

Space for growth in the regions

“ *There is a significant possibility that the outcome of our national and regional efforts can be strongly increased for all partners through coordination.* ”

Photo: ESA

Space is important for industry because it creates a market pull for innovative enterprises and research organisations, to meet the demands of space programmes and to industrialise their spin-off technologies. Several European regions have encouraged and developed space-based industries and competences that act as important knowledge-based clusters and networks – helping to drive regional economic development. Two application-oriented initiatives, namely GALILEO and GMES, are expected to generate major economic impact, growth and employment in those regions actively accompanying their industries in these activities. The ERA-STAR Regions network links research programme managers from these regions with the objective of building the transregional critical mass in RTD capacity needed to meet the growing opportunities that space programmes and space-based services offer.

The European Commission's 2003 White Paper on a European space policy presents an action plan for developing an extended European space effort, recognising that space technologies have a critical role to play in delivering faster economic growth and improved competitiveness. The space sector also offers a host of social and policy benefits in many fields, such as security, job creation, cohesion and sustainable development, to mention but a few. Significantly, space RTD (research and technological development) is part of a much larger value chain that demonstrably stimulates research in other sectors and leads to commercial applications with enormous potential for job and wealth creation. The GALILEO satellite navigation system is one example of such a European programme that can leverage many applications in commercial and public services. So far, Europe's successes in space have been built on national and regional research programmes and implemented through multinational cooperation in the European Space Agency. However, these activities are now acquiring a European space policy to guide and coordinate them.

Space in the regions

The ERA-STAR Regions network unites European regions and “smaller” countries that have developed particular competences in space research. In these regions, the space sector has a high technological profile and is, to varying degrees, interwoven into the regional industrial and research landscape. These space-based clusters, often including both industrial and academic players, are important knowledge-based networks that help drive regional economic growth and prosperity.

ERA-STAR Regions' members include national ministries and regional authorities and agencies responsible for regional development and innovation planning. A policy group, composed of governmental representatives (ministers or high-level officials), one for each partner country or region, will be created in order to involve policy-makers at regional and national levels. The key stakeholders are active in promoting and supporting scientific research and industrial innovations in the space sector that complement European and national programmes. Therefore, with space activities expected to grow significantly in the future, the ERA-STAR Regions' members are coordinating their existing regional programmes or regional initiatives on space research and innovation – for the mutual benefit of their regions following the national and European space programmes.



Coordination Action ERA-STAR REGIONS

Full title:

ERA – Space Technologies
Applications & Research for the
Regions and medium-sized Countries

Research field:

Space

Coordinator:

Belgium: Ministère de la Région
wallonne - DGTRE

Partners:

- Austria: Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Innovation und Technologie
- Austria: Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für Weltraumfragen
- Czech Republic: Česká kosmická kancelář, o.p.s (Czech Space Office)
- Czech Republic: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
- France: Conseil Régional Midi-Pyrénées
- Germany: Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wirtschaft, Infrastruktur, Verkehr und Technologie
- Germany: Senator für Bildung und Wissenschaft der Freien Hansestadt Bremen
- Germany: Senator für Wirtschaft und Häfen der Freien Hansestadt Bremen
- Germany: Bremer Innovations-Agentur GmbH
- Germany: Anwendungszentrum GmbH Oberpfaffenhoffen
- Hungary: Hungarian Space Office
- Italy: Navigate Consortium (Lombardia)
- Italy: Regione Toscana, Direzione Generale Sviluppo Economico
- The Netherlands: Netherlands Agency for Aerospace Programmes
- Slovenia: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport – Science Office
- Spain: Junta de Andalucía
- Spain: Comunidad de Madrid

Further information:

Ir Michel Charlier, Directeur général
Ministère de la Région wallonne
Direction générale des Technologies,
de la Recherche et de l'Energie
Avenue Prince de Liège, 7
B-5100 Jambes
Fax: +32 (0) 81 30 66 00
e-mail: f.quertain@mrw.wallonie.be
website: www.wallonie.be/dgtre

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Photo: ESA

“ This will be the first time that the coordination of space research policies will take place multilaterally at the level of the regions. ”

In addition to direct research funding, the individual members of ERA-STAR REGION supply several types of support to their regional space sectors. These include research infrastructures, financial support for spin-offs and technology-transfer, incubation facilities for space-oriented start-ups, and space sector oriented network building. When assessed from a European viewpoint, this support was previously fragmented with few trans regional programmes – in fact, the regions were often actually competing with each other. However, the establishment of a European space policy is producing a step change in the development of the space sector. And the ERA-STAR Regions' members are cooperating to achieve the critical mass in coordinated research programmes or similar initiatives that can sustain growth in their individual regional space sectors. ERA-STAR Regions concentrates its activities around the existing programmes or initiatives with reference to four main axes:

- GALILEO applications
- GMES applications
- Technology applications
- Outreach, Education-related partnership, Communication

Creating space to grow

Through exchanging information and good practice the network's research programme managers are setting the groundwork for future joint projects. Given that the network comprises many regions with their own governmental and administrative structures, particular attention is being paid to removing the administrative and legal obstacles to cooperation in collaborative projects. The longer-term goal is to launch joint calls for proposals that will cement transregional cooperation and build the distributed resource bases that respond to the large RTD demands of the space industry, as well as taking the products of space research and developing innovative spin-off applications for the benefit of Europe's citizens.