18th EUROPEAN SPACE CONFERENCE 2026

Europe's Space Domain at a Crossroads

Keynote Address of Mr. Marco Fuchs, President of Eurospace (27/01/2026, 9:30 – 9:40)

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mister Commissioner,
Mister Deputy Minister,
Mister Director General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

It's the 18th edition of this conference and, let us be honest, repetition from one year to the next is not unusual. But this new year opens a very different chapter.

It propels us into a more dangerous and unstable world. A world that requires Europe to come of age.

The signs are encouraging:

We hear about a future "EU Space Shield" that will deepens the link between space and defence. We saw a decisive and successful ESA Ministerial Council. We see proposals for an EU Space Act and, especially, a new Multiannual Financial Framework.

Let me start with an important note about the next MFF and to be clear: everybody knows that **around 50B€ will be needed,** to maintain the global leadership we have with Galileo and Copernicus, and to deploy Iris2 and the infrastructures **that Europe needs to protect itself and to improve its autonomy.**

Success will now be measured by what we build and operate, what actually flies, what actually works, and what actually protects, connects and serves Europe.

And for this to happen, readiness is fundamental.

But readiness is not a slogan, it comes with clear implications.

> The first implication is that Europe must use the budgetary and political momentum to strengthen its own industrial base: the increase in space budgets shall translate into a decrease of our dependencies!

> **If more European public money is put on the table, it is not to outsource critical technologies, critical systems, or critical supply chains;** it is to reinforce vital industrial capabilities in Europe and take the control of our technological sovereignty. By designing in Europe, developing in Europe, manufacturing in Europe, and by exploiting in Europe the capabilities we deem necessary for our autonomy of decision and action.

It is not about isolationism; it is about giving ourselves the means to create real interdependencies with our allies and partners.

Yet a structural challenge remains: **the European space industry continues to operate with low profitability.** This limits our ability to invest, innovate and scale.

Addressing this issue is essential if Europe wants an industrial base that is not only sovereign but also sustainable in the long term.

I cannot emphasise this enough: **long-term financial sustainability of the space industry is key in the world that we are entering**, as space systems are critical infrastructure and instruments of sovereignty, robustness and resilience.

> The second implication concerns research, development and innovation.

R&D musts find its place back to the top of the European space policy agenda. Now!

If we want non-dependence, we need technological leadership. And if we want technological leadership, we need a strong and consistent institutional support for R&D.

This is precisely where the now very modest "Space Co-programmed Partnership" must play its role: as the forum where Europe's space stakeholders define common objectives and drive better-coordinated R&D across public and private initiatives. **We did achieve what was requested: we demonstrated that the tool is working**. Now is the time to prepare for the follow-up, with serious ambitions and real resources. And yes, we do have ambitious ideas.

Industry is ready to co-invest and ready to take risks. But this only works if R&D is treated as a strategic priority at European level, not as an adjustment variable.

> The third implication is perhaps the most political one: in today's geopolitical and industrial context, intra-European cooperation is no longer just "nice to have."

It has become an existential issue: a large part of the world is explicitly waiting, even acting, for Europe to divide itself.

Fragmented demand is our structural vulnerability. This is where European institutions play a central role. Not to impose uniformity, but to guarantee cohesion.

Cohesion means interoperable systems. It means augmenting national capabilities with European services. Aligning national initiatives. Connecting funding streams. And it means leveraging national programmes to build real European capabilities.

In this frame, there is a need for all institutional actors to join forces and to implement measures aiming at fostering a more efficient and predictable demand by:

- Stabilising products and promoting outlets for European products;
- Increasing the recourse to recurring systems for operational missions;

- Encouraging the take up of space-based services by public authorities.

Industry is ready to cooperate differently: across companies and across borders, notably by unlocking and integrating the potential of emerging European space ecosystems into our value chains.

> Fourth implication: Europe must be able to run what it is now announcing.

Space programmes are long-term, risky and technologically uncertain. They usually involve moving consortia of actors. They evolve over decades, not budget cycles.

They require therefore institutions capable of orchestrating complex ecosystems, of absorbing risk, of maintaining direction over time, even when the political, economic or security context shifts.

As it has always been the case, Industry is ready to engage in such programmes, ready to commit capacities and ready to mobilise its supply chains.

But readiness on the industrial side must be matched by readiness on the institutional side, starting, as I mentioned, from R&D and then up to the exploitation phase.

Because, there is indeed a fundamental difference between delivering to a development agency and serving an operational customer: while one optimises technology, the other one optimises service continuity, resilience, upgrades and costs.

If Europe wants space and ground systems that truly support its policies, its security and the economy, **it needs institutions able to act as competent, long-term, operational customers.**

Customers who understand large complex systems, who manage performance over decades, and who can drive industrial transformation.

We need to build an operational culture.

The institutions are moving: they put programmes, instruments and resources on the table.

Now comes the **really exciting** part: turning political will into industrial capacity, turning programmes into systems, turning budgets into capabilities.

The European space industry is ready. **Give us predictable demand, coherent policy and realistic rules, and we will deliver European space sovereignty!**

I wish you an interesting conference. Thank you for your attention.