

IISL COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E7)  
A new look at (how far are we with) Space Traffic Management (3)

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TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN STM REGIME: OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS FOR  
EUROPE

**Abstract**

Space Traffic Management (STM) is a topic of discussion in the global space community for more than a decade. STM has been defined by the IAA Cosmic Study of 2017 as “the set of technical and regulatory provisions for promoting safe access into outer space, operations in outer space and return from outer space to Earth free from physical or radio-frequency interference.” The European Space Agency (ESA) has developed, over the years, several STM and SSA related initiatives and programs, recognizing its importance for the safety and sustainability of space activities. The US’ Space Policy Directive-3 (SPD-3) on National Space Traffic Management Policy of 2018, was followed by a US-driven proposal, in May 2020, of a set of “Space Traffic Coordination and Management” standards at the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO). These developments intensified dialogue around STM and led to the development of several relevant initiatives in Europe. The recently published Action Plan on Synergies between civil, defence and space industries of the European Commission defines an action item on STM and makes reference to the “EU strategy for Space Traffic Management.” The first part of this paper delves into the opportunities and motivations for space stakeholders in Europe to adopt a common position on STM, taking into account the role of space sector as an enabler of European strategic autonomy. The second part of the paper focuses on potential barriers for the development of a common European approach on STM. Potential challenges from legal, political, economic and technical perspectives will be taken into consideration, as well as the complex ecosystem of STM with the role of the various space actors involved in Europe. Based on these opportunities and barriers, the objective of this paper is to draw conclusions on the potential of a common European approach to Space Traffic Management.