Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1341 (1997)[1]

European space policies

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly notes that both the member countries of the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Russian Federation possess a significant scientific and technological capacity with regard to space exploration.

2. The ESA serves as a positive example of how numerous European nations, many of them with limited resources, can unite and co-ordinate their efforts in a technologically sophisticated area. The ESA has performed a number of successful space missions, including manned flights, and the Ariane launches comprise its major technological and commercial activity.

3. This co-operation is based upon the principle of one state - one vote, but it also provides for a flexible optional programme. In placing space-related orders, the principle of fair industrial return is still applied, although recent developments seem to be moving towards a slightly stronger market orientation.

4. The Russian Federation, as the largest European space-faring nation, has inherited from the Soviet era a vast space complex and is running a full-range space exploration programme. The economic reform process has led to major budget cuts in this sector, but the Russian Federation has still managed to retain unique and compatible technology and know-how, especially for manned flight missions.

5. Space programmes have a considerable impact on the economy, both directly (by developing new markets and creating new jobs) and indirectly (by providing technological spin-offs to other industries). Given the predominant importance of quality high-tech products and services for modern industrial development, space exploration serves as a powerful source of new knowledge and technological innovation.

6. Due to its universal importance, space research and exploration are lending themselves to increased international co-operation. Regular exchange of scientific data, as well as joint production and utilisation of space capabilities, have important cost-benefit aspects. Besides overcoming national barriers, co-operation in space also has a major positive impact on the political climate in Europe and the world. For these reasons, the development and implementation of an international space policy deserves a higher level of political attention.

7. Earth observation is one of the most promising areas of international space co-operation. It has a wide scope of applications, ranging from traditional climate and environmental monitoring to the prospective use of satellite data for peacekeeping and disaster management.

8. The world space community is now linked by a tight network of organisations. East-West space co-operation has become a significant element of space technology development. This is particularly evident in the case of the international space station where the United States (Nasa), the ESA and the Russian Federation are major partners. However, there is still room for improving international co-ordination of efforts.

9. The Assembly welcomes in this context the American initiative to convene a series of workshops with the aim of improving international space co-operation.

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1. Assembly debate on 23 September 1997 (27th Sitting) (see Doc. 7875, report of the Committee on Science and Technology, rapporteur: Mr Lorenzi). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 September 1997 (27th Sitting).

10. The Assembly considers it important to follow and contribute to the development of European space policy and its internationalisation. New reports on this topic should reflect more fully the changes in the membership of the Council of Europe and forthcoming major developments in international space co-operation.

11. The Assembly therefore asks the Committee of Ministers and in particular member governments of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement:

11.1. to enhance the use of space technology for the monitoring of disasters within the framework of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement;

11.2. to work towards the establishment of an all-European satellite-supported system of disaster mitigation by exploiting this agreement.

12. The Assembly further recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on the governments of Council of Europe member and observer states:

12.1. increase their space research efforts within national and international programmes;

12.2. to develop international co-operation in various spheres of space exploration and to integrate it on a regular basis into national space programmes, thus ensuring a maximal use of the advantages provided by the international division of labour;

12.3. to enhance the political, legal, institutional and financial framework for such co-operation;

12.4. to ensure full compliance with their existing international obligations in this field;

12.5. to enhance the role of the present international fora and if need be to establish new mechanisms for reviewing existing space capabilities and the use of their products and services, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts;

12.6. to encourage their respective space agencies:

a. to exchange information on their processes of selecting and funding space projects;

b. to engage in a regular dialogue with a view to establishing a co-operative strategy for further space exploration, especially in the implementation of common objectives;

c. to increasingly seek co-operation with a view to cutting costs and increasing the benefits of space exploration programmes;

12.7. to evaluate the political and technical feasibility of partially converting their military space-related installations to serve civil purposes;

12.8. to consider making their space-related projects more responsive to market incentives, including a partial liberalisation of the industrial return principle and encouraging a more active participation of the private sector;

12.9. to pay special attention to co-operation in the field of Earth observation, including application of satellite sensoring data, to support peacekeeping operations, as well as crisis and disaster management;

12.10. to address new areas of space co-operation, such as the mapping, controlling and removal of orbital debris;

12.11. to continue work on the possible, future transmission of solar power to the Earth;

12.12. to examine the feasibility of installing a permanent base on the Moon.

13. The Assembly asks the ESA to explore the possibility of enlarging its membership.