

Conference The Ambitions of Europe in Space
Brussels, 15-16 October 2009

EGNOS/Galileo, GMES: Governance and Responsibilities
(15 October 2009, First Plenary Session, 9:45-11:15)

Intervention of Marek Mora, Deputy Minister for European Affairs, Czech Republic

First of all, let me join my colleagues in thanking Business Bridge Europe for organizing this conference. It is with enormous pleasure that I seize the opportunity to share my views with such a distinguished company today.

Space is a political project. Heads of state or government should therefore concentrate on it and not be distracted. The Czech government is aware of the responsibility of the Czech Republic for being the last Member State not having ratified the Lisbon Treaty. And here we speak of the legal basis for future activities.

This plenary session is dedicated to crucial aspects of the European space program. Governance and responsibilities are key to any project and their importance only grows with the complexity of a given project. I am happy to briefly intervene here and focus on expectations and aspirations of the Czech Republic – a representative of the New Member States - towards these key aspects of this crucial European project.

The Czech Republic has more than 40 years of tradition of space research and development. This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the then-Czechoslovakia was the first country in the world besides the USA and the USSR to have its man onboard a spacecraft on an orbit. The Czech Republic insists that space exploration, research and development as well as development of space-related industry are vital for further prosperity of Europe.

To mention only one of initiatives besides our involvement in ESA, the Czech Republic has set up Galileo Users' Forum, a platform for discussion among Galileo-based application users. Galileo Users' Forum seminars have so far focused on agriculture, railroad transport and we are currently preparing one dedicated to EGNOS. Our candidacy for the GSA seat is yet another example of the importance that we attach to space.

The Czech Republic is realistic in defining its position as regards space. We have much to offer. Our space-oriented industries are mostly highly competitive small and medium-sized enterprises with high added value. Naturally, I am speaking in particular about the application segment. The enterprises need government – and of course the relevant EU institutions – to create such environment that enables them to innovate and develop under fair and stimulative conditions.

We therefore welcome the progress made so far as regards implementation and governance in space-related areas. And I would like to congratulate to the organizers of this conference for the perfect timing – it has only been a few days since we have seen the launch of the EGNOS and its Open Service.

Nevertheless, there are challenges ahead of us. First, we, the Member States, European Parliament and the Commission, should all work together to avoid delaying the legislative process. It requires a constructive cooperation of all involved parties and I hope progress can be made soon.

Second, we should pay more attention to regulatory processes and procurement rules. Every effort should be made to consolidate regulatory processes so that projects are implemented swiftly and efficiently, especially in cases of shared responsibility between European Space Agency and the European Commission.

Third, our industries need more clarity as regards implementation time frame. In order make sound business plans, our small and medium-sized enterprises need to know a more precise schedule of the Galileo program. By the same token, we need more clarity as regards the overall Galileo budget.

Last but not least, space, where no frontiers exist, offers unique opportunities for a truly European cooperation. The Czech Republic, as a New Member State, has always underlined this common European dimension of space program. The Czech Republic also keeps emphasizing that all EU Member States, and I repeat all Member States, must feel they are part of this project and that they can actively shape it and participate in it.

It is needless here to mention the numerous achievements of Old Member States. On the contrary, we have not seen too many participants from the New Member States. But this is a political project.

I can not avoid mentioning the symbolism of the GSA seat. If we want to have a genuinely European ownership of space cooperation, the EU must follow the December 2003 European Council Conclusions and place the GSA seat in a New Member State. And it is no secret that the Czech Republic has been consistent in pursuing actively its candidacy. A speedy and transparent decision on the GSA seat is therefore imperative if we want to secure confidence and involvement of the New Member States.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for me to speak here today on behalf of the Czech Republic.

The current economic crisis demonstrates that our economy will depend more and more on competitive, innovative and dynamic sectors. Space is certainly a flagship and example in this respect. I am convinced that the outcome of our debate and this conference will foster our cooperation and lead to the success of European space program and to an even stronger and more prosperous Europe.

Thank you for your attention.