

## A YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION: EMPOWERING EUROPE IN SPACE AND BEYOND

**ESPI Perspectives** usually focus on topics of a particular month. This 2024 Outlook Perspectives, attempts to project into the year ahead, with the past year as a backdrop.

2023 has been a remarkable year for space, with India becoming the fourth nation to land on the Moon, with the MENA region just witnessing the emergence of an AI-powered space technology champion, integrating geo-spatial, satcom with AI and business intelligence. 2023 saw China sending first astronaut missions to the Tiangong space station and Starship making progress in the U.S. In Europe, despite many achievements, including the two ESA missions Juice and Euclid, 2023 will be remembered as the year of the launcher crisis.

For ESPI, the year marked an extraordinary stepping stone for its future as Europe's think tank for space. It witnessed a new quality of recognition of the independent research, analysis and policy recommendation of ESPI, demonstrated at its **1st extraordinary General Assembly and Advisory Council** in 20 years, the first of its kind **high level political event of ESPI at the Austrian parliament** welcoming close to 40 nations, and an **ESPI Autumn Conference** with record attendance. 2023 brought a 25% growth of the ESPI membership base. It saw a new level of commitment by members and international partners with several bilateral agreements. ESPI further increased its international engagement from the Asia-Pacific, the U.S., India, Africa, to Australia, and brought to life the **Vienna Space Diplomat initiative**. An overview of ESPI's transformation and activities is provided in the **ESPI Annual Report 2023**.

Looking ahead in space and time, 2024 shall see the maiden flight of Ariane 6, as Starship may reach orbit for the first time. Globally, space for security & defence and the international dimension of space will receive new importance in a shifting geo-political scenario. Yet, Europe can be expected to still fall short on political will and its own revolution space, to step up as a global space power. 2024 will be a decisive year, setting the scene for years to come. ESA and its member states will engage in preparations for ESA CM25, supported by a new ESA Strategy 2040. The EC will start planning the evolution of the EU space programme. Several countries will continue to develop and amend their national space strategies, as space may find increased recognition in other domains of policy, such as energy, digital, transport and security.

ESPI will support these developments, implementing its mandate to make proposals and recommendations to European decision makers and institutions. It will increase its effort, in particular by building-up of the Centre of Excellence for Space and Sustainability in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK), by expanding in security & defence matters, and by the development of its educational activities. The institute will further pursue its evolution, with the objective of a continued growth of members and agreements, and further international engagement, in line with ESPI's international character. In coordination with its members, it will prepare the first implementation steps of ESPI's evolution as and possibly beyond a Quasi-International Organisation, towards a modern and future-proof governance and institutional set-up, reflecting the international nature of ESPI.

With the issuing of the implementation plan of **ESPI2040**, ESPI will engage in a collective debate, for Europe to voice a clear political will and act on its ambitions in space. Together with ESPI members and in consultation with the other European stakeholders and international partners, ESPI will further develop its vision for Europe in space in 2040 and beyond, fully convinced that Europe today still has all it takes to develop into a full space power and strong global partner.

Yours sincerely,

**Hermann Ludwig Moeller**  
Director of ESPI

