

Celebration of Luxembourg's anniversary of joining the ESA and attempt at a moon landing by ispace's mission 2, in the presence of Lex Delles (05.06.2025)

On Thursday, June 5, the Minister of the Economy, SMEs, Energy, and Tourism, Lex Delles, attended the celebration of Luxembourg's 20th anniversary as a member state of the European Space Agency (ESA), which also coincided with the ESA's 50th anniversary. More than 750 people and many distinguished guests gathered at Kinopolis to attend the event. Participants also watched the attempted moon landing of the ispace M2 mission, which carried the Tenacious rover developed in Luxembourg.

In his speech, Lex Delles highlighted how Luxembourg's space sector has grown remarkably over the past decade, becoming a thriving hub of innovation and entrepreneurship. He said: "Luxembourg's collaboration with ESA has been instrumental in the development of our sector, and I would like to thank ESA for its support and contribution. I am convinced that continuing our partnership will lead to even greater results in the future." He also outlined his vision for the sector's future: "Europe must strengthen its space leadership through innovation for the benefit of citizens and collective security. By aligning civil and military technologies through a dual-use policy and promoting collaboration, we are boosting competitiveness and ensuring that Europe has a leading role in global space innovation."

In a pre-recorded speech, Prime Minister Luc Frieden reaffirmed the government's support for the development of the sector, which remains key to the diversification of Luxembourg's economy.

In 2012, the space ecosystem counted 16 companies employing around 600 people. By 2018, this had doubled to 32 companies with 1,000 employees, and as of 2024, Luxembourg is home to 80 space-related companies with a workforce totalling approximately 1,650 professionals. This impressive growth reflects the unwavering commitment of the government to fostering a dynamic space industry capable of attracting global talent and investment.

The gross value added produced by the space sector increased by 21.7% in absolute terms between 2012 and 2018, and by 74% between 2018 and 2023, representing nearly 1.73% of the country's total gross added value in 2023. Not including SES, the gross value added produced by the space sector increased by almost 150% between 2018 and 2023.

The remarkable progress of Luxembourg's space sector is also a direct result of continuous governmental support and vibrant public-private collaboration. The Luxembourg Space Agency, created in 2018, plays a vital role in orchestrating national efforts and fostering synergy between public institutions and private companies. This collaborative approach has accelerated the development of innovative technologies and commercial applications across satellite communications, Earth observation, and space resources to name a few.

Next, Josef Aschbacher, CEO of ESA, also gave a pre-recorded speech in which he reiterated how much Luxembourg's contribution to ESA's activities is appreciated. A cornerstone of Luxembourg's success has been its close collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA).

Since becoming a full member of ESA in 2005, Luxembourg has positioned itself as a key contributor to European space initiatives. This partnership has enabled Luxembourg to launch pioneering projects in the context of the SpaceResources.lu initiative in 2016, attracting companies active in the field of space resources, such as ispace Europe for instance. The establishment of the European Space Resources Innovation Centre (ESRIC) in 2020, jointly operated with ESA and the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology is another milestone of the ESA/ Luxembourg successful collaboration.

A panel discussion then brought together Jean-Jacques Dordain, former Director General of the ESA, Yves Elsen, President of the Luxembourg Aerospace Group (GLAE), Geraldine Naja, Director of Commercialization at the ESA, and Marc Serres, CEO of the Luxembourg Space Agency (LSA), who each spoke about their own experiences after 20 years of collaboration.

Finally, Raphaël Liégeois, a Belgian-Luxembourg biomedical engineer and neuroscientist, shared with the audience the training he underwent in 2024 at ESA following his selection in 2022 to become a career astronaut. He is scheduled to take part in his first long-duration space mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS) in 2026.

ispace mission 2 attempted moon landing

A meaningful milestone for Luxembourg's space ambitions—and a defining moment of the evening—was the tentative moon landing of the ispace Mission 2. Although there is currently no prospect of a successful moon landing, the mission showcased Luxembourg's capacity to develop and deliver sophisticated space hardware, with Tenacious—designed and built entirely in Luxembourg—reflecting the country's commitment to technological excellence.

This experience reinforces the importance of perseverance and innovation in the space sector, where each mission contributes to a broader foundation of knowledge. It also highlights the critical role private companies and startups play in advancing exploration beyond Earth.

This mission also marks an important step forward under Luxembourg's Space Resources Law of 2017, helping to chart a clearer path for the future of space resources utilization.

Looking forward, sustained investment, policy backing, and enhanced public-private partnerships remain essential to maintain this upward trajectory. By cultivating an innovation-driven ecosystem, Luxembourg is well-positioned to continue being a leader in the global space economy, fuelling economic growth and inspiring future generations.