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The space economy: what are the socio-economic impacts? (3)

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A SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE EUROPEAN LAUNCHER SECTOR

Abstract

In a context where the economic strains are challenging European policies as well as the very fabric of governmental contributions to public life, innovation and efficacy of public policy in research are called upon to support growth in Europe and to sustain employment and entrepreneurial capacities. Governments need evidence that the investments in space, while providing strategic tools to implement sovereign policies, create jobs and build the competitive European economy of the future. This is particularly true when the decisions at stake have a potential bearing on the future of the European space sector for at least the next 30 years, as it has been the case for the ESA Council at ministerial level meeting in December 2014. On this occasion, Ministers took the decisions to start the development of a new Ariane 6 launcher and Vega evolutions having a critical bearing on the Member States' strategic industrial capabilities and on the sustainability of the European guaranteed access to space. Given the importance of the subject, and following similar studies undertaken in the past for e.g. the Ariane 1-4 programme, the Agency has requested an independent consulting team to perform a dedicated study to assess ex-post the direct, indirect and induced socio-economic impacts of the Ariane 5 programme (mid-term evaluation) and of the Vega programme (early evaluation) globally, at European level, and within the economies and industries of each ESA Member State. This paper presents the assessment of the socio-economic impacts allowing the evaluation of the return on public investments in launchers through ESA in a wider perspective, going beyond the purely economic terms. The scope of the assessment covered in total approximately 25 ESA programmatic and activity lines and 30,000 commitments from 1986 to end 2012. In the framework of the study, the economic impact of the European launcher programmes is measured through a GDP impact defined as the straight economic activity deriving from the injection of Participating States funding channelled through ESA into the space upstream (manufacturing) industry.