation, which makes it particularly important to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and the Member States;
51. stresses that it will be crucial to the success of EU space policy for the Union to provide political and economic support, within a framework of fair, efficient administrative regulations and an efficient decision-making structure based on recognition of competences at all levels;
52. stresses the importance of both the European Space Agency (ESA) and the national space agencies, which have so far been successful in pursuing the implementation of national and European space strategies and whose rules have made it possible to build a strong and competitive industry and research sector. The structures and capacities of the ESA must be given the attention they deserve, particularly in future efforts to define the governance of space policy and the rules surrounding it;
53. suggests that, in future European "space governance", the EU could take responsibility for drafting European space policy and strategic visions and for designing the necessary measures. The ESA, as the "executive" authority, could be charged with implementing them at European level;
54. would once again stress that local and regional authorities play a key role in the development and implementation of European space policy and in communicating it to the public. It is consequently important for them to be involved in shaping future EU space policy;
55. therefore advocates that local and regional authorities should be given appropriate opportunities to participate in the future governance structures of the EU space programmes and that their representatives should be able to participate in programme bodies alongside the EU institutions and Member States. Local and regional authorities must be put in a position both to exploit the development of space technologies and to contribute to that development;

Financing

56. points out that the regions have already made significant investments in building up Europe's space sector and will continue to do so in future. At the same time, it is vital for the EU to provide reliable funding for space programmes, as this is the only way of ensuring that these activities are competitive and have a transnational dimension;

57. sees a particular need for more substantial, more targeted and more sustainable funding for space exploration, and calls for more effective coordination in order to secure synergies between space exploration and other innovative strands of research and development;
58. believes that EU space policy should also be coordinated with other policies and related funding mechanisms (research, innovation, cohesion, regional cooperation, etc.), in order to make it easier for the regions, in particular, to participate in development and utilisation;
59. urges the Commission to present a proposal, in connection with medium-term financial planning from 2014, on how the contributions of the EU, the ESA and the individual Member States (national programmes and regional investments) can be regarded as a whole, in order to maximise synergies and avoid duplication of effort;

VI. CONCLUSIONS

60. urges the Commission to submit, as soon as possible and on the basis of an EU space strategy, a comprehensive proposal for a European space programme that covers both the user-oriented application potential and the research and innovation potential of space travel and is fully incorporated in medium-term financial planning from 2014, particularly with regard to the Galileo and GMES programmes;
61. highlights the central role played by local and regional authorities in the development, implementation and utilisation of space technologies;
62. therefore calls for the European Commission to consult the institutions involved, and the key interest groups, in good time when drafting the EU space strategy and the implementation plan required, and points out that the involvement of local and regional authorities in drafting and implementing the EU's space strategy should be commensurate with their importance and competence;

63. believes that the Commission should support local and regional authorities in publicising the results and possibilities of the European space programme to businesses, administrations and the general public in the regions.

Brussels, 15 December 2011

The President
of the Committee of the Regions

Mercedes Bresso

The Secretary-General
of the Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

VII. PROCEDURE

Title	Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards a space strategy for the European Union that benefits its citizens
Reference(s)	COM(2011)152 final
Legal basis	Art. 307(1) TFEU
Procedural basis	Simplified procedure
Date of Commission letter	4 April 2011
Date of President's decision	12 April 2011
Commission responsible	Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)
Rapporteur	Rapporteur: Hermann Kuhn (DE/PES) Member of the Bremen City Parliament
Analysis	14 July 2011
Discussed in commission	3 October 2011
Date adopted by commission	3 October 2011
Result of the vote	Unanimity
Date adopted in plenary	15 December 2011
Previous Committee opinions	OPINION on the GREEN PAPER ON SATELLITE NAVIGATION APPLICATIONS, CdR 96/2007 fin