The New European Space Act: Onwards and Upwards

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It is estimated that there are approximately 70 national space agencies across the globe, as well several privately owned agencies, such as SpaceX and Blue Origin. 16 of those agencies can conduct a space launch, and 7 of them can send probes to extra-terrestrial locations such as Mars and into deep space.

Within the industry, there is no international global agency and no standardised norms. Getting reliable statistics on the number of satellites in space (operational and defunct) is not easy. The numbers range somewhere between 11,330 and 12,149. The USA leads the race on numbers, with Elon Musk's SpaceX- Starlink enterprise reported to have about 7,000 satellites. That number makes up a substantial part of all the satellites, transversing the world, with a reported 3 dropping to the Earth every day.

The European Space Agency, which has 22 individual member states, has recently issued its vision of space travel and logistics. The document, known as The European Space Act "EUSA", was published in June 2025 and is expected to enter into force in January 2030, after consideration by it partners. This document is intended to work alongside another document, aptly named the European Space Economy document (ESE vision), with the aim of establishing a global space economy by 2050.

The plan

- Binding regulations setting out the minimum standards for the national licensing of products.
- A set of detailed technical requirements for the authorisation of space activities
- Resilience provisions with an emphasis on cybersecurity and environmental impact. This includes measures to improve the tracking of space objects, including collision avoidance services and to ensure safe satellite disposal at the end of their operational life.
- A new register for all space operators with an e-certificate for tracing space service and operators.
- An extension to Non-union stakeholders outside the 22 for a licensing and registration process.

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Who will be affected

- EU and non-EU stakeholders planning or engaged in space activities.
- Non-EU stakeholders providing space services, including data services, within the EU.
- Indirectly, it will also affect any suppliers to the above entities, which include the financial, legal and insurance markets.

EUSA's aims

- To try and create a harmonised level playing field in the EU.
- To encourage sustainable space practices, including financial and legal ones.
- Align space law across its membership of nations.

Until now, members of the European Space Agency have been able to develop their own space legislation, independently of each other. The EUSA seeks to change that haphazard approach and level the playing field in a number of directions.

The Act has a long way to go yet before it comes into operation. We all rely upon space services – in one capacity or another whenever we use GPS or perhaps Tinder on our phones. Perhaps the EUSA project will lead to bigger shift on the global stage towards more international regulation. The USA government announced in its 2026 Budget that it intended to accelerate human space exploration of the Moon and Mars. Ensuring the world has space harmony and systems in place to effectively regulate the industry, needs to be a priority going forward.

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