



Europe: great expectations in Space

In this issue, I have looked at the **European Space Policy** that was adopted last year and is in the process of implementation. From 25 to 26 November, the Ministers in charge of space policy within the European Space Agency's Member States and Canada met with the promise of undertaking new space initiatives and fulfilling existing programmes that will continue to place Europe at the forefront of space activity. It seems that Europe is determined to invest in space and recognises it as a strategic asset. This is obviously great news for the satellite and launch industries as they comprise a significant part of these new and on-going initiatives.

As a result of the meeting, the pledge has been made to provide funding for the Guiana Space Centre, for the Ariane 5 Evolution programme, the Vega programme and the Future launchers programme. This vital part of space policy will ensure that Europe continues to have guaranteed access to space with a choice of launchers. The Ministers have also agreed to continue Europe's earth observation activities – vital for the monitoring of the environment and meteorology. Other important projects such as Galileo, Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems (ARTES) and initiatives that address the problems of space debris will continue to receive full support from Europe.

Probably the most exciting part of the space policy is the initiative that subscribes to the encouragement of European human spaceflight and the exploitation of the International Space Station. Europe has already made its mark on the ISS and has become a valued partner with the success of the Jules Verne Automated Transfer Vehicle. The aim is now to build on this success and take it forward. In addition, the ExoMars programme that aims to achieve robotic exploration of the martian surface and to execute the extraction of soil samples is very much a priority.

The main message that the European Space Policy puts out is that Europe is not prepared to sit back and that it understands that space is where the future is held and that the constant establishment of new initiatives will secure Europe's future in space and will also assert its position amongst the other global space 'powers'. The importance of high ambition will be crucial in the future. In order to be able to compete with the likes of China and the USA, Japan and other countries with huge space ambitions such as South Korea, Europe will need to be bold in order to survive. A strong stance on space will serve the continent well and will ensure that space is made available to Europeans for generations to come. Whether we recognise it or not, space will continue to play an increasingly important part in all our lives and being at the cutting edge will be the most important consideration for Europe.

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