

KYOTO AND KYIV: TWICE IN A LIFETIME

Europe is concerned about its future in space. It calls to reinforce the development of an overall European Space Policy.

Yet, debates in Europe often appear to be focused on efficiency concerns of agencies such as procurement schemes; the governance between EU, intergovernmental and national actors and concepts like an EU chamber of ESA; and the competitiveness of the European space industry and geo-return constraints. All these aspects deserve highest attention, i.e. **HOW Europe should engage**. They do, however, fall short of addressing the decisive question: **WHY Europe would invest in space at all. What provides the policy foundation of space.**



UN Photo/Frank Leather

25 years prior to the war in Ukraine, the Kyoto protocol and the public awareness triggered by the El Niño phenomenon may have provided the most significant impetus to what became Space for Green & Sustainability and the EU Copernicus programme, Europe's flagship in space, world-leading. Today, about 25% of ESA's budget supports Earth observation, Europe's most successful program.

The same year, on the 4th of July 1997, 25 years after the last Apollo mission, NASA's Mars Pathfinder mission landed on Mars. NASA's policy foundation, its mission to explore the unknown, innovate for the benefit of humanity, and to inspire the world through discovery, still today appears to stand timeless. Its FY2025

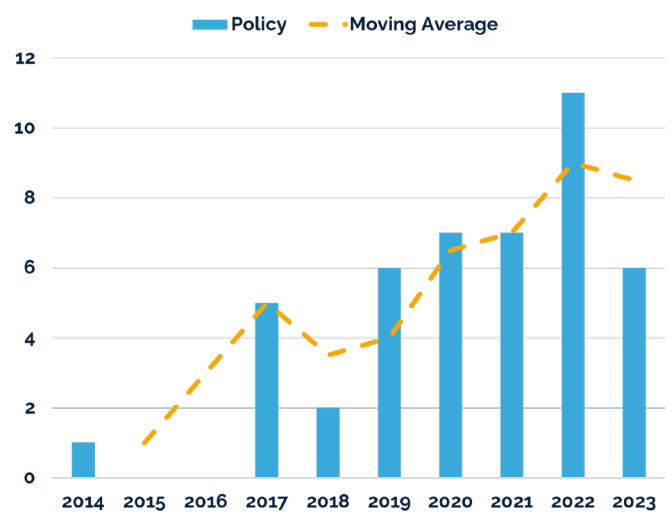
budget request amounts to 25.4B\$, with 2/3 in support of science & exploration, leveraged globally by the Artemis accords - an epitome of space at the service of diplomacy. ESA invests just 10% compared to its US partner in science & exploration, and consistently has denied itself such a grand mission. Also, the 2023 report **Revolution Space** on space exploration has yet to find political support.

Since the Cold War, space for security & defence always has been the other important element of US investments in space, with a FY2025 budget request by the Space Force of 29.4BUSD. In comparison, related European funding is marginal, as Europe is only beginning to act on the geo-political shift caused by the war in Ukraine.

Yet, clearly the space policy dimension of space continues to increase also in Europe, as 30 countries issued national space policies or related policies and strategies since 2017. So far, 6 of these policies (Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Switzerland, UK) have been (up-) issued since 2022 and several take into account (in a first instance) the **new security & defence dimension of space**. Half of these recent policies originate in the ministry of foreign affairs or ministry of defence, only in one case it is linked to a research ministry, traditionally the ministerial home of space in Europe.

Affirming the increased strategic relevance, the European Space Agency for the first time has been tasked by its Member States to develop a long-term ESA strategy.

Most Updated Space Policy Publications by Year



Note: This figure only includes the occurrence of the most updated space policy documents from the ESA countries to capture how up-to-date European space policy and strategy is.

Source: Space Policies Database, updated until August 2023.

In Europe, **security concerns have outranked green and climate in space policy agendas**. This should at least have two consequences regarding **WHY** Europe should invest in space, beyond Kyoto, for the next 25-year cycle,

- to extend its existing, Earth observation champion program and strategy beyond climate, green and sustainability and to develop its security & defence and economic dimension much stronger
- to put security & defence as a new core of a European space policy, on par with climate and environment, seeking synergies with Europe's achievements in civilian space applications in navigation and communications, leveraging commercial and dual-use solutions

Beyond that, Europe also needs to come to terms with its ambitions in science and human exploration and recognizes the catalytic effect these have on the entire space eco-system, from talent to capabilities, and as a foundation for the space industry of any space power.

Yours sincerely,

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