A strategy for Swedish space activities
Sweden is a small country, but it is a dedicated space nation. We have strong space research, several companies at the cutting edge of space activities and the unique Esrange Space Center. These are assets that must be developed in order to continue promoting research, development and innovation.

There are a large number of actors involved in Swedish space activities, and they are found in diverse sectors. Space data and space activities impact many sectors of society. This is why the Government is coordinating space issues and has gathered them in this strategy to create a platform for long-term work on all space activities. The strategy will help to meet society’s challenges and contribute to making sure we are equipped to meet future needs.

Many people use services on a daily basis that work thanks to space data, such as map and weather services. It is also thanks to space infrastructure that global payment services work. The limits to what space can contribute are a long way from being reached. It drives technological development and creates new job opportunities. The discoveries made in space activities are disseminated and often have an impact far beyond their original fields of application.

Many terrestrial challenges can be solved using technology from space activities. Not least, it can be used to find solutions to the necessary climate transition. It is from space that we can see the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, measure the extent of sea ice and melting glaciers. It is also thanks to space technology that we can take targeted measures in the event of wildfires or extreme weather events, because the areas can be localised using satellites.

High-quality space research and successful companies in the space sector strengthen Sweden as a modern and sustainable welfare nation. More jobs are created as a result of space activities. This helps to build a stronger society so that Sweden can take further steps forward in development. An investment in space is ultimately an investment in Earth.

Matilda Ernkrans
Minister responsible for Space Issues
In its written communication A strategy for Swedish space activities (2017/18:259), the Government has presented a strategy that now forms a platform for Sweden’s long-term work on space activities. The strategy includes an overall description of the areas the Government wishes to prioritise and the targets that exist for the respective areas.

International cooperation for the peaceful and sustainable use of space

Space is a common resource that all countries have the same right to use and explore for peaceful purposes. This forms the basis of all space activities and is increasingly important to emphasise as space becomes accessible to increasing numbers. Sweden’s freedom of action in and access to space can be strengthened through the contributions the country makes to a long-term sustainable use of space in which the extra-terrestrial environment is kept safe and predictable. Safeguarding this is a strategic objective.

This objective is linked to another strategic objective, namely opposing the placement of weaponry in space and preventing space from becoming an arena for conflicts, and to a third objective - the use of space and space services for peaceful purposes in a way that benefits human welfare and sustainable development. A fourth objective is for space activities to take place in an open and transparent manner. Openness and cooperation require standard-setting agreements, both voluntary guidelines and legally binding treaties and regulations. A fifth objective is therefore for Sweden, through its participation in international negotiations, to contribute to the development of international regulations for space activities.

Space debris forms the single largest threat, for which humans are responsible, to the extra-terrestrial environment. Space debris mostly consists of defunct satellites, loose objects or fragments of satellites that have detached or resulted from collisions of objects orbiting the Earth. The amount of debris is steadily increasing as the result of daily space activities but collisions and, in the worst cases, deliberate attacks on satellites could lead to the formation of large amounts of new debris. Managing the problem will require a combination of increased understanding of this phenomenon, technical solutions and new regulations. To emphasise the importance of this, a sixth objective is for Sweden, through its participation in international negotiations, to contribute towards international efforts to manage the problem of space debris.

Space data is used across society as a whole

The many satellites in space provide large amounts of data. This applies in particular to the navigation initiative of the EU and the European Space Agency (ESA) using the Galileo satellites and Earth observations using Copernicus. The Government has set two strategic objectives for space data. The objectives are for Sweden to benefit from participation in these programmes and for data from space systems...
in general, and from the EU’s satellite programmes in particular, to be easily accessible for the development of technology and services. In these contexts, Sweden’s national security should be safeguarded and confidentiality, security protection and the protection of personal privacy should be upheld.

The 2030 Agenda and the Global Goals

The large amounts of data from observations of the Earth provided by Galileo and Copernicus can be used in the work of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Goals. One strategic objective is therefore for the Swedish space industry and space research to contribute towards global environmental and climate monitoring work and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Goals.

Sweden’s security must be considered in space activities

Space activities have foreign policy, security policy and defence policy dimensions, which are becoming more substantial as greater numbers of actors become involved in space. The capacity to act in space and use space services entails advantages in military strategy and security policy. International security policy developments, particularly in Sweden’s neighbourhood, must be considered for Sweden’s international cooperation, as well as in decisions and prioritisations concerning Swedish space activities. One strategic objective is therefore for state space activities to contribute towards increasing Sweden’s security by contributing to the fulfilment of Sweden’s foreign policy, security policy and defence policy interests and to strengthen the national military capability.

Critical infrastructure needs to be protected

Modern society is dependent on space services for communications, navigation, weather forecasting and many other functions. The critical interdependence of important activities and across national borders means that interruptions and disruptions can have major consequences. Dependence brings vulnerability to disruptions in access to space services. The Government has therefore set two strategic objectives to protect critical infrastructure. These are ensuring that space activities contribute towards restricting the risks inherent in society’s dependence on individual space services, and ensuring, through the coordination of the actors concerned, that infrastructure important to society has strong resilience towards extreme solar storms and deliberate disruptions.
The stringent demands that the space industry’s products work in such extreme environments as space are pushing the boundaries for what can be manufactured and constructed. This provides knowledge that can also be used in other areas, thereby contributing towards stronger competitiveness, even outside the space industry. To make it easier for the space industry to participate in international cooperation, and so contribute to strengthening Swedish competitiveness, the Government has set three long-term strategic objectives. One objective is for central government support to the technological development of space activities to lead to stronger competitiveness for the participating companies. Another objective is for Sweden’s participation in the EU’s space work, international cooperation and the Swedish National Space Board’s participation in ESA programmes to be predictable over the long term. A third objective is to utilise synergies between central government support for the technological development of space activities and other support for civil and military activities.

Espace

The European Space and Sounding Rocket Range (Espace), situated east of Kiruna, is a civilian space centre for the launching of rockets and balloons which are used for research in the upper atmosphere and near-Earth space. One strategic objective is for the infrastructure of Espace to be scaled up to become an important national and European strategic resource for national and international research, development, demonstration, test activities and other space-related activities. Sweden’s foreign policy, security policy and defence policy interests must be considered when international cooperation takes place.

The Space Activities Act

An increased Swedish presence in space requires that regulations dealing with space activities are adjusted to needs. One strategic objective is for Swedish space legislation both to provide support for space activities in Sweden and ensure that international commitments are fulfilled, and to enable private investment in Swedish space activities.
Galileo is launched from Europe’s Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. Photo: ESA-Manuel Pedoussaut
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Nebula Carina
Photo: NASA/ESA/M
Space research helps us to understand the Earth

Swedish space research and research in space physics maintain high standards in international comparisons and are cited more often than the global average within most areas linked to space. Swedish higher education institutions participate in several of the ESA’s programmes and in the development of instruments for Swedish satellites, often in collaboration with the Swedish space industry. At the Swedish Institute of Space Physics, satellites and instruments are manufactured which have been included in several of the ESA’s expeditions to orbits around other celestial bodies. To ensure that Sweden continues to pursue cutting-edge research, the Government has set three strategic objectives. These are that Swedish space research maintains a high standard in international comparisons, that Swedish space researchers perform well in international comparisons and that Sweden is a strong partner when participating in international cooperation in space exploration.

Infrastructure for space research
Conducting high quality research demands high quality equipment. To guarantee this, one strategic objective is for space researchers to have access to appropriate infrastructure for their research.

Space activities open career paths for both women and men
Space is an area within the natural and engineering sciences that awakens particularly great interest among both women and men. This can be a path to a broader interest in the natural and engineering sciences. To contribute towards this, the Government has set three strategic objectives. One objective is for Sweden to be a leading country when it comes to equal opportunities for both women and men to pursue careers within space activities. Another objective is for space activities to encourage both young women and young men to apply for technology and science programmes at upper secondary level and in higher education. A third objective is for the number of students in education to be sufficiently high to fulfil the need for competence within space activities.
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Galileo satellite in orbit
Photo: ESA-P. Carril