



FOREWORD

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The Commission has just adopted its Communication "*Towards a space strategy for the European Union that benefits its citizens*". The Communication highlights that space has a social, economic and strategic dimension and that space activities and space applications are vital to our society's growth and development.

Europe's space policy is aimed at promoting technological and scientific progress, stimulating industrial innovation and competitiveness, enabling European citizens to reap the benefits of space applications and raising Europe's profile on the international stage in the area of space. In order to achieve those goals, Europe needs to keep an independent access to space. The Communication identifies therefore a number of priority actions in order to put these objectives into practice.

The immediate priorities are to ensure the success of the EU's flagship programmes. The global satellite navigation system "*Galileo*" will enable the Union to remain independent in a strategically important field, at a time when reliance on civilian global navigation systems continues to grow. The EU's Earth monitoring system, "*GMES*", will deliver information on the state of the sea, land and air environment and help to make our planet a safer place by addressing climate change adaptation up to crisis prevention and management.

The Communication highlights that European citizens and businesses increasingly rely on space based systems for a broad range of services from satellite communications to weather forecasting to humanitarian relief. Accordingly, space infrastructure must be seen as critical infrastructure that needs to be protected from threats such as space debris and radiation bursts.

The Communication identifies the need for Europe to put in place a '*space situational awareness*' service to protect our space infrastructure.

Active involvement by the EU in space exploration would enable it to establish a closer link with social and economic challenges by merging the interests of the different Member States and to ensure cross-fertilisation between the space and non-space sectors. In addition, there is an international political dimension to space exploration that goes beyond the issues inherent to research and development.

The central role of research and innovation is not forgotten: that is why our reflections on space policy also take into account the long lead cycle of space programmes that need to be supported by the Union's research and innovation policy.

The Communication emphasises the need for coordination between the EU, member States and ESA. It also stresses the importance of international cooperation in space activities both as a tool for external policy implementation but also to allow space nations to participate in the most ambitious space programmes now and in the future.