



## EUROPEAN SPACE POLICY

### POSITION OF BELGIUM

*This document synthesizes the position of Belgium regarding the European Space Policy (ESP).*

*The comments below represent the basis for the continued Belgian full cooperation to the definition and the setting up of a coherent and ambitious space policy for the benefit of Europe and all Europeans.*

#### General comments

First of all, Belgium would like to stress that the new European Space Policy may not neglect the past achievements and acquired experience built up in the field of space in Europe, in particular through the European Space Agency.

It is a fact that the space sector has undergone many evolutions, like for example the restructuring of the industrial landscape or the revision by the traditional space powers of their strategy. The new European Space Policy therefore has to put forward the adequate answers to the challenges and issues at stake resulting from these changes. This implies that the political weight of the European Union has to be fully valorised in defining and executing the new European Space Policy and its policies and tools have to be used to augment the reach and effectiveness of space activities in Europe.

The ESP must, first of all, state a **general vision**, and Belgium suggests this vision to be:

***"The ESP will allow Europe to continue to develop and make the best use of world class space infrastructures and applications, in order to stay a major player, solve global problems and improve the quality of life of the citizens within and outside its boundaries."***

In order to reach this vision, the ESP has to allow – or reinforce the ability for –

- Europe to have an independent access to space and, above all, to the data that are critical for its autonomy, its security and its development, by maintaining its privileged position among the global space powers;
- the European Commission – and, when need be, other European institutions – to have a reliable and affordable access to the space applications it needs to work out and implement its policies;
- the European Space Agency to lead the development and supply of space infrastructures and applications;
- all Member States to reap the fruits of their long investment in their space research and technological centres;
- European scientist and industrials to deliver competitive and world class products and services.

For Belgium, the ESP must be a commitment of Europe, not only a conditional wish. If Europe wants the ESP to be credible, it has to state clear goals and commit itself to a financial framework and a calendar to reach these.

In this respect, it is crucial that the ESP reflects that Europe does not consider space as a self-sustainable sector, financed by the market and public R&D funding only, but as a strategic sector also needing structural support to keep up with other space powers.

It is also essential to integrate the 'research' aspect of the European Space Policy in the objectives set by the Union in the field of economic development and scientific research (Lisbon and Barcelona objectives), in particular within the European Research Area under construction with its underlying principles (excellence, networking, complementarities,...).

Moreover, it is essential that the ESP can count on a dynamic technology policy capable of guaranteeing the performances and competitiveness of the industries of the European space sector on a worldwide scale. At the same time, this policy has to take the specific characteristics of the sector into account: notably the need to make best use of the national public investments and to valorise and reinforce the scientific expertise and skills of each Member State.

## **Specific comments**

### *Industrial policy - the issue of government protection*

The ESP has to take into account the fact that the industries of the other main space powers benefit from protected institutional markets and from disguised subsidies for R&D and infrastructures.

Belgium considers space infrastructures and applications as strategic assets for Europe, which are essential for its sovereignty. The upholding of the European capacity to independently access and utilize space requires, on the one hand, a substantial increase in public demand for space tools and, on the other hand, the protection of its institutional market.

Therefore, Belgium strongly supports:

- a quick completion of the inventory of demand for space tools of the EU – those of the Commission, as a first step.
- the setting up of a special, transversal line (for instance "Space Infrastructure") within the EU budget, intended to fund the development and maintenance of space tools to meet the needs and requirements of European institutions (and, so, freeing partly the R&D budgets presently used for the development of space infrastructure);
- the protection of the institutional markets (UE, EUMETSAT, Member States...) for what concerns launchers, technological independence, operation of strategic infrastructures...
- the maintaining of a strong and effective industrial policy aiming at strengthening the competitiveness of the European industry as well as to provide a strong incentive for governments to invest in space programs and infrastructures and to allow Member States to develop their own space strategy.

### *Industrial policy - the issue of duplication*

According to Belgium, there is a very important task to be addressed by the ESP, regarding the evaluation of duplication in the European space industry. In this process, a balance has to be found between necessary duplication and the optimal cost efficiency of our industry.

But, whereas one priority for the ESP should be to avoid unnecessary duplication, it must also devote a lot of attention to eliminate the gaps in the industrial offer; these gaps are much more problematical for the European space policy than the issue of duplication.

Concerning the situation of industry, we are today confronted with monopolies (i.e. GALILEO) or duopolies at prime level. In the long run, competition at the highest level will thus not exist anymore but will be limited to subcontractors only. This in our view is a problematic situation, which will have to be tackled during the implementation of the ESP.

### Commercial aspects

Another point that has our full attention is the importance the ESP should devote to the commercial aspects of space by making optimal use of the technological programs to steer and accompany the industry active in this domain.

### Security and Defence

Belgium would like to repeat its support for the inclusion of a topic on “security and defence” in the ESP, as we consider there will be no real space policy without a policy that aims to bridge the gap between defence and civil space programs, ensuring that Europe’s defence requirements are met.

We recognize that this aspect is extremely sensitive for certain Member States. Belgium is therefore in favour of a phased approach and suggests that the EU already rapidly progresses on important aspects of civil security before tackling defence topics.

### Governance

Belgium considers, firstly, that the ESP must not prejudge the future of the European Constitution nor the evolution of ESA – which is in the hands of its Member States. However, Belgium is in favour of a structural rapprochement between the ESA and the EU, giving the space sector political consideration and thus more weight by moving related decisions to the highest political level.

What the ESA Member States should do now is to determine together what types of specific mechanisms they want to keep in case of a further integration of the ESA within an EU framework.

As far as Belgium is concerned, these mechanisms have to enable the Member States to continue :

- to participate to optional programs within an intergovernmental framework while maintaining the principle of “fair return”;
- to “use” the technical expertise of the Space Agency of Europe for their scientific and technological space activities.

\*

\*       \*