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Author: Prof. Giancarlo Graziola  
Università degli Studi di Bergamo, Italy, giancarlo.graziola@unibg.it

Dr. Giacomo Primo Sciortino  
Italian Space Agency (ASI), Italy, giacomo.sciortino@asi.it

THE ROLE OF ITALIAN SPACE INDUSTRY POLICY: PAST EXPERIENCE AND PRESENT  
PERSPECTIVES

**Abstract**

Given the largely predominant role of public demand for the Italian space industry, demand policy has been by far the most important tool through which that industry has been supported. Some classical tools of industrial policy, like RD subsidies, have also been used to further ISPI but their importance is not comparable to that of the demand policy. On the other hand policies aimed at furthering satellite telecommunications and broadcasting, which require a Central Government's coordination of the space policy with other government policies, have been quite absent or defective. The present paper is in three parts. In the first one, we shall inquire what, and how much large and effective, has been the role of the Italian government in directing the past development of Italian space industry. From a first reading of a number of historical accounts one sees that in the first thirty years (1960-1990) of that history the authorities in charge of the space policy have been constantly facing the problem of choosing among a number of forward looking and pioneering scientific and industrial programs, cropping up from scientific and industrial environments, the ones on which to put the public money. In the following twenty years (1990-2010) the formulation of Italian space policy has been entrusted to ASI, which has been supervised and funded by the Ministry of the University and Scientific Research (MIUR). In the second part we shall see how the development of Italian space industry has paralleled the evolution of the space policy up to its present conditions. With these in mind and on the assumption that demand policy is not so much a tool of industrial policy as one of achieving goals of public interest, we shall try to figure out the factors influencing the capabilities of its firms to compete in the different segments of the markets for manufactured goods and services; and the mix of industrial policies which would support their efforts. We shall also try to explain how these policies, on one side, should interact with the more general policies for promoting telecom and broadcasting services and, on the other one, constitute an element of the strategy adopted by ASI to fulfill its Space Plan (Strategic Vision 2010-20). The third part will focus on the policies for SME's, which are everywhere the structural mainstay of Italian industry, for the strengthening of their clusters.