

Question for written answer E-006244/2016
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Protection of the European satellite infrastructure

Space plays an essential role in our lives, although its importance is often forgotten. Without satellite systems, it would not be possible to predict the weather accurately or navigate with precision. Thanks to satellites, we can monitor climate change and predict natural disasters. There is no doubt that space technologies have a profound impact on our lives.

Unfortunately, extremely expensive, cutting-edge technologies sent into space are being damaged in collisions with space debris – extremely fast-moving pieces of used rocket parts, old satellites and chunks of celestial bodies orbiting the Earth. The 950 or so satellites in space are thought to be at risk of collision with more than half a million objects' worth of space debris.

In 2014 Parliament and the Council decided to establish a framework to support the Space Surveillance and Tracking programme (SST) in the construction of monitoring and early-warning systems for collisions with space debris.

At what stage is work on the SST, and when will the programme be fully functional? What other steps will the Commission take to ensure that EU satellite infrastructure is protected, in particular the Copernicus and Galileo systems?