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THE IMPACT OF “BREXIT” ON THE UK AND EUROPEAN SPACE SECTORS

Abstract

In 2010, the UK government announced that it was seeking to increase its share of the global space market from 6.5% up to 10% by 2030, and has to date displayed commitment to this goal by steps such as increasing its contributions to ESA, building a national satellite testing facility, and seeking to construct a space port. However, this ambition will now be challenged by the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union on 29th March 2019. This report seeks to understand the overall impact “Brexit” may have on both the UK and the European space sectors.

Firstly, the report assesses how the economy of the UK may be affected by its departure from the EU, and what consequences this will have for the country’s space sector. It also considers the challenges that the UK could face when creating new partnerships, and how its cooperation with key European space players such as France, Germany and Italy may be altered.

The relationship between the UK and the European Commission will be significantly different post-Brexit also – especially in terms of collaboration, challenges for future governance, funding levels of EU budgets, and the ability of the UK to procure contracts relating to the EU’s flagship space programmes. The UK outlined in its ‘Collaboration on science and innovation’ future partnership paper that it desires continued participation in the Galileo and Copernicus programmes, as well as the new Space Surveillance and Tracking programme that could be put in place; whether this can be achieved or not is also assessed.

Finally, the report explores the continuing membership of the UK to the European Space Agency (ESA). ESA is not an EU institution, and so the UK’s participation should not be at risk due to Brexit. However, a significant proportion of ESA’s budget is supplied by the EU, and several of its programmes are based around the EU flagship programmes. Therefore, the partnership between ESA and the UK may have to evolve.