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REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD OPINION

Mid-term evaluation of the Space Programme

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Regulatory Scrutiny Board

Brussels,
Ares(2024)

Opinion

Title: Mid-term evaluation of the Space Programme

Overall opinion: NEGATIVE

(A) Policy context

The EU Space Programme established by Regulation (EU) 2021/696 for the first time combined all EU space activities - Copernicus, Galileo, EGNOS GOVSATCOM and space situational awareness - in a single Regulation. Article 102 of the Regulation mandates the European Commission to evaluate both the implementation of the Programme and the performance of EUSPA and to present a Report by June 2024 to other institutions.

(B) Summary of findings

The Board notes the additional information provided.

However, the Board gives a negative opinion because the report contains the following significant shortcomings:

(1) The report does not present clearly the intervention logic and evaluation matrix to guide the analysis for each component of the programme.

(2) The report does not present and use the available evidence in a self-standing way. It does not sufficiently assess the programme's performance in terms of effective and efficient delivery on its objectives based on robust impact indicators.

(3) The report does not clearly present the methodology used, its assumptions and limitations, and does not adequately distinguish between the evaluation of actual impacts and ex-ante projected results.

(4) The report does not sufficiently analyse the impact of the programme's components on the competitiveness of the EU space industry eco-system and connected sectors. The SME competitiveness and participation dimensions are underdeveloped.

(5) The report does not present clear and operational conclusions and lessons learned to inform on future actions, based on the analysis.

The Board considers that in its present form this report does not sufficiently respond to the mandate of the evaluation.

This opinion concerns a draft evaluation/fitness check which may differ from the final version.

(C) What to improve

(1) The report should include a comprehensive intervention logic for each programme component reflecting their specific policy needs and better regulation requirements. This should include all elements in such a way as to allow for a full understanding of causality, identifying relationships and dependencies and linking the specific objectives to policy actions and to their output/result/outcome/impact and their related indicators. To support the analysis of the intervention logic and evaluation findings, the report should develop a comprehensive evaluation matrix and present it in the annex.

(2) The report should ensure that all the better regulation requirements are complied with, and on this basis the report can also address the specific requirements of Article 102.

(3) The report should clearly present the available evidence, incorporating it from all relevant sources such as the accompanying study, earlier work and the data sets supporting the key performance indicators, to render the analysis robust, the evaluation SWD self-standing and to comprehensively report on the programme's main achievements and progress towards targets. The report should explain how the evidence is used to substantiate the assessment and findings. It should take full ownership of all evidence used, the methodology applied, and the analysis undertaken, up to conclusions and lessons learned. It should provide a comprehensive narrative enabling the understanding of the main elements of the programme, avoiding unnecessary technicalities and focusing on the programme's tangible achievements against the points of comparison / baseline based on clear performance indicators.

(4) The analysis should clearly present the methodology applied, including approach, assumptions, quality and relevance of evidence, gaps and their impact on the evaluation, estimates and calculations. Costs and benefits should be systemised and triangulated as far as possible with other findings. The report should ensure that methodology presented in Annex II is aligned with the analysis in the body of the document, including the terminology used. References to accompanying studies should not substitute essential explanations and evidence, which should be included in the report. The report must be clear on the reference period for this mid-term evaluation, distinguishing in the analysis and methodology between the results and impacts effectively achieved in the period under consideration, and those that are expected, based on ex-ante models and/or projections. Limitations to evaluating certain programme components which are more recent or still under development, and the implications for the assessment of costs and benefits, should be clearly explained. The report should use the most relevant key programme indicators on outcomes, results and impacts, demonstrating the programme's performance evolution.

(5) The analysis should be more explicit on the potential for simplification of the programme, reduction of administrative costs and burdens, including for SMEs, in particular as regards procurement procedures which are acknowledged as sometimes burdensome.

(6) The report should put more emphasis on evaluating how the programme affects the competitiveness of the European space industry eco-system, related industries and sectors as well as those who benefit from the programme in a more indirect way. Particular attention should be paid to the impact on SMEs, including ease of their participation, programme relevance and ultimately SME competitiveness. The assessment of the pricing policy should explain how international outlook and technological advancements were taken into consideration, including in the conclusions.

(7) The report should present conclusions, based on the preceding analysis, of the programme's functioning against all mandatory evaluation criteria. The conclusions should reflect the analysis in a more balanced way. The lessons learned should be presented as a

separate section, which should include any issues affecting the programme's performance and ways to address them with a view to inform further policy developments. The report should also discuss the recommendations from earlier evaluations and ECA reports of the programme's components and assess the extent to which they have been addressed or difficulties persist.

(8) The synopsis report on stakeholder views should be more comprehensively presented, and the report should explain how the views of the different stakeholder groups are reflected in the analysis.

Some more technical comments have been sent directly to the author DG.

(D) Conclusion

The Board advises the lead Service to revise the report before launching the interservice consultation.

The lead Service may resubmit to the Board a revised version of this report.

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