Question for written answer E-000397/2023
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Does the Commission plan to reaffirm the preference for Arianespace with regard to the launching of satellites?

In its 2016 communication on a 'Space Strategy for Europe[1]', the Commission announced its plans for EU autonomous access to space, and predicted the launching of more than 30 satellites by 2030, 'for its Galileo and Copernicus programmes, notably in the class of the future European-built launchers such as Ariane 6 and Vega C'.

However, despite a EUR 16.9 billion budget – a 17 % increase for the space sector from 2023 to 2025 – the EU possesses no more than two Ariane 5 launchers to launch its satellites into orbit[2]. Vega-C's recent failure[3] and the end of the strategic partnership with Roscosmos[4] are exacerbating the EU's already delayed plans to launch satellites, an area in which China and the US are light years ahead.

1. In this worrying situation, is the Commission ruling out the possibility of using launchers from outside of the EU?

2. Does it intend to reaffirm, as the Council did in May 2017[5], the need for a 'common strategy' and the obligation for contracting Member States to design satellites that are compatible with future EU launchers, and also to give preference to launching services offered by Arianespace?

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1 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0705&from=MT
2 https://www.20minutes.fr/sciences/4014750-20221214-espace-placant-trois-satellites-orbite-ariane-5-termine-annee-succes
3 https://www.latribune.fr/entreprises-finance/industrie/aeronautique-defense/vega-c-apres-l-echec-du-premier-vol-commercial-arianespace-suspend-tous-les-vols-945553.html
4 https://lanouvelletribune.info/2022/03/espace-fin-du-partenariat-entre-leurope-et-la-russie/
5 'A Space Strategy for Europe', https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9817-2017-INIT/en/pdf