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AUTONOMY AND COOPERATION FOR SPACE SUSTAINABILITY: THE CASE OF THE EU SST.

**Abstract**

Outer space is increasingly congested, contested and competitive because of the growing number of space activities undertaken by countries (as many, including emerging ones, are investing in space) and by the private sector (given the privatisation of space operations). As a result, greater attention is being placed to the safety, security and sustainability of outer space. SSA is one central tool for addressing the challenges of its growing use. Within this scope, SST of man-made objects is becoming the subject of greater attention. The EU reinforced its focus on this area through its SST programme, a vital element of the security concerns of the EU and of its wish to becoming autonomous in this field, as echoed in the EU Space Strategy and in the European Defence Action Plan, among others. This paper analyses the EU approach to outer space security through the SST programme at three levels: firstly, by means of analysing the goals and scope of the EU SST as reflected in Decision 541/2014/EU and in its Implementing Decisions of 2014 and 2016, which were the basis for the establishment and expansion of the SST consortium. Secondly, by means of assessing the nature of the programme, including its synergies with military goals and its impacts for an accessible and transparent SST. Indeed, even though the EU SST excludes purely military goals, dual-use concerns are included and at least one current application to the consortium is led by a defence entity. Thirdly, by means of looking at how the EU SST coordinates and responds to international calls for a secure outer space and better cooperation in this domain. In this scope, the paper will analyse the UN approach to the sustainability of outer space, including in the light of the thematic priorities of UNISPACE+50 and of the strategic objectives of Space 2030. Analysis of the role of the EU (both in financing and through SATCEN), ESA and Member States in securing outer space will also be made. This paper will further look at the contribution of the EU SST to guaranteeing that outer space is accessible to all as established in the OST, especially with relation to the issue of access to and exchange of SST data and cooperation therefor. The paper concludes by highlighting the main challenges to sustainability of outer space through SST and the need for increasing international cooperation in this area, including within the EU.