

# The Expansion of ESA as seen by a former member of the ESA Council

**Gérard Brachet**

**Space Policy consultant**

**Former Director General of CNES (1997-2002)**

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The Convention of the European Space Agency (ESA) is designed to accommodate large, medium and small European contributing States.

From the very beginning, ESA was conceived to be progressively enlarged to include additional Member States, if only to accommodate countries which were part of ESRO in the sixties but not of ESA (such as Norway).

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The Convention of the European Space Agency (ESA) also includes this beautiful idea of optional programmes, in which only those States which have a strong interest decide to participate. They also choose at what level they want to invest (with a minimum of 25% of the GNP rate).

With the exception of the Science Programme, which is part of the mandatory activities, this provision allows new Member States to select carefully their areas of interest and focus their investment on space programmes which correspond best to their capability and needs. Good illustrations are Luxembourg's investment in the ARTES programmes or Portugal's investment in EGNOS and Galileo.

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In addition, Member States of ESA, represented in the decision-making bodies (Programme Boards, AFC, IPC, IRC and Council) have thus an opportunity to participate actively in the discussions on European space programmes and the associated policy issues.

The “intellectual” contributions of each Participating State to these discussions are not limited by their financial contribution. I have seen many cases where a delegation made a very significant contribution to the decision-making process while the Member State that it represented contributed only a few % of the resources to the programme.

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Many Members States complain that enlarging ESA creates more industrial capabilities than we really need in Europe, which is a valid argument.

However, it is the role of ESA to guide those new entrants towards technical areas and niches that are not too crowded already and new sectors, such as in application services , which will add value to the industrial base in Europe.

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In conclusion, it is indeed the role of ESA to integrate the newcomers from inside the European Union.

The issue would be very different, and much more difficult, if a new State from outside the EU is applying for membership.

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**Welcome to Poland as the newest  
Member State of ESA!**