

Space may be back, but who will bring it?

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Sir,

After the Kourou meeting, it is evident that the European Union is trying to revitalise space policy as a common goal for all member states. Their intentions are noble and their arguments sound, but they will need to get Europe's leading industry players involved if they want to progress beyond the words alone.

Any move to bring space back as a common priority for the EU will certainly need the collaboration of satellite operators who already provide the invisible infrastructure that today brings TV to many millions of European homes including via cable. This is the only real hope for the cost-effective connection of Europe's remotely-located citizens within any useful timeframe.

However, the future of the industry may be at risk if the Telecoms Package that is currently under discussion is adopted without further amendment. The review of the regulatory framework for electronic communications must protect the right for operators to access spectrum and maintain their ability to use it over the life of the satellite. Only then will they be able to guarantee the viability of services so crucial for European citizens such as television, radio, emergency communications, and any other type of connectivity on land, air and sea.

Without stability in this sector, the quality of those services will fall and investments in this sector may plummet affecting not only the operators but also the manufacturers, expenditure on R&D projects and a host of downstream service providers.

Any real commitment to bring back space policy needs to think about who is going to deliver the advantages of space to European citizens. Satellite operators are eager to advance but their unique role cannot be denied.

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