

Transcending Societal Issues for Space Exploration (12)
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BENEFITING MANKIND: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE EMERGENCE OF A
SPACE-ACTIVE STATE

Abstract

Space exploration is becoming essential in fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goals, on a national and global level, which is why Space2030 agenda encourages the emergence of more space-active States. That is, however, a difficult and long process, due to extreme complexities in the technological, legislative and societal spheres.

States today repeatedly overlook the importance of civil society in establishing their national space sectors. Civil society, generally understood as consisting of individuals and their organizations, operating approximately 2.2 trillion dollars, can - when mobilized - influence the political will and business actions. It can therefore substantially contribute to building a space-active State, furthering space exploration and ensuring space sustainability. Its absence, however, can result in a democratic deficit and lack of public scrutiny that could otherwise ensure quality and effectiveness of space legislation and exploration in practice.

Under Article XI of the Outer Space Treaty (OST) States are obliged to inform the public to the greatest extent feasible about their space activities. His excellency Manfred Lachs has posited that this obligation is the concretization of the principle contained in Article I of the OST that space exploration must be done for the benefit of all mankind. Civil society and space exploration should therefore go hand in hand.

However, to utilise the full strength of civil society, it must first be informed about the benefits space exploration brings to it. The problem nowadays is that the people themselves are not aware of the immense extent of the benefits they receive on a daily basis from space exploration, and are therefore consequently not interested in participating in its regulation. For example, the evolution of the space sector not only provides essential services, but also facilitates growth in non-space sectors, thereby guaranteeing healthy economic competitiveness, technological and social development.

That is why in my article I will focus on the role civil society plays in space exploration. For this purpose I will examine three critical areas. Firstly, how civil society can help build a space-active State, explained on the example of Slovenia, which in 2020 launched its first two satellites and is currently drafting its first space legislation. Secondly, how the civil society can be stimulated into engaging the space sector. And finally, how civil society can be used to ensure space sustainability (and by proxy Earth sustainability) and an enlargement of space exploration, innovation and investment, which will finally benefit all mankind.