

European Cooperation for European Spaceports

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An increasing number of European countries are backing initiatives to develop micro-launchers and/or spaceports for small satellites. These initiatives are directly aligned with the European interest in securing access to space and stimulating commercial growth.

It is important to highlight that these projects do not contravene European cooperation. In fact, nationally funded projects, such as **the spaceport developed by Andoya Space, will offer Europe a strategic capacity** that relies on the contributions and expertise of industry from all over Europe to succeed. However, to maximise the benefits across Europe we need a new “modus operandi” to ensure that European micro-launchers will succeed in their competition with government backed initiatives from other regions.

The challenge: Like the defence sector, space is a state-driven sector characterised by strategic interests and protectionism. In short, state policies matter for the industry’s competitiveness. In Asia and the U.S the micro-launcher and small satellite industry benefit from policies which Europe so far has been slow to implement. These include protective market policies, streamlined regulations, innovative procurement procedures, design philosophies where “fail-fast and learn quick” approaches are accepted, and having government bodies act as anchor-customers or pay for launches to demonstrate innovative technologies.

Based on the above, we would like to highlight **five challenges Europe needs to address:**

1. **Ensure fair competition:** European industry is all for competition, but if governments in other regions support their own industry out of strategic interests Europe needs to follow suit to level the playing field.
2. **Speed:** European industry produces world leading technology, but the complex European institutional frameworks (European Space Agency and EU) often impedes the speed and flexibility necessary to match Asian and US competitors in bringing technology to the market.
3. **Regulatory uncertainty:** Countries across Europe are developing national space legislation, but the processes are slow and significant questions remain as to how collaborative activities can take place across jurisdictions in this complicated regulatory landscape.
4. **The lack of launch opportunities for small satellites and payloads** is a bottleneck in Europe. Emerging companies struggle to find launch opportunities to prove to potential investors or customer that their products work in space, and are worth buying or investing in.
5. **Covid-19** forces the European space industry to tighten its belt and reduces budgets for innovation.

The opportunity: Technological advancements are now making it attractive to pursue certain projects outside the European institutional frameworks, in a commercially driven capacity with national backing, including spaceports and micro-launchers. This makes it possible to leverage industry and private investment in new ways, and to develop and mature technology much faster. With the right tools it could also address a major bottleneck for the European space sector by providing opportunities to ensure quick access to space capability demonstrations for small satellites and payloads.

To spark a European micro-launcher and spaceport market, we believe it is necessary to combine the development of the European institutional frameworks with more bi-or multilateral cooperation and coordination. We have **four recommendations:**

1. **Regulation coordination:** Ensure compatible and clear legal frameworks across Europe to avoid regulatory showstoppers.

2. **Capability coordination:** To enable a competitive European sector in a global context, it is beneficial for national initiatives to, at least to some extent, complement each other. A rational approach to define the division of labour would be to make maximum use of national specialisations and geographical advantages. Furthermore, spaceports for micro-launchers should not be seen as competitors to existing launch capacity, but rather as a maturation of the market responding to new demands.
3. **Policy coordination:** European governments must adopt policies to launch their payloads and small satellites with European launchers at a European spaceport.
4. **Finance-initiatives coordination:** Increase the flexible funding arrangements available for «Space Capability Demonstrations» which can stimulate cooperative initiatives. This would ideally support the launch of smaller innovative European payloads on European micro-launchers at European spaceports. This can be achieved through a development of the existing mechanisms in the EU and ESA and by creating bi- or multilateral agreements. This will address the bottleneck in the overall value chain and initiate a European micro-launcher market.