Union Secure Connectivity Programme 2023-2027

2022/0039(COD) - 15/02/2022 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish the Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027 ensuring the provision of secure, flexible and resilient global satellite communications services to the Union and Member States' government entities.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: there is a growing demand by the Union governmental actors for secure and reliable satellite communication services, particularly because they are the only viable option in situations where ground-based communication systems are non-existent, disrupted or unreliable. Affordable and cost-effective access to satellite-based communication is also indispensable in remote regions and in the high seas and airspace.

Because of the scale and complexity of required investments, and the synergies that a common capability could bring, Govsatcom has been identified as early as 2013 as a promising field for Union initiatives, with the possibility of tangibly contributing to the objectives for a strong, secure and resilient European Union. It is now an integral part of the Space Strategy for Europe , the European Defence Action Plan and the European Union Global Strategy.

Until now, satellite communications have relied mainly on geosynchronous spacecraft (GEO), but technical progress has allowed the emergence of non-geostationary satellite constellations (NGSO) - satellites in low earth orbit (LEO) and medium earth orbit (MEO) - whose performance meets new user needs.

To date, the EU has no operational or planned satellites in low earth orbit (LEO) or medium earth orbit (MEO). Driven by technological progress, various non-European mega-constellations supported or subsidised by the State are emerging in the USA, China and Russia, among others. At the same time, the geopolitical context and cyber and hybrid threats continue to raise security and resilience concerns. The rise of quantum computers poses an additional threat.

There is therefore a **mismatch between the rapidly evolving governmental needs and the available European solutions**, both at national and European level, for secure, reliable and diverse satellite communications services, based in particular on technological advances in medium and low earth orbits. This makes it urgent to set up a space-based system for secure connectivity in the Union.

CONTENT: the proposed Regulation establishes the Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027.

Objectives

The general objective of the Programme is to establish a **secure and autonomous space-based connectivity system** for the provision of guaranteed and resilient satellite communication services, in particular to:

- ensure the long-term availability of worldwide uninterrupted access to secure and cost-effective satellite communication services to governmental users, which supports protection of critical infrastructures, surveillance, external actions, crisis management and applications that are critical for the economy, environment, security and defence, thereby increasing the resilience of Member States;

- allow for the provision of commercial services by the private sector.

The Programme has the following **specific objectives**:

- improve the **resilience** of the Union communication services by developing, building and operating a multi-orbital connectivity infrastructure, continuously adapted to evolution of demand for satellite communications, while taking into account the existing and future assets of the Member States used in the frame of the GOVSATCOM component of the Union Space Programme established by Regulation (EU) 2021/696;

- contribute to cyber resilience by proactive and reactive defence against cyber and electromagnetic threats and operational cybersecurity, and integrate the space and related ground segment of the European Quantum Communication Infrastructure to enable secure transmission of cryptographic keys;

- improve and expand the capabilities and services of other components of the **Union Space Programme**;

- incentivise the deployment of **innovative and disruptive technologies**, in particular by leveraging the New Space industry; and

- allow further development of **high-speed broadband and seamless connectivity throughout the Union** , removing communication dead zones and increasing cohesion across Member State territories, and allow connectivity over geographical areas of strategic interest outside of the Union, such as in Africa and the Arctic region.

A public-private partnership is the most appropriate scheme to ensure that the objectives of the Programme could be pursued. This partnership will foster the participation of start-ups and SMEs along the whole value chain of the concession and across Member States, hereby incentivising the development of innovative and disruptive technologies.

The programme will provide guaranteed access to **secure satellite communications**. It will therefore indirectly contribute to the EU's security interests. In the Member States, it will support, for example, civil protection forces and national police, public security agencies, border guards and maritime communities. At EU level, it will facilitate the work of EU agencies, such as Frontex and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and enhance the effectiveness of civil protection and humanitarian aid interventions in the European Union and worldwide.

Budgetary impact

The EU contribution from 2021 to 2027 would amount to **EUR 2 400 million** at current prices, of which **EUR 1 600 million** will be implemented under the new EU programme for Secure Connectivity from 2023 to 2027 and **EUR 800 million** under three other programmes: (i) EUR 430 million under Horizon Europe, (ii) EUR 220 million under the Union Space Programme and (iii) EUR 150 million under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).