



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 24 May 2013**

**ST 9755/13**

**COMPET 317**

**NOTE**

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From: Commission  
To: Delegations  
Subject: EU-ESA Relations  
- Information note from the Commission

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission on the above-mentioned topic with a view to the AOB item at the at the Competitiveness Council on 30 May 2013.

**COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL ON 30 MAY 2013**

**INFORMATION NOTE FROM THE COMMISSION**

**Status of Reflections on the Evolution of EU-ESA Relations**

On 14 November 2012 the European Commission adopted a Communication on “Establishing appropriate relations between the EU and the European Space Agency”<sup>1</sup>. It outlined some of the structural difficulties in the current set-up and presented several options for further evolution. These options should now be studied in greater detail in order to determine the most desirable course of action for the future.

These reflections take place against the backdrop of on-going negotiations on the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework of the EU. In the next seven years (2014-2020) the EU is likely to devote considerable financial resources to space activities. This reflects the political will of the Member States that EU should play a stronger role in European space activities.

Increased funding comes with increased responsibility. What is needed is better governance for better spending. This requires a reinforced partnership with the Member States, seeking to establish additional synergies in the triangle formed by the Member States, ESA and the EU. Closer collaboration with ESA will also be crucial to the success of our space endeavours.

ESA has become the implementing agency for many of the EU’s space activities. As a consequence, the EU is today one of the largest contributors to ESA. This fact needs to be reflected in the on-going governance discussions.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2012)671

In 2013 we have a unique opportunity to shape a better governance in line with the political orientations given by the EU and ESA Ministers. The next generation of arrangements between the EU and ESA are currently being prepared, drawing lessons from the programmes implemented so far. The potential for synergies and complementarity in the area of Space research is also being explored. All this requires closer cooperation, openness and transparency on both sides.

The Commission remains convinced that the ultimate goal should be one of *rapprochement* of ESA towards the EU environment. But decisions for such change require time and political will. They could affect the EU-ESA relationship in the long-term, beyond 2020. In order to pave the way for those long-term changes, there are things which can and must be done in the meantime on a pragmatic basis. ESA bodies should be progressively opened to representatives of the European Commission in areas where the EU intends to invest under Horizon 2020. The Commission's communication presented concrete ideas to that effect, which should be explored in order to ensure that (i) activities carried out by ESA for the EU are managed within an EU-like environment; and (ii) the European Commission is allowed unrestricted access to ESA's relevant statutory bodies.

### **Next steps**

The Competitiveness Council conclusions of 18 February 2013 asked the Commission to work closely with ESA in carrying out a comprehensive cost benefit analysis and impact assessment of a set of options, including those proposed in its Communication.

This process has already been launched. An in-depth study is being prepared by the Commission and first results could be expected to be presented to Member States towards the end of the year.

Reflections are also on-going on the ESA side and the Commission is working closely with the Director-General of ESA to ensure the necessary level of coordination and coherence between the two processes.

Decisions on the evolution of ESA are expected at the occasion of the next ESA Council at Ministerial level, planned to meet in autumn 2014.