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Author: Mrs. Malak Trabelsi Loeb
United Arab Emirates

Dr. Krzysztof Kanawka
Blue Dot Solutions, Poland

HOW ATTRACTIVE IS THE UAE SPACE SECTOR TO FOREIGN ENTREPRENEURS?

Abstract

From a bipolar race, the space sector has witnessed a proliferation of activities in a global ecosystem in which new countries, Inter-governmental Organizations (IGOs), non-state actors as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and private institutions contributed to the course of its evolution. The space industry has been undergoing a metamorphosis propelled by an unprecedented paradigm shift marked by innovative technologies, new investment philosophy, competitive political and economic trends, and steered by the new entrants into the space economy. Among the new entrants to the New Space space ecosystem is the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The New Space rising star has already achieved significant milestones since its National Space Programme launch in 2017, marked by the first Emirati's astronaut mission in the International Space Station and the successful launch of the Hope Probe to Mars. In the pursuit of its national economic diversification to support its Centennial 2071, the UAE policies aim to benefit from the space industry's function as a key enabler and space science technologies' spill-over multiplier's effects. To attract private space actors into the UAE space sector, the UAE has reduced the economic and legal barriers. Nonetheless, building a resilient sector beyond a mere satellite-based economy will have to capitalize on the nascent space activities such as access to space, mining, space robotics, Internet of Things upstream manufacturing, deep space communication, and many more space ventures. Thanks to the wise leadership with a futuristic vision and the UAE's position in leading one of the leading space powers, private space actors worldwide have been expressing their interest to access the UAE's national space economy. However, there is a lack of studies addressing the various factors to be considered by foreign space actors before accessing the UAE national space sector. Thus, this work aims to identify the current status of the foreign private actors' interest in the UAE national space sector and determine through a questionnaire and interviews their willingness to do business or open a permanent place of business within the country. This work's ultimate goal is to map the foreign entrepreneurs' interests in the UAE space sector, and perform a factor analysis related to the potential determinants in attracting these actors to facilitate their access to the UAE ecosystem.