

66th International Astronautical Congress 2015

28th SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)
Interactive Presentations (IP)

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SPACE COOPERATION IN EUROPE: LOOKING UP, LOOKING AHEAD!

Abstract

The European space Policy, as it was discussed and adopted in 2009, carried some queries about the governance implementation and its implications in Europe. Cooperation within the European space governance is one of the challenges that European institutions have been addressing. Two last official documents that resulted from the European Union (EU) Council and European Space Agency (ESA) Ministerial Council meetings, held in the latter months of 2014, set the official guidelines for European space policy for the near future.

The significance of the European Space Policy lies in the fact that it is the first joint document addressing all dimensions of space activities, compiled and adopted after extensive consultations with member countries of the EU and ESA, as well as industry and other key stakeholders, and endorsed by those member countries. It represents the culmination of a decade of discussions leading to a change in EU and ESA collaboration.

Despite the high expectation of these recently approved documents, it seems that they do not answer to all the governance questions that arose in this last years. In fact, these documents contained a similar vision of the EU and ESA institutional cooperation as the previous ones.

Although the history of space cooperation in Europe is much older than the EU- ESA cooperation, it is clear that the European Union and European Space Agency are two main space players that share a common aim: (i) to strengthen Europe; and (ii) benefit its citizens. While they are separate organisations, they are increasingly working together towards these common goals, however, many more questions remain to be answered.