



Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioner Kubilius, European Commissioner for Defence Industry and Space

Title of Youth Policy Dialogue: Space

Date: 27 January 2026

Location: 18th European Space Conference, the Square, Brussels, Belgium



Introduction

The Youth Policy Dialogue brought together 25 young people with a background in space to discuss European space topics with European Commissioner Kubilius. DG DEFIS invited 10 participants, the European Space Agency invited 10 participants, and the European Space Policy Conference organisers invited 5 participants. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 30. A briefing document was shared with all participants ahead of the Dialogue. The physical meeting took place on 27 January at The Square, the venue at which the European Space Policy Conference took place, in The Agora, a circular space designed for frank and informal discussions. The Dialogue was moderated by DG DEFIS Youth Correspondent David Jelinek.

The topic was selected as it falls under the remit of Commissioner Kubilius. The European Space Conference is the largest annual space conference held in Brussels, and convenes over 2,000 space sector stakeholders, including youth. As such, it was decided to take advantage of the Commissioner's presence at the event in order to organise a YPD on the Agora space rather than on one of the main stages, as the Agora is more accessible to youth audiences and conducive to informal dialogue and exchanges.

The selection of participants was shared between three space stakeholders: DG DEFIS, the European Space Agency and the conference organisers, and based either on internal competitions or pre-existing space networks. All participants were provided with registration links allowing them to waive the registration fee for the event, allowing them to participate for free. Travel and accommodation expenses were not covered.

No online preparatory meeting was held, but as all participants were already very familiar with the space topic, none was deemed necessary. A one-page briefing document was sent to all participants and explained the format, suggested topics for discussion, as well as background information on the Commissioner's mandate, the EU Space programme, and other key information was included.

Summary of the Youth Policy Dialogue (In person-meeting)

The YPD lasted for 50 minutes, and included Opening Remarks by the moderator (DG DEFIS Youth Correspondent David Jelinek), a Welcome Speech by Commissioner Kubilius, a 25-minute open Q&A session, and a short interactive quiz using Slido. 5 questions were displayed on the large screen, and participants were invited to answer. All answers were then displayed on the screen in real-time, with the Commissioner then providing some brief remarks on the most popular answer. The 5 questions and the possible answers are reproduced below:

1. **What should be the top priority in space policy over the next decade? Rank the below:**

- Upgrading global, high-precision navigation systems such as Galileo and GPS
- Strengthening governmental and commercial Earth observation systems for climate and security
- Developing a European secure satellite communications system

- Supporting innovation and start-ups in the space sector
- Developing in-orbit servicing, debris removal, and Space Situational Awareness capabilities for a more sustainable space environment
- Strengthening space exploration, especially for the post-ISS era

2. What aspect of space most inspires you or makes you optimistic about the future?

- Scientific discovery and exploration of the universe
- Space technologies improving everyday life on Earth (navigation, connectivity, climate monitoring)
- International cooperation and peaceful use of space
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, and new careers in the space sector

3. Which defence-related space challenge should the EU address most urgently?

- Reducing dependence on non-EU space technologies
- Managing space debris and congested orbits
- Using space-based assets to help fight climate change
- Enhancing coordination between EU Member States

4. To what extent do you support the European Union having a stronger role in defence, security, and space policy?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neutral / no clear opinion
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

5. What type of support would most help young people enter the European space sector and have a voice in space policy?

- Better access to education, training, and specialised skills

- More internships, traineeships, and early-career job opportunities
- Increased funding and support for start-ups and young entrepreneurs
- Structured opportunities to contribute to EU space policy discussions
- Improved visibility and communication about EU space programmes and careers

Finally, the Commissioner gave his Concluding remarks, and the moderator closed the YPD.

The YPD was highly successful, as the participants were all highly engaged and posed thoughtful questions. The venue worked well, as it allowed for a wider audience to attend, though actual participation was strictly limited to the 25 invited youth participants. As the YPD was organised as part of the official Space Conference programme, it benefited from significant visibility and featured on the official brochure / website of the event, ensuring a very high participation and attendance level. The use of Slido and interactive elements further increased engagement.

Main takeaways

Please identify three main takeaways. In case there were more than one topic/theme, this section can be divided into thematic subsections. This should include the following:

1. Space inspires youth

- Space has a very strong convening power and ability to inspire youth
- Space is perceived as overwhelmingly positive and contributes to humanity
- The EU has a strong mandate in space, as it can achieve more than individual EU MS acting alone

2. Space is strategic

- Space is dual-use (defence and civil applications)
- Space can support / contribute to key EU priorities such as helping to combat climate change, generate socio-economic benefits, boost innovation, develop technologies, create jobs, etc.
- The EU should act to decrease dependence on 3rd countries in space, favouring its own industry and helping young Europeans to enter the space sector

3. Future EU priorities in space

- Youth favour a greater role of the EU in space
- Youth expressed a desire for the EU to further support innovation and start-ups in the space sector.
- They also said that the EU should communicate better on space, highlighting the benefits it brings to citizens in their everyday lives.
- Space should be used to further EU interests including climate change, digital, safety and security, and others.