



ESPI

European Space
Policy Institute

Speech by Matija Renčelj, ESPI Research Manager at the
“Enhancing Space Cooperation in the EU”
on 28 November 2024 in Brussels

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, Ambassador Verrecchia, for convening this important discussion on enhancing **European space cooperation**. As recognized by the Space Council Conclusions in May 2024, reinforced cooperation for the development of the overall European Space Policy is **fundamental to our success**.

It is an honour to represent the European Space Policy Institute today and I send the warmest regards from our Director, Ludwig Moeller, who is on duty in Vienna at our General Assembly.

The necessity for a coordinated European space policy and strategy has never been more pressing. Space plays a **decisive role in Ukraine**, a conflict on our doorstep, and **the competitiveness of our economies is threatened** by the risk of losing Europe's industrial capability in space. Since the 2016 European Space Policy, we've faced significant geopolitical shifts and a new level of commercial dynamics. Both are directly affecting Europe.

Europe as a whole today **lacks the political will** at the **true scale of its economic power and talent** to become a full space power. While this goal is still within reach, the gap is widening. Clear programmatic and associated funding commitments (CM25, MFF, CM28) and strategic direction are **preconditions** to avoid Europe being pushed **further down the global competitiveness scale**, not only in space but **across all sectors of the economy** enabled and transformed by space.

Space powers like the United States, Japan, and also China demonstrate the **effectiveness of coordinated space policy and strategy**. Italy's **COMINT** framework, which directly links space policy to the Prime Minister's office, serves as an **exemplary model within Europe**. Europe's complex space governance is often seen as a challenge. Yet, pooling the strengths of national, ESA, EU, and other intergovernmental frameworks towards a shared strategic direction is Europe's **only way** out of the current crisis and towards **shaping a prosperous future**. Pragmatic, real-world implementation within existing frameworks—not prolonged and often theoretical debates about ideal governance—will allow us to act. To **act decisively**.

And scale matters! With a GDP budget share in the order of 0.07% compared to about 0.25% in the United States, space in Europe fails to live up to the full potential of our talent and economic power. ESPI calls for **doubling this rate to 0.15% of European GDP by 2040** to remain relevant alongside the United States, China, and India.

The only **game changer** to accelerate the use of space in Europe is **security & defence**. Globally, the share of security & defence funding in public space budgets is more than 50% or approximately 54B EUR in 2023. In Europe, it represents only a fraction.

Second to security & defence, the recognition of **space exploration as a catalyst for the overall space ecosystem is largely underestimated** in Europe. Exploration brings a high value to the entire space ecosystem, with its industrial, economic, geopolitical, and inspirational benefits and is a **key driver of innovation**. Last, but not least, as demonstrated by SpaceX.

Ladies and gentlemen, the theme of today's event captures not just an aspiration but a call to action. It reminds us that Europe's success in space will depend on our ability to join forces, coordinate national priorities towards European goals, and lead with purpose.

ESPI with its national and European members, including ASI, ESA, and the European Commission, stands ready to support this vision to **develop the full benefits of space for Europe**. We strive to serve as a bridge between European and national stakeholders, and our engagement with the Italian space community exemplifies this commitment.

-  In 2023 we entered into a **landmark agreement** with the **Italian Space Agency**, represented by President Valente, providing strategic support in line with Italy's Mattei Plan for Africa, Excellence in Space Exploration Capabilities, and commitment to the EU Space Programme.
-  We increasingly support ESA's teams in **ESRIN**, headed by Simonetta Chel, in our joint efforts to develop the **wider impact of Earth Observation** on other policy sectors including agriculture, transport, urban development, and disaster response.
-  Finally, we're grateful to have a strong Italian representative in our **Advisory Council** with Samantha Cristoforetti's invaluable contributions and **forceful energy**, always ready to debate her ideas and the opportunities of human space exploration.
-  President Valente, Ms. Cheli, dear Samantha, thank you – your **energy, vision, and purpose define what we stand for at ESPI**.

To conclude, let me emphasize ESPI's ambition to **further deepen its presence in Europe** to support decision-making and develop closer links with national stakeholders – today representing over 80% of Europe's public spending in space. **Italy** stands as a **priority** for this expansion, given its **growing and pivotal role in Europe's space ecosystem**.

Finally, let me also highlight our efforts here in Brussels. Our increased presence in the city, with Sara Dalledonne, our Lead on EU Relations, is a testament to the **importance of proximity** – not only to EU institutions but also to the national, industrial, and civil society networks and communities that drive Europe's space ecosystem.

In short, **it takes a village**, as suggested by our Policy Brief on the Draghi Report. Space needs all of us to step together in a shared purpose, vision, and direction.

Thank you!

ESPI's Draghi Brief



ESPI's Vision 2040



About ESPI

 Vienna, Austria
 +43 1 718 11 18-0
 www.espi.or.at

