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International cooperation in using space for sustainable development: Towards a “Space2030” agenda (1)

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ESA AND THE ARCTIC - THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO A  
SUSTAINABLE ARCTIC

**Abstract**

The Arctic has become an area of particular relevance, where manifold interests meet with particular challenges, such as the harsh environment, a limited infrastructure and a low population density. Many of the specific challenges of the Arctic can be addressed by space technology: monitoring and assessing the Arctic environment is a task that is best met with space systems; satellite technology facilitates navigation and communication and improves marine safety, and it enables the comprehension of climate change impacts, which are particularly evident and dramatic in the Arctic.

Since many years, the European Space Agency is supportive of its Member States with interests in the Arctic: many ESA programmes are targeting, directly or indirectly, the Arctic area, for scientific purposes, a better understanding of the Arctic environment or to support activities in the Arctic region. After providing a general introduction to the Arctic and its legal status, as well as an overview over different interests in the region, this paper details the numerous ways in which space activities can contribute to sustainable development and life in the Arctic. It then turns to retracing the specific steps taken in the European Space Agency, including the specific Arctic Task Forces, culminating in the recent application for observer status at the Arctic Council. In a concluding chapter, this paper then explores how both organisations can mutually benefit from each other.