



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Speech by Commissioner Thierry Breton at the 14th EU Space Conference

Brussels, 25 January 2022

Dear Ministers and Member State representatives,

Chère Sophie Wilmès,

Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Dear friends from the space sector,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to open this European Space Conference. It is good to see you all in this room this morning.

Europe is a space power. It has the necessary expertise, industrial capacity, start-ups and assets to weigh in on the global stage. But there is no time for complacency.

The space sector is undergoing a massive transformation.

On the one hand, the **booming of private operators** changes the business model of space, combining both large and small industry, space and digital ecosystems. This is a major opportunity for Europe. We need to unleash this potential.

On the other hand, space is exponentially a **contested domain**.

The recent Russian anti-missile test made it clear. Space is a strategic area where big powers are now competing. We cannot be naïve. Europe must defend its interests and freedom to operate in space.

This brings a new strategic dimension to space that must become a strong driver of all our plans.

Against this background, I would like to present my four priorities for this year ahead.

My first priority will be to **consolidate our existing assets** while developing to face the upcoming challenges.

Galileo is the best satellite navigation system in the world. However, our competitors are moving fast. Following my decision to accelerate the deployment of the second generation, we have now prepared all the necessary contractual conditions. We are expecting to receive the first 2nd generation satellite in 2024 and to proceed to its first launch in 2024.

With this new generation, Galileo will operate real technological breakthroughs such as digitally configurable antennas, inter-satellite links, new atomic clock technologies, use of full electric propulsion systems.

Copernicus is the best earth observation system in the world. However, it is also facing a growing and very acute competition from private actors.

While keeping the fundamentals of Copernicus, we need to rethink how it works and how it can better answer evolving needs towards more green, more digital, and more reactive.

In a few weeks, I will have the opportunity to present this modernisation strategy, taking into account all these aspects.

On launchers, Europe can rely on its historic launchers with Ariane and Vega, which are the result of decades of investments and accumulated know-how.

But here again, against strong competition, we must develop a **fully-fledged European launcher strategy** that will ensure its needs, its global position and its autonomy for the next 20 to 30 years.

We will soon formally launch **the European Space Launcher Alliance** to define a technological roadmap and a holistic European approach to launchers, combining the need to consolidate our

existing – and indispensable – launchers while setting the right framework for small and micro launchers to emerge.

My second priority is **to prepare and project Europe into the realities of tomorrow**, anticipate the future challenges and avoid potential strategic dependencies.

First, I consider Europe should equip itself with a space-based connectivity infrastructure.

As promised last year, I will present to Member States and the European Parliament a legislative proposal to establish this initiative in the coming weeks.

With this infrastructure, we have four pillars:

- We will provide high-speed internet access for all Europeans, putting an end to dead zones
- We will ensure redundancy with terrestrial infrastructures and thus allow Europe to remain connected whatever happens on terrestrial networks. It is imperative for our resilience.
- We will set up an ultra-secure infrastructure thanks to quantum encryption. Other regions across the globe are initiating it, Europe cannot lag behind on this technological dimension, which will condition the cybersecurity of tomorrow.
- Finally, it is a true geopolitical infrastructure. It will reduce European dependency on non-European commercial initiatives under development. It will also provide Africa with the necessary connectivity, offering a European alternative, a first Global Gateway initiative.

We have tested its feasibility through studies over the past year with industries as well as start-ups. Details of its architecture will be presented in a few weeks. However, there are already points of importance:

- It should be multi-orbital, allowing to benefit and use all the assets we have today in Europe.
- It should have a governmental and a commercial service.
- It should integrate from the start the military usage and needs. Using LEO satellites, it opens up several fields of interest.
- Being a strategic constellation, we will make sure that the right governance and eligibility conditions are put in place to avoid any dependencies on third countries.
- We will rely on the whole expertise of our space industries, large corporations and start-ups. We will make sure that this initiative is run in a “New Space” spirit.

Once presented, I count on Member States and the European Parliament to move fast, so we can hopefully conclude negotiations in a year's time, and have the first services deployed already in 2024. It is ambitious, but feasible.

The second critical initiative I will launch in the coming weeks is to define the **European strategy for Space Traffic Management**.

An increasingly congested space is threatening the viability and security of space infrastructure and operations. More than 1 million debris are orbiting around earth and it is constantly increasing! It is expected that in the next years to come, more than 30 000 additional satellites will be launched.

The Union already has surveillance and tracking capability, thanks to the capabilities made available by the Member States within the EU SST consortium. We monitor nearly 240 satellites in real time, including Galileo and Copernicus, in order to protect them against any risk of collision.

But faced with the challenges and the multiplication of threats, we must go further and define a holistic STM approach including through the strengthening our existing capabilities. We must reduce our dependence on the American system, while ensuring interoperability.

It is also a geostrategic question to be able to monitor autonomously space and enhance our collective situation awareness of threats to European or national Space assets.

Besides these two initiatives, it is imperative for Europe to develop a real **strategy to spur innovation in space**. This is my third priority.

I want to mobilise all the instruments at our disposals:

First, through the first ever Space Partnership, we will bring together the space industry, research institutes, academia and public authorities, with one aim: design – through technological roadmaps – long-term plans and coordinate investment in space innovation.

Second, I am determined to use public procurement in a strategic way, including in our large space projects. This will be the case for Copernicus new generation or for the connectivity projects.

Public procurement lowers commercial risk and provides long-term prospect to stabilise the business of a small companies, in particular start-ups. It also has a positive effect on private investors.

In the same vein, we will also use public procurement to test and de-risk new solutions. This is precisely the purpose of our In-Orbit Validation/Demonstration initiative: for a new entrant, space flight heritage in real conditions is a must. Without it, there is no commercial opportunity.

Drawing lessons from our past experience, and together with ESA, we will ensure speed and annuality of the programme to make it more efficient.

In a few weeks, we will publish a new call to collect potential candidates – payloads or experiments – that need in-orbit demonstration and validation services.

We will also use public procurement to stimulate the launcher ecosystem, in particular for mini- and micro-launchers, by giving them launch service opportunities. This is the flight ticket initiative. As of 2023, new launch systems will have the possibility to provide launch services for certain institutional launches, starting with In-Orbit Demonstration and Validation.

Third, access to finance is also critical for innovation. We will increase our cooperation with the EIC building on the positive experience of last year.

Additionally, today we are signing the start of **the CASSINI Space investment fund** with the EIF. **It will deploy an investment capacity of at least €1 billion in support of space start-ups** that want to scale up.

Europe is not short of vibrant start-ups that have disruptive ideas and technologies. But many of our start-ups cannot get sizeable equity investment in the EU once they need to scale up. They have no choice but to turn to non-EU investors. This is a major loss for Europe. The Cassini Fund will be a game changer.

It will be complemented by a debt instrument through the EIB, to make sure that New space companies get access to loans, in particular when they are not accessible from traditional sources.

My last priority is about the defence dimension of our space policy.

Two weeks ago, I participated in a discussion with the EU defence ministers on space, together with the High representative/Vice-President Josep **Borrell**.

We discussed about the strategic nature of space and the need to have a plan on how to enhance our resilience in and from space.

Beyond the traditional defence domains, we collectively face new threats in new strategic and contested areas. It is the case with cyber, it is also the case with space as space is crucial for our security.

This is why we are proposing - as part of the Strategic Compass, which is the vehicle of our collective ambition in defence cooperation – to put forward by next year **a Space & Defence Strategy**.

We should first **expand the defence dimension in existing and upcoming EU infrastructures**. Galileo is a clear demonstration that a common infrastructure under civilian control can meet defence and security needs, and that we can set up the right governance, based on trust.

We should replicate this approach for the evolution of Copernicus, in the new secured connectivity initiative and of course in the STM.

Second, we should **develop new infrastructures as dual-use by design**, integrating the defence needs from the outset.

For instance, the secured connectivity infrastructure could be equip with payload on the LEO Satellites allowing to monitor space from space.

Third, we **should reduce our technological dependencies and reinforce the resilience of our value chains** in critical sectors for space such as quantum, artificial intelligence and chips. This is critical to ensure the integrity, the security and the operations of our space infrastructures.

Finally, we should set up a new governance for our space programme to best reply to the threats. In addition to the established crisis management protocol, we could better organise joint situational awareness with the participation of all the actors. Our aim on the mid- to long-run could be to establish a true European Space Command.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have a full programme ahead of us to enhance our space ambition.

2022 will be an important year for space.

- A year during which we consolidate our existing assets (Galileo, Copernicus, Launchers) while preparing and projecting them to the next decade;
- A year of new initiatives, where we go from words to concrete implementation: space connectivity, STM and New space;
- A year finally where we will concretely and fully integrate the defence and strategic dimension of space in our approach and policies;

The Commission is working with determination to deliver on it.

I count on all of you, Member States, Members of Parliament, industry, ESA and the national agencies to make sure we can progress fast. Time is of the essence.

You can count on me.

Thank you very much.

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