

**Outcomes**  
**of the European Space Traffic Management Conference, 7 July 2021**  
**“Fostering a European approach on Space Traffic Management”**

Representatives of Member States of EU and ESA, together with representatives of the European Commission, the European External Action Service and the Executive of the European Space Agency met at the European Space Traffic Management (STM) Conference on 7 July 2021.

The Conference was initiated by orientations affirmed by the EU-ESA Space Council of 20 November 2020 on the European contribution in establishing key principles for the global space economy. There, Ministers responsible for space from EU and ESA Member States recommended a coherent approach on STM in Europe including to hold a dedicated European conference to discuss the mapping exercise of current regulatory frameworks in Europe.

The Conference was prepared in an informal process encompassing the representatives of the Member States of EU and ESA, as well as representatives of the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and the Executive of the European Space Agency. This process included a Hearing on STM that took place on 24 March 2021, at the occasion of which EU and ESA Member States, space agencies, the EU Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) Consortium/Partnership, industry, academia and Europe’s international partners presented their views on space traffic management, thus highlighting the various elements and actors and perspectives relevant to fostering a European position on STM. Based on the Hearing a mapping of European capabilities and gaps was carried out on 21 April 2021.

In the development of a European position on STM, continued engagement with international partners/organisations like UNCOPUOS will be key in ensuring that the increased coordinated European approach contributes to international STM discussions, in order to achieve an internationally acceptable approach.

The Conference noted with appreciation the European Union roadmap for STM, which was discussed at the EU Competitiveness Council (SPACE) on 28 May 2021.

The following Outcomes of the Conference are not binding to any participant, the Presidencies or institution but are offered as a contribution to the STM debate in Europe.

## 1. Relevance of Space Traffic Management for Europe

- (1) Space Traffic Management is a very complex topic under the remit of multiple levels of competences from the multilateral United Nations, to the European actors and national governments. It requires action at multiple dimensions that need to be addressed through a close involvement of all relevant European actors, such as: i) research and innovation activities; ii) development of capabilities; as described in chapters 2 and 3, iii) operational coordination services iv) regulatory activities including standardization, v) security and dual dimension.
- (2) Orbits are increasingly congested and contested. They constitute a limited natural resource. The dynamic evolution of space activities and the increasing emergence of a near-Earth ecosystem as an economic domain, attracting additional actors and investments, including from the commercial sector, and leading to the development of innovative applications and technologies is noted.
- (3) There is an increase in space traffic and collision risks, thus challenging the safety of space activities, access to space, and the long-term sustainability (LTS) of outer space.
- (4) Ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space as a safe and secure environment is a prerequisite for Europe to access and utilize outer space, as space data and applications are increasingly important for our societies as a whole and for implementing European Union and national policy objectives such as the digital and green transition and for socio-economic, security and defence goals. Moreover, the protection of European citizens and their Member States is a prerequisite to achieve at the earliest stage of any STM development.
- (5) The need for ESA, the EU, and their respective Member States to foster a common approach on STM in order to react to the global challenges and to contribute to ongoing international discussions on STM is highlighted.
- (6) A European contribution to the formulation of future international norms and standards related to STM as well as an increased coordinated approach and cooperation are of primary importance for preserving European interests in accessing and using space, public and private space infrastructure and to promote the competitiveness of the European industry and for contributing to a level-playing field for the global space economy.
- (7) Europe should continue to foster its status as a role model for responsible behaviour in space.

## 2. State of Play and Needs

- (1) STM constitutes a multi-dimensional concept encompassing legal, regulatory, policy, research and innovation, development of capabilities legal and operational elements at different levels. The civil, commercial, technological, security, and dual-use aspects should be duly taken into account.
- (2) A comprehensive approach is necessary in fostering a European approach to STM, for which the mapping presented at the occasion of the Preparatory Meeting for the European Conference on Space Traffic Management on 21 April 2021 could be useful, identifying specific needs for action as a valuable tool for facilitating a structured approach towards shaping a European position on STM as well as the on-going research activities launched by European Actors such as the two ongoing H2020 STM actions and the EU SST Consortium/Partnership by the European Commission, an STM pilot project commissioned by the European Parliament, and the ongoing ESA Space Safety Programme.
- (3) Europe should make use of all its resources and capabilities and bundle them in the most effective and efficient way, involving different EU, ESA, and national authorities and their contributions and responsibilities in their respective fields.
- (4) In order to assess the needs to establish adequate coordination interfaces with air traffic management, a coordination with in particular International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), Eurocontrol and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) could be promoted.
- (5) In order to ensure the safety, security and long-term sustainability of outer space activities, international coordination and technical standards as well as rules with universal applicability, in accordance with international space law become necessary, and in this case European Member States need to actively contribute to such development and its implementation in a coherent way.
- (6) Europe should work on the implementation of the existing voluntary LTS guidelines adopted by UNCOPUOS and could develop standards and good practices; this development would be gradual and incremental and should be based on the principle of reciprocity, so as not to penalize the competitiveness of the European space industry, and taking into account strategic issues as well. As a long-term goal, Europe should strive to contribute to further consideration of an international regulatory framework on STM in collaboration with other nations and international organisations which might encompass as appropriate legal or voluntary instruments worked out within international organisations such as UNCOPUOS.
- (7) Europe needs to promote its technological leadership to enhance the safety and sustainability of its space activities and reap the benefits of developing markets and fully use the opportunities provided by commercial capabilities and services, including as regards in-orbit servicing, active debris removal, space debris mitigation (with for example spacecraft design elements), space surveillance and tracking, space weather, and near-Earth objects.
- (8) European and national SST capabilities are a prerequisite to any burden sharing, as well as an essential basis to monitor space objects and provide SST services related to space traffic. European and national investments in SST are therefore of capital importance.

### 3. Actors Contributing to a European Approach to Space Traffic Management

- (1) The development of a comprehensive, coherent and jointly developed European approach on STM to contribute to the global discussion necessitates the inclusive involvement of all relevant actors, Member States of EU and ESA, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the ESA Executive, the EU SST Consortium/Partnership, regulatory authorities, academia, industry, including service providers and civil society, based on the actors' competences, roles, and capabilities.
- (2) The imperative role of Member States of EU and ESA in shaping the way forward due to the security, sovereignty and dual dimension of STM and the EU and ESA Member States' authority over their SST sensors needs to be taken into account. Other national initiatives and research and development through the ESA programmes should also be considered in the European approach in the future too. Also, the EU and ESA Member States' responsibilities under the United Nations treaties need to be taken into account.
- (3) The EU SST programme is for EU member states the primary research and innovation capability development and operational capability for monitoring and coordinating space traffic through the SST Services (collision avoidance, re-entry, fragmentation, remediation and mitigation) as well as for providing services to institutional and commercial stakeholders, public and private, civil and military ones.
- (4) The role of the European Commission should be emphasized in the implementation of the EU space programme, in particular with the SST sub-component which could contribute to a European STM, and other EU space activities in accordance with the EU treaties and international law. The European Commission is also announcing STM as one of the three flagship initiatives, stemming out of its Action Plan on Synergies between civil, defence and space industries. EU Member States have also provided, through the EU Competitiveness Council (SPACE), guidance for developing a European Union approach for STM. The European Commission was encouraged to prepare the declaration of acceptance of the rights and obligations under the United Nations space treaties, where applicable.
- (5) ESA provides essential contributions and programme expertise in research and collaborative development and implementation of large European systems and also develops operational prototypes and precursor services in its Space Safety Programme. Furthermore, ESA performs research and development, in particular in the areas of in-orbit servicing, space debris mitigation, active debris removal, space weather, and near-Earth objects and sensor development, which could contribute to a European STM. ESA also has a strong and long experience in contributing in different international forums as the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC).
- (6) An active involvement of European space industry including the downstream sector and service providers, financial service providers such as insurers, regulatory authorities, research establishments, academia, and civil society is important for the future development of technical, operational rules and standards in order to promote effective solutions and increase the European competitiveness and technological leadership.
- (7) The collaboration between the EU standardization organisations European Committee for Standardization (CEN), European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), European Telecommunication Standardization Institute (ETSI) and the European Cooperation for Space Standardization (ECSS) should be further strengthened as an important platform for the development of standards relevant to STM. ESA, Member States of ESA and

EU and European industry have a strong experience in standard setting by contributing in different international forums like ECSS, CEN, CENELEC, International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and European Organisation for Civil Aviation Equipment (EUROCAE).

#### 4. Way Ahead

- (1) The Conference welcomed the consensus reached at the occasion of the EU Competitiveness Council (SPACE) on 28 May 2021 on a European Union roadmap contributing to the way forward on a European position on Space Traffic Management and welcomed the further development of a step-wise European approach for a coherent and inclusive way ahead with all competent actors in particular EU, ESA and all their respective Member States.