ESPI European Space Policy Institute

20TH ESPI ANNUAL CONFERENCE "ASPIRATIONS FOR A NEW ERA"

19-20 October 2026, Gartenpalais Liechtenstein, Vienna, Austria

DAY ONE: 19 OCTOBER 2026

Master of Ceremonies: **Anastasiia Posnova,** Research Fellow, European Space Policy Institute (ESPI)

1. CONFERENCE OPENING 14:00 – 15:00

Welcome remarks 14:00 – 14:30

- **Ludwig Moeller,** Director of ESPI
- **Hubert Büchel**, Government Councillor of the Ministry for Interior, Economy and Sport, Liechtenstein
- **Karin Tausz**, Managing Director, Austrian Research Promotion Agency

Keynote speeches: *per aspera ad astra* 14:30 – 15:00

- **Josef Aschbacher**, Director General, European Space Agency (ESA)
- **Thomas Reiter,** Head of the Space and Security Department, German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space

2. POLICY TRACK 15:00 – 18:15

Putting space at the centre of geostrategic evolutions 15:00 – 15:45

- **Martina von Künsberg Sarre**, Member of Parliament, National Council, Austria
- **Klaus-Peter Willsch,** Member of Parliament, Bundestag, Germany

- **Andreu Martín Martínez**, Member of Parliament, Congress of Deputies, Spain, and Co-chair of the 2026 Spanish Presidency of the European Interparliamentary Space Conference
- **Lord David Willetts**, Member of the House of Lords, UK

Moderator: **Sinead O'Sullivan**, Economist, University College Cork, and Member, ESPI Advisory Council

Coffee break 15:45 – 16:15

Earth, Moon and life: aspirations for a new era
16:15 – 17:20

Earth
- **Simonetta Cheli**, Director of Earth Observation Programmes, ESA
- **Rafel Jorda Siquier**, CEO, Open Cosmos

Moon
- **Daniel Neuenschwander**, Director of Human and Robotic Exploration, ESA
- **Alexander Gerst**, Astronaut, ESA

Life
- **Prof. Anu Ojha**, Space Chief Technology Officer, UK Space Agency & School of Physics & Astronomy, University of Leicester
- **Dr. Sarah Rugheimer**, Associate Professor and Chancellor Fellow, University of Edinburgh

Moderator: **Ludwig Moeller**, Director of ESPI

A special recognition for contributions to European space policy
17:20 – 17:30

Global Europe: reuniting the world in times of global upheaval
17:30 – 18:15

- **Simonetta Cheli**, Director of Earth Observation Programmes, ESA
- **Eric Morel de Westgaver,** Director for Strategy, Legal and External Matters, ESA and President, EURISY

- **Walther Pelzer**, Director General, German Space Agency at DLR
- **Carlos Garcia Sacristán,** Head of International Relations, Spanish Space Agency (AEE)

Moderator: **George Thomas**, Head of External Affairs, Frontiers

3. EVENING RECEPTION 18:30 – 21:00

Courtesy address

- **Margit Mischkulnig**, Head for Space Affairs & Aerospace Technologies, Austrian Federal Ministry for Innovation, Mobility and Infrastructure

DAY TWO: 20 OCTOBER 2026

Master of Ceremonies: **Juliet Hannay**, Communication Officer, ESPI

Opening keynote: 9:00 – 09:15

- **Peter Hanke**, Federal Minister for Innovation, Mobility and Infrastructure, Austria

4. EARTH TRACK 09:15 – 10:00

From Kyoto to Kyiv...and back again 09:15 – 10:00

- **Paul Counet**, Head of Cabinet of the Director-General and Head of Strategy, Communications and International Relations, EUMETSAT
- **Jeffrey Apeldoorn**, Vice President of Missions, ICEYE
- **Nicolas Paparoditis**, President, International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing
- **Mauro Facchini**, Head of Unit for Earth Observation, DG DEFIS, European Commission

Moderator: **Sinead O'Sullivan,** Economist, University College Cork, and Member, ESPI Advisory Council

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Coffee break 10:00 – 10:30

The ESPI research corner **10:30 – 11:00**

"How do Europeans feel about space?" - H. Ludwig Moeller, Director of ESPI

"42: The ESPI Space Index" - Matija Rencelj, Director of Strategy and Operations, ESPI

5. MOON TRACK 11:00 – 11:45

Europe and the Moon: to be or not to be

- **Ricardo Conde**, President, Portuguese Space Agency
- **Philipp Reiss,** Professor of Lunar and Planetary Exploration, Technical University Munich
- **Lars Petzold**, Lead on Science and Exploration, ESPI

Moderator: **Etienne Schneider**, former Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg and Chair of the ESPI Advisory Council

6. LIFE TRACK 11:45 – 12:30

A programme for humankind: the search for life as the next ISS?

- **Daria Robinson**, Executive Director, Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator
- **Roberto Battiston**, Chair, European Space Sciences Committee
- **Pascale Ehrenfreund,** President, Committee on Space Research

Moderator: **Sascha Quanz**, Director, LIFE Space Mission, ETH Zurich

Lunch break 12:30 – 13:40

Institutional announcements **13:40 - 14:00**

ESPI-DLR Agreement – **Ludwig Moeller**, Director of ESPI and **Walther Pelzer**, Director General, German Space Agency at DLR

ESPI-EUI Agreement – **Ludwig Moeller**, Director of ESPI and **Leonardo Meeus**, Loyola de Palacio Chair in the Robert Schuman Center, European University Institute

7. MAKING ASPIRATIONS THRIVE 14:00 – 15:00

Modelling the future of international partnerships

- **Ambassador Ian Biggs**, Ambassador of Australia to Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna
- **Ambassador Alison Grant**, Ambassador of Canada to Austria and Permanent Representative to the International Organisations in Vienna
- **Ambassador María Sebastián de Erice**, Permanent Representative of Spain to the UN and other International Organisations in Vienna
- **Aarti Holla-Maini,** Director, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs
- **Sangho Kim**, Vice President for International Cooperation, Korean Academy of Space Security

Moderator: **Alberto Rueda Carazo**, Incoming Lead on Space Diplomacy and Multilateral Platforms, ESPI

8. CLOSING 15:00 – 15:15

Key takeaways 15:00 – 15:05

- **Ludwig Moeller**, Director of ESPI

Closing Remarks 15:05– 15:15

- **Andreas Geisler**, Head of Aeronautics and Space Agency, FFG & Chair of ESPI General Assembly