



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Chairs,

The Commission would like to thank the Assembleia da República for its Opinion on its Communication on the Space Strategy for Europe {COM(2016) 705 final}.

As the Assembleia da República rightly outlines in its Opinion, space is a highly strategic sector for governments, enterprises and modern societies. It generates extensive technology benefits, creates highly qualified jobs and contributes to other sectors and policies, notably the digital agenda, telecommunications, energy, transport, climate change, environment, security and defence. The European space sector is a global leader and Europe hosts some world-class space companies and research centres at the origin of key discoveries.

However, competition becomes fierce with the emergence of new players, public and private, innovative technologies and new business models which challenge the traditional way of working.

With the Space Strategy for Europe, the Commission has proposed an ambitious and common European approach to space for the next 15 years. Europe should remain a global space player and a partner of choice on the international scene. The objective of the Strategy is to ensure that the European economy and society fully benefit from the space solutions and services. The Joint Statement on shared vision and goals signed on 26 October 2016 between the European Union and the European Space Agency is a tangible sign that European institutional actors, i.e. the Member States, the European Space Agency and the European Union are determined to progress in the same direction.

The Commission welcomes the Opinion of the Assembleia da República on the Space Strategy for Europe and thanks it for its support and for the clear strategic national orientations it contains. The specific location of Portugal in the South-West of Europe together with its large area of territorial waters in the Atlantic indeed offer interesting opportunities for space-related activities and regional economic development.

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The Commission takes good note of the intention of the Republic of Portugal to increase its participation in European space programmes and to develop its corresponding national programmes in relation to Earth Observation, launch of activities, scientific and technology development, navigation and communications. It shares the position expressed by the Assembleia da República on the importance of ensuring that all Member States can participate to the implementation of the Space Strategy for Europe, in accordance with their respective expertise and added value.

The Commission values the engagement of the Assembleia da República at this stage and will take into account its Opinion as well as the suggestions it contains, together with other contributions, when preparing next implementation phases of the Space Strategy.

The implementation work has already started: 2017 is another crucial year for the European Union's activities in space with the mid-term review of the two flagship programmes, the European Global Navigation Satellite System and Copernicus, the preparation of a Govsatcom initiative and preparatory work for a possible evolution of the Space Surveillance and Tracking support framework.

In parallel, the Commission is preparing the next multi-annual financial framework and the related budgetary proposals. The support of Member States and their national institutions will be crucial in the discussions that will take place on these proposals in the course of 2018 and 2019.

The Commission looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Elżbieta Bienkowska
Member of the Commission*