

13th EUROPEAN SPACE CONFERENCE 2021

A Changing World: a look at European space

Interventions of Mr. André-Hubert Roussel, president of Eurospace

1. Mr. Roussel, does the current crisis shed a new light on the future of the space sector?

Dear Ms Holla-Maini

Dear Mr Pesonen,

Dear Mr Viola,

Dear Mr Aschbacher,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to intervene in this conference, for the first time as President of Eurospace, the association of the European space industry.

We have all had a terrible year so I will not insist again today on the negative consequences of the pandemic for our sector and, rather, start this new year with the new perspectives – and even the opportunities – offered by the crisis.

But let me first salute the reactivity of ESA, which has swiftly implemented efficient measures to mitigate the immediate impact on Industry, at the beginning of the crisis, last April; this demonstrates, if needed, that the role of a space agency such as ESA extends far beyond the one of a mere “customer” for Industry;

Then, I would like to highlight the **important role played by space** in managing the crisis and its consequences, from helping to ease the circulation of goods between EU Member States to monitoring post-lockdown recovery; this is exemplifying the role of **space as an indispensable part of the EU economy and as a vital infrastructure** for delivering public services to support a green and digital recovery; in particular via Galileo and Copernicus. But the crisis has also shown and exacerbated our reliance on ubiquitous, reliable and secure connectivity infrastructures and services; a situation where space could, and should, also provide solutions.

As **Europe needs “more space”** to become more digital and more sustainable, **space also needs “more Europe”** to federate stakeholders from different sectors around common goals and ambitions.

Space as part of the digital transition:

Whether it is with **Copernicus**, as **Josef** knows very well, or with the **initiative of Commissioner Breton** to launch a **sovereign space-based connectivity system**, more and more space projects are strongly intertwined with the digital world.

For instance, I am convinced that a future secure connectivity would **not only be able to provide** secured communication services and broadband connectivity, but it will as well provide a mandatory building block for a **European digital cloud**.

The recent **partnership between Space X and Microsoft Azure** cannot leave us aghast: **Europe has to act NOW** to ensure its **digital sovereignty!**

As I am sure **Mr. Viola** is aware, **digital and space worlds are still very distant** in terms of economic size, business models, length of development cycles... it is crucial that space agencies, and public authorities in general, **support the space industry** to further connect with digital companies and telecoms. The **feasibility study** launched by the Commission and awarded few days ago to a consortium composed of space and digital players is definitely a **step in the right direction**.

Increased ambitions and coordination at public level:

Europe is known to do more with less, but it is more than time to enhance our reactivity.

It takes roughly 6 years for the European Member States and the EU to invest as much in space – in an un-harmonised way – as it takes the US to do in one year.

We are grateful to the public efforts to increase investments but **are we really at the level of ambition expected from a power such as Europe?**

Mr. Pesonen will certainly agree with me that the existence of DG DEFIS, dealing both with space and defence industries, is a crucial first step; but we **still have a long way to go**, our European way of course, but we should hit the road NOW to see space support the growing geopolitical role of the EU.

And this requires to implement a **clear and ambitious industrial policy for space**, in order to use our scarce resources wisely. [This policy shall aim at safeguarding the European capabilities, strengthening the resilience, competitiveness and reliability of the industry, and at enhancing our technological non-dependence.] And it shall be supported by an **ambitious roadmap** to boost the development of European space applications at the service of public policies, citizens' well-being and economic growth.

Of course, there cannot be a credible space policy without **autonomous access to space**. European launchers are today under **2 important threats**: the widening gap of level playing field vis-à-vis US space industry that you are all aware of, but also the lack of unity at European level.

My view is that it requires a **renewed partnership between the public actors, and also between the public and private sectors**, in order to reinforce the European institutional demand, but also to improve the competitiveness.

Industry is a partner:

As elsewhere in the world, the public authorities in Europe (at EU and national level), continue to have a key role, not only in defining what infrastructures and services they expect Industry to deliver, but also to ensure the preparedness and sustainability of Industry.

But industry today is not the same as twenty years ago, and neither is the space sector worldwide: on both sides of the Atlantic, the **industrial sector has reached a level of maturity** that allows it, in certain areas, to define its own technology policy and to lead its own developments, and even to finance them. And the partner role of Industry is, perhaps counterintuitively, even more evident in Europe, where 40% of our turnover is generated on the open markets!

This is the reason why Eurospace is going to propose **evolutions to the ESA Technology Harmonisation process**, and this is also the reason why the private sector is proposing the

Commission to set up a **“co-programmed partnership” in the frame of Horizon Europe**, in order to define R&D activities linked to our competitiveness in a coordinated, transparent and inclusive manner. This partnership is key for our competitiveness as well as for the evolution of Industry.

This for me should be a general trend and will conclude this intervention: we appreciate being “consulted”; with the evolution of the sector and our reliance on the commercial markets, we should move up a gear, and I would recommend the private sector to be more frequently “involved”. Many tools are already existing in public procurement regulations and in R&D programmes; let us use them.

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2. The concept of “Strategic autonomy” is no longer a taboo as it used to be in Europe, will this evolution have an impact on the space industry?

Absolutely.

Strategic autonomy is one of the underlying motivations behind the “**secure connectivity constellation**” advocated by Commissioner Breton and is reflected in ESA’s programme in Next-Generation Secure Satellite Communications; more generally, this evolution should facilitate the emergence of a European industrial policy and, in particular, of a **sustainable “access to space” policy**, as I already mentioned. We also need a **better synchronization among actors** so that resources are capitalized upon, and **not duplicated or wasted**.

European Defence Fund is a concrete tool to help Member States to further progress in a multilateral way to develop much needed space-based capabilities for defence, where Europe is clearly lagging behind, in a dangerous way. In this context, I would like to underline that a space situational awareness capability is mandatory for Europe to protect the European Space infrastructures against current and future threats.

More generally, I think that the EU should seize the opportunity to be at the forefront of the discussions on the topic of **Space Traffic Management**. By being proactive, the European Union will allow the European space sector to use agreed rules and procedures at its advantage. Indeed, for instance, the reforms undertaken by the US administration could have a very significant impact on the capacity of Europe to freely access and operate in space as well as on the competitiveness of Industry.

Eurospace will very soon issue recommendations about this topic; and I am very happy to see that this subject has recently started being discussed in EU forums.

Here again, to echo what I said as previously, I advocate for a **strong industry involvement, starting with the current EU space surveillance and tracking consortium**, where the private sector should be able to contribute to the future catalogue or complementary value-added services, which would enhance the overall quality and reactivity of the EU SST services.

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