

30th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)  
Interactive Presentations (IP)

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HOW TO IMPROVE THE COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INDUSTRIAL  
SYSTEM IN THE SPACE SECTOR. THE POLICIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE ITALIAN SPACE  
AGENCY TO SUSTAIN THE KEY ROLE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM COMPANIES.

**Abstract**

The paper intends to show the results achieved in the first two of four invitations to tender (respectively on these topics: 1. Materials, Components and Sensors; 2. Earth Observation) reserved to the Italian Small and Medium Space Enterprises, issued by the Italian Space Agency (ASI) as part of its institutional commitments to promote the growth of SMEs in the sector and the strengthening of national industrial competitiveness. The analysis will take into account three main building blocks: economic, technological and public interest aspects. In particular, concerning the economic aspects, the focus will be on, among the others, impacts in terms of competitiveness, employment, creation of start-ups, participation in new international competitions (i.e. ESA, Horizon 2020, others) or creation of new partnerships (i.e. with other SMEs or with LGIs). With regard to technological aspects the indicators analyzed are: the TRL increase, technology transfer and product portfolio extension. Finally, the aspects related to impacts of public interest have been analyzed, considering for example environment, health and security. The paper will show how the developed activities have led to positive results and specific case studies will be presented as selected success stories as well as the lessons learned. The analysis represents a useful starting point for future initiatives aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium companies in the space sector and, as a further evolution, for the sustainability of the whole industrial system.