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TOWARDS A COORDINATED EUROPEAN SPACE EXPLORATION PROGRAM

Abstract

With Horizon 2020, the European Union's future funding program for research and innovation (2014-2020), "space exploration" has received additional support in Europe. The Space Advisory Group of the European Commission recommended that "Space for exploring the Solar System and the Universe" should become a main pillar of its Space Program. Space exploration can only be performed in international cooperation. Essential steps on the right path are the global exploration roadmap of the International Space Exploration Coordination Group (ISECG) and the Lucca declaration of the Third International Conference on Exploration and the first High-level International Space Exploration conference with representatives from 28 countries. If Europe wants to become a major player in this international enterprise of space exploration, it needs to bundle its capacities, first at the national and then at the European level. This would be a first step towards a joint European research agenda for Space which has been requested in the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union. By combining its capacities in space exploration, Europe has the potential of becoming a leading partner in a global adventure. With Spacelab, the Columbus Module of the International Space Station and the family of Automated Transfer Vehicles Europe has gained key competences, with MarsExpress and the upcoming ExoMars mission Europe has recognized Mars as the focus of its space exploration program. Likewise, European scientists have gained a wealth of information on the responses of the human body to the conditions of spaceflight and the development of countermeasures, which are key elements for safeguarding human presence in space, on the Moon and on Mars. References: Ehrenfreund P, Peter N. Space Policy, 25 (2009) 244-256; Horneck G, Coradini A, et al. Space Policy, 26 (2010) 109-112