

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004130/25
to the Commission
Andi Cristea (S&D)
(21 October 2025)**

Subject: EU stance on space

The EU is currently lagging behind the United States and China in the space race. Europe does not possess sufficient launch capacity, particularly for heavy payload satellites. One of the main reasons for this shortfall is the EU's lack of reusable rocket technology.

As a consequence, European satellites have to be launched from US territory. However, in principle, the EU could make use of US rockets to launch satellites from European territory, for example from French Guiana.

In a recent interview broadcast on German television, the Director General of the European Space Agency (ESA), Josef Aschbacher, stated that he prefers to support only European launch companies. However, until these companies are capable of meeting EU requirements, he intends to rely on the services of Elon Musk's company, Space X, to launch EU satellites from US territory.

In this context:

1. Can the Commission confirm if it is in contact with the ESA regarding this matter?
2. Why is the ESA not supporting US operators seeking to carry out launches from EU territory?

Submitted: 21.10.2025

**Answer given by Mr Kubilius on behalf of the European Commission
(8 January 2026)**

The Commission is fully engaged in maintaining and fostering the EU's autonomous, reliable and cost-effective access to space, as indicated in the EU Space Programme Regulation ⁽¹⁾ and in the Mission Letter of the Commissioner for Defence and Space ⁽²⁾.

Access to space is a key enabler and indispensable element in the overall space value chain: without autonomous access to space, there is no credible and strategically autonomous EU space policy.

The EU has regained its autonomous access to space thanks to the entry into service of the Ariane 6 and Vega C launchers which have already brought into orbit EU satellites for both Copernicus and Galileo EU systems. Additional launches of EU satellites with European launchers are planned throughout 2026.

The EU ambition is to facilitate the aggregation of demand for European launchers, to foster research and innovation in technology, and to support European critical and strategic test and launch infrastructure, without prejudice to the European Space Agency (ESA)'s activities.

The Commission is regularly engaging with ESA to ensure alignment of ESA's activities with the strategic goals of the EU Space Programme.

The EU and ESA are separate entities with different governance systems and decision-making procedures: ESA selects the launch service providers for the launch of ESA satellites while the EU selects the launch service providers for the launch of its own EU satellites. For the support of United States operators launching from EU territory, the Commission is not involved in any decision.

The Commission is committed to ensuring an autonomous, secure and cost-efficient capability to access space, considering the essential security interests of the EU.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/696/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/630c289c-7ff1-4fdd-944f-0f596e7e7914_en?filename=mision-letter-kubilius.pdf.