

SPEECH: Speech by ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher for ESA DAYS in Latvia



The second edition of the European Space Agency (ESA) Days in Latvia took place on 20-21 April within Deep Tech Atelier and was opened by ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher's speech. Read it in this article!

Deep Tech Atelier is the largest deep tech industry forum in the Baltics welcoming hundreds if not thousands of people in Riga for already 5th year in a row. ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher opened the event with a speech addressing the successes and potential of the Latvian space sector. The transcript of the speech is available below!



Dear Prime Minister,

Dear Minister,

Distinguished speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

While I understand that for the next two days the city of Riga will turn into a deep-tech hub, “the place to be” indeed, regrettably I was unable to join you this time.

Translating “scientific excellence into market success”, the theme of this edition of the Deep Tech Atelier, is perfectly matching with the objectives of ESA’s Agenda 2025, especially when it comes to the key priority of commercialisation.

Our joint efforts are truly going in that direction, and I would like to warmly thank the Latvian Government, in particular the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Economics, for their sustained commitment to space activities.

Over 10 million Euros have already been invested by the Government, to fund **a hundred space projects involving more than 50 entities in Latvia.**

Engaging in space activities is not just about spending public money. It is about **investing in your future and offering development and business opportunities here on Earth** to all entities ready to embark on inspiring

undertakings, and to scale up their ambitions.

I invite you all to look at **ESA as Latvia's gateway to space**.

ESA and Latvia have been successfully engaged in various forms of cooperation for over a decade, to the extent that ESA Member States have welcomed Latvia as an Associate Member in July 2020.

Latvian scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, as well as young professionals can be **proud of this achievement**.

This came with new responsibilities, roles, and **opportunities for the Latvian space industry**.

It is expected that more companies will join the space sector in the coming years. Business incubation will significantly help.

The Eventech and Allatherm companies will ensure Latvia's participation in two ambitious space missions: the Lunar Gateway (a new international space station to orbit the Moon) and the Hera mission (for Earth protection from asteroids) - with Latvia contributing a time-of-flight detector for the mission's laser altimeter.

You probably all have witnessed that the **NASA DART mission** impact has changed the asteroid's motion in space. We are now all looking forward to the launch of Hera in 2024. Flying instruments on a space mission is quite remarkable for a newcomer. This is truly promising!

Our common goal is now to further develop competitive industrial capabilities and secure their progressive integration in the European space supply chain.

Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation is a key tool to that end. The 5 areas considered are all very relevant:

- Regarding a **knowledge-intensive bioeconomy**: Earth Observation satellite data applications are crucial here and Latvia has developed strong capabilities, for example in forest monitoring.
- **Biomedicine** is an area rich in technology transfer opportunities: sustaining human life in space enables radical innovation in medicine on Earth.

By 2025, it is estimated that digital products and services will grow to a market share of 12%, equalling nearly 1 trillion Euros, within the worldwide healthcare sector (and around 232 billion Euros for Europe). This transformation of the sector will create a market pull for new solutions, for which space is a significant enabler and value-provider.

- **Smart materials, engineering systems and optics** are already Latvia's competitive advantage in space.
- Regarding **smart mobility and energy**: the space community is talking about beaming space energy onto Earth, where most of mobile phones are already Galileo-enabled!

And lastly,

- **Information and communication technologies**: the revolutions we are seeing in data processing, artificial intelligence, quantum computing will enable new products and services. Blockchain, metaverse, digital twins, smart industries are all benefiting from innovative space technology.

This strategy is therefore an asset for properly driving forthcoming developments and prioritising related investments. It also provides clarity and guidance to all stakeholders. Hopefully it will lead to additional Latvian subscriptions to ESA optional programmes.

On a sad note, the ongoing war at the European Union's door has revealed a strong dependency on space assets. The conflict in Ukraine involves all domains, including space and cyber, with a strong information warfare dimension.

Secure connectivity is key in that context, and ESA's contribution to IRIS² is timely and adequate. The security of supply must be ensured as well.

The use of commercial providers of hardware and services to back up the national security space infrastructure is more and more visible. Many commercial space companies are increasingly relying on the space defence market for their revenues.

These are only examples of the relevance of space technologies, products, and services.

I look forward to continuing the excellent cooperation between ESA and Latvia, for the benefit of citizens across Europe.

I wish you all a fruitful event and great ideas, some of which I hope to see implemented together with us in ESA!

Thank you for your attention.