Questions and Answers on an EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence

Brussels, 10 March 2023

What are the key issues of the Strategy? What novelty does it really bring?

The Strategy acknowledges that space is crucial for everyday life and for defence and security in particular. It proposes to better protect space systems and services and maximise the use of space systems for security and defence, thus reinforcing the role of EU as a global space power.

The key pillars of the Strategy are:

- Ensuring a shared understanding of space threats;
- Enhancing the resilience and protection of space systems and services in the EU;
- Strengthening the collective ability of the EU to respond to any attacks and threats putting at risk the EU’s security interests;
- Developing dual-use space capabilities, including for security and defence purposes;
- Fostering global partnerships.

The EU will also enhance its technological sovereignty by reducing strategic dependencies and securing relevant supply chains, supporting synergies between space and defence, and enhancing skills for EU defence and space industries.

Will the strategy have a financial impact on EU budget?

The Strategy proposes concrete actions to be implemented using budgets from existing programmes (e.g., European Defence Fund, Horizon Europe, EU space programme, IRIS²). It defines a new course of action for the EU. It will have a long-term impact and lead to greater synergies between space and defence, including in proposing options for potential new initiatives.

Will the Strategy impact the governance of EU programmes?

No, the governance of the EU Space Programme will remain unchanged.

The strategy will however foster the development of dual-use space-based services in support of security and defence. The governmental use of space services requires appropriate security rules.

How will the EU enhance its ability to respond to space threats?

Since it owns space assets, the EU should have access to the necessary security information to protect them. Modalities to support an EU response to space threats (such as a space domain awareness) will be explored with Member States owning relevant capabilities and to complement sensitive information we already provide on the security of the space programme.

The EU budget could fund part of the technologies and capabilities related to space situational awareness.

The EU Space Programme has the potential to contribute to the space threats picture, through space surveillance and tracking activities, included through IRIS². A pilot will explore the delivery of initial space domain awareness services.

The Council and the High Representative have the responsibility to take action in case of space threats that affect the security of the EU or its Member States, including by mobilising relevant EU tools in a consistent way to respond to such threats.

Is the EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence contributing to an arms race in outer space?

The EU is committed to prevent such an arms race and has been actively advocating for reducing space threats through norms, rules, and principles of responsible behaviours.

At the same time, the EU has to cope with new security challenges, including in the space domain.
Through the Space Strategy for Security and Defence, the EU intends to defend its security interests in space.

By making public its Space Strategy for Security and Defence, the EU intends to meet its commitment to transparency and thereby to further build confidence in outer space.

**How is the Council Decision on the security of systems and services under the Union Space Programme triggered in the event of a threat?**

In the event of a threat, the Council, on a proposal by the High Representative, or the High Representative directly, issues urgent instructions to the relevant operator of the space programme. The European External Action Service is able to react 24/7 to support the High Representative in this process, through the Space Threat Response Architecture.

**Why are you considering an EU Space Law, and what could it encompass?**

To address challenges in the space domain (proliferation of satellites and related risks of congestion and collision, high level of security threats against space infrastructures), Member States have started to develop national laws on space.

In the absence of an EU regulatory framework, there is a risk of fragmentation in the EU. Such lack of common rules could affect the competitiveness of the EU industry, the security of the EU and its global influence in multilateral fora.

The Commission is therefore considering a possible EU space law, that could propose common rules on safety, security, and sustainability in space.

**How will the EU enhance access to space?**

The EU intends to uphold its efforts towards reinforcing an EU autonomous access to space.

The responsiveness, versatility and competitiveness of EU space launch systems is needed to best serve institutional (civil and military) as well as commercial needs.

Beyond ongoing research and innovation activities, the Union will propose preparatory actions to support the development of game-changing solutions for EU autonomous access to space, also taking into account security and defence needs.

**Why do we need a governmental service for Earth observation, and what would it be?**

Space-based earth observation is a key enabler for security and defence, as proven by the EU Satellite Centre in the context of Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

Though Copernicus delivers security services, it has not been designed to comply specifically with defence requirements.

An EU Earth observation governmental system would be beneficial to provide reliable, resilient, and continuously available situational awareness to support the autonomous decision-making and action of the EU and its Member States. As part of the evolution of Copernicus, an initial service will be put in place by end 2024.

The strategy proposes to explore options that would allow the EU to complement existing national, commercial, and European satellite imagery infrastructure.

**Will the strategy benefit small and medium enterprises, including start-ups?**

The Commission will incentivise collaborative work between space and defence start-ups and SMEs.

Activities such as hackathons, challenges and matchmakings, In-Orbit-Validation and Demonstration will be synergised to foster cooperation between space and defence start-ups.

**Why do we need this EU space strategy for security and defence? How can we avoid duplication with NATO’s role?**

The main difference is that the EU owns space assets that require protection, whereas NATO relies on space assets owned by Allies.

EU and NATO responses to incident and threats in the space domain will be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

The third Joint EU-NATO Declaration of 10 January 2023 and the strategy identify space as a field where institutions will expand and deepen their cooperation.

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