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Greece: Nurturing a Sustainable and Collaborative Legal and Institutional Framework in Space

ABSTRACT: *Space exploration has evolved into a genuinely global endeavour, transcending national boundaries and inspiring a renewed vision for humanity's presence beyond Earth. In the New Space era, establishing comprehensive national legal and institutional frameworks is pivotal for regulating a country's space activities, ensuring responsible conduct, fostering international cooperation, and promoting the long-term sustainability of space exploration. In this context, Greece–though a nation with a longstanding tradition in science and astronomy–has only recently entered the modern space arena. The country's growing involvement, marked by the adoption of its National Space Law (Law 4508/2017) and the establishment of the Hellenic Space Center, constitutes one of its most promising developments in technological governance and international collaboration. This paper explores Greece's evolving participation in the space domain through adherence to international space law, engagement within the European Union framework, and involvement in multilateral and bilateral initiatives, such as the Artemis Accords. Ultimately, it argues that Greece's emerging legal and institutional system demonstrates both progress and potential in advancing a sustainable and collaborative approach to space exploration, while identifying areas for further development and reform.*

KEYWORDS: *Greece, National Space Law, Outer Space, Hellenic Space Center.*

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1.
Introduction

The exploration and use of outer space have become defining elements of contemporary reality, with significant implications for the future of humankind. In this context, the need for space law is critical, as it provides the necessary framework to foster responsible behaviour in outer space, ensure peaceful cooperation among States, and protect the environment beyond terrestrial boundaries.

Greece, though a very recent entrant into modern space activities, has a legacy deeply intertwined with the human quest to understand the cosmos. The ancient Greeks laid the foundations of astronomy and mathematics, which have significantly influenced modern space exploration.[1]

The purpose of this study is to examine how Greece has begun to nurture a sustainable and collaborative framework for space exploration within the broader international and European legal orders. It explores how international obligations, regional commitments, and national legislation intersect to define Greece's evolving role in global space governance.

Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative, analytical approach, drawing on international treaties, European Union (EU) instruments, national legislation, and scholarly literature to provide a holistic understanding of Greece's space law and policy. Comparative insights from other European jurisdictions, such as Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, are included to highlight similarities, divergences, and opportunities for further alignment.

The study proceeds from the international to the national level. It first analyses the international legal framework governing space activities, Greece's engagement in multilateral and bilateral initiatives, most notably the Artemis Accords, and the country's affiliations with international and regional organisations, with particular emphasis on the EU **(Section 1)**. It then offers a concise analysis of Greece's national law **(Section 2)**, an overview of the Hellenic Space Center (HSC) **(Section 3)**, and concludes with *de lege ferenda* proposals to advance both public and private endeavours.

1 Huffman, 2024. http://doi.org/10.62733/2025.1.5-15

2.
Greece on the International Terrain: Legal Framework and Affiliations with International Organisations

As an emerging space nation, Greece is in the early stages of its space journey, slowly but steadily beyond Earth's atmosphere. Greece's engagement in space activities is primarily governed by its adherence to international treaties and agreements about outer space, alongside its involvement in relevant international organisations.

2.1. Corpus Juris Spatialis Internationalis

Greece is a State Party to four space treaties adopted under the auspices of the United Nations and is therefore bound by their articulated norms. This section briefly outlines the international rights and obligations that delineate the State's behaviour in outer space at the international level.

To begin with, Greece has ratified the *Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*.[2] Often referred to as the *'Magna Carta'* of space law, the Outer Space Treaty (OST) has acquired, many argue, 'a constitutional' value, establishing the fundamental principles governing human activity in outer space.[3] First and foremost, the OST, as the first hard-law instrument governing outer space, preserves in its Preamble,[4] the exploration and use of outer space *for peaceful purposes*. Proclaiming outer space as *the province of all mankind*, Article I confers upon State Parties a set of freedoms to be exercised *for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development*. These freedoms include exploration, access, use, and scientific investigation in outer space.

However, these freedoms are not unfettered. Article II of the OST establishes that *'[o]uter space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means'*. Therefore, the provision serves as a threshold, establishing the

2 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, *entered into force* Oct. 10, 1967, 18 U.S.T. 2410, 610 U.N.T.S. 205 (Hereinafter: Outer Space Treaty).

3 Blount, 2019.

4 Even though the Preamble is not legally binding, the "peaceful purposes" clause is to be used to interpret the Treaty, as per the general rule of interpretation of Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, see: Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, *entered into force* Jan. 27, 1980, 1155 U.N.T.S. 331.

non-appropriation principle which excludes outer space from any forms of national appropriation.[5] Furthermore, under Article III, space activities must be carried out '*in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation and understanding*.'

What remains rather idiosyncratic to this day about the OST regime is the responsibility mechanism enshrined in Article VI. Under this provision, States bear international responsibility for national activities in outer space, whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental entities.[6] States shall also comply with the obligation to authorise and continuously supervise non-governmental space activities. Article VII further articulates the basic rule of liability:[7] the Launching State[8] of a space object "*is internationally liable for damage caused to another State Party to the Treaty*". Moreover, domestically, Article VIII implies the international obligation to maintain a national register and affirms jurisdiction *ratione instrumenti*[9] over registered space objects.[10] Finally, the OST binds States to conduct their activities based on *cooperation* and *mutual assistance*,[11] taking *due regard of the corresponding interests of all other State Parties to the Treaty*, to avoid interference in the safety of space operations of other States.[12]

Secondly, Greece has signed the *Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space,*[13] which elaborates on Articles V and VIII of the OST,[14] by detailing the rights and obligations regarding rescue, assistance, and the return of astronauts in distress to the *launching authority*.[15]

Thirdly, Greece has ratified the *Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects*.[16] The Liability Convention supplements Article VII of the

5 Lyall and Larsen, 2018.
6 Kerrest, 1997.
7 Kerrest and Smith, 2009.
8 That is, the State that launches or procures the launch of a space object, as well as the State from whose territory or facility an object is launched, as per article VII of the Outer Space Treaty, also Article I (c) of the Liability Convention.
9 Oduntan, 2012.
10 Csabafi, 1971.
11 Mineiro, 2010.
12 Marchisio, 2009.
13 Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, *entered into force* Dec. 03, 1968, 19 U.S.D. 7570, 672 U.N.T.S. 119. (Hereinafter: Rescue and Return Agreement).
14 Riccio Jr., 1970.
15 Gorove, 1969.
16 Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects, *entered into force* Oct. 9, 1973, 24 U.S.T. 2389, 961 U.N.T.S. 187 (Hereinafter: Liability Convention).

OST[17] by providing a victim-oriented regime,[18] and eventually creating specialised liability rules depending on the place of damage, establishing an absolute liability[19] regime for damage on the Earth's surface or to aircraft in flight (Article II), and a fault-based regime for damage occurring elsewhere than on the surface of the Earth (Article III).[20]

Lastly, Greece has signed the *Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space,*[21] which obliges the registration of space objects by the Launching State in an appropriate Register (Article II (1)).

Despite Greece's firm commitment to the multilateral UN Treaty Law, as demonstrated by its adherence to the aforementioned space treaties, Greece has not ratified the *Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*.[22] The Moon Agreement constitutes an instrument of notably limited acceptance and applicability on the international terrain.[23] Its primary obstacle is found in Article 11,[24] which designates that '*[t]he moon and its natural resources are the common heritage of mankind*', essentially necessitating the creation of an international regime whereby all States collectively manage resources and share their benefits derived from their exploitation, even by States not participating in extraction activities.[25] As stipulated in Article 11 (5) and (7), the establishment of *'an international regime, including appropriate procedures, to govern the exploitation of the natural resources of the moon as such exploitation is about to become feasible'*. Greece's position on the non-ratification of the Moon Agreement is further clarified by its strategic shift towards the Artemis Accords, signed in February 2024, which provides a clear, industry-friendly alternative to the Moon Agreement.

2.2. Greece and the Artemis Accords

On 9 February 2024, Greece became the 35th State to sign the *Artemis Accords*,[26] which are a set of 'Principles for Cooperation in the Civil Exploration and Use of the

17 Von der Dunk, 1992.
18 Cheng, 1997.
19 Kerrest and Smith, 2009.
20 Kayser, 2004.
21 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, *entered into force* Sept. 15, 1976, 28 U.S.T. 695, 1023 U.N.T.S. 15 (Hereinafter: Registration Convention).
22 Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, *entered into force* July 11, 1984, 1363 U.N.T.S. 3 (Hereinafter Moon Agreement).
23 Isnardi, 2020.
24 Tronchetti, 2009.
25 Noyes, 2011.
26 Greece signs the Artemis Accords, 2022.

Moon, Mars, Comets, and Asteroids for Peaceful Purposes'.[27] Initiated by NASA in 2020 as part of the broader 'Artemis Program',[28] the Accords articulate guiding norms for responsible behaviour in lunar and deep-space activities, emphasising transparency, interoperability, peaceful exploration, and the protection of heritage sites.[29] Although non-binding, they aim to operationalise key commitments of the 1967 OST in a new era of international collaboration beyond low-Earth orbit.

For Greece, accession to the Accords represents a diplomatic and strategic milestone. As noted by the President of the HSC,[30] Greece seeks to contribute its scientific expertise in space physics, remote sensing, robotics, and software engineering to the collective Artemis mission. From a legal perspective, the Accords have sparked debate over their compatibility with the OST, particularly concerning the principles of non-appropriation (Article II) and international responsibility (Article VI).[31] Greece's decision to join may therefore be seen as a reaffirmation of its commitment to pluralism, strategic alliances (particularly with the United States and European partners), and to the peaceful use of outer space, while signalling its intention to participate actively in humanity's return to the Moon.

2.3. Affiliations with International Organisations

While the international law framework establishes the normative foundations of State Responsibility, international organisations – especially those with specialised space mandates in space – illustrate how these obligations are operationalised through cooperative mechanisms. Indeed, Greece's engagement in the space domain is shaped and implemented through its integration into key multilateral institutions that provide the essential infrastructure to support its national space ambitions. As a committed member of the EU and the European Space Agency (ESA), Greece participates in flagship space programmes. At the same time, its continuous engagement with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) ensures the coordination of spectrum management.

27 The Artemis Accords: Principles for Cooperation in the Civil Exploration and Use of the Moon, Mars, Comets, and Asteroids for Peaceful Purposes, 2020.
28 Artemis: Humanity's Return to the Moon, no date.
29 NASA, "Artemis Accords", 2020.
30 HSC, 'Greece signs the Artemis Accords'.
31 Von der Dunk, 2021, pp. 145–157.

2.3.1. Greece's Engagement with the European Union in the Space Sector

The EU has long functioned as a catalyst for transnational cooperation, and this spirit has naturally extended to outer space activities. The Lisbon Treaty of 2009 marked a decisive moment in this evolution.[32] Particularly, Article 189 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides the legal basis for a common European space policy, empowering the Union to promote scientific and technical progress and enhance industrial competitiveness through coordinated action.[33]

On this basis, the EU established the European Union Space Programme and its implementing agency, the 'European Union Agency for the Space Programme' (EUSPA), which manages key initiatives such as *Galileo, Copernicus,* and *EGNOS*.[34] Together, these programmes strengthen the EU's technological sovereignty and ensure the strategic, peaceful, and sustainable use of space.[35] Building on this framework, the European Commission published in June 2025 a proposal for an 'EU Space Act', aiming to establish a regulatory framework for the safety, resilience, and sustainability of space activities and to create a single market for space activities across the Union.[36]

As a Member State, Greece has gradually integrated into this European framework.[37] Through its financial contributions to the EU budget and ESA, Greece participates in flagship programmes such as Galileo, EGNOS, and Copernicus, and has invested over the past two decades in advancing its scientific and technological capacities.[38] Beyond the financial dimension, Greece's participation fosters the exchange of expertise and access to advanced infrastructure, enhancing national competence in satellite navigation, Earth observation, and environmental monitoring.[39] Finally, Greece's engagement with the European Union Governmental Satellite Communications (GOVSATCOM) underscores its strategic commitment to enhancing security and resilience through space technology. Under Commission Implementing Decision 2024/3195,[40] Greece constitutes one of the two States that will host a

32 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2012) OJ C326/47.
33 Article 189 (1) TFEU, "To promote scientific and technical progress, industrial competitiveness and the implementation of its policies, the Union shall draw up a European space policy. To this end, it may promote joint initiatives, support research and technological development and coordinate the efforts needed for the exploration and exploitation of space".
34 About EUSPA, 2023.
35 EU Space Programme, no date.
36 See: Evroux, 2025.
37 Von der Dunk, 2015, p. 281.
38 Papadopoulos, 2024, pp. 1–20.
39 The EU's Space Assets: Strengthening Resilience and Security, Special Report, No 10, 2023.
40 Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/3195 of 18 December 2024 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the location of the GOVSATCOM Hub (2024), OJ L, 3195/1.

GOVSATCOM Hub, thereby playing a pivotal role in the EU's programme to equip the Union and its Member States with secure, resilient, and cost-efficient satellite communication capabilities.[41]

From a legal perspective, the interaction between EU and national space law illustrates how EU law functions as a bridge between international principles and national implementation. EU regulatory frameworks require Member States to align their national legislation with sustainability, safety, and liability standards.[42] Greece's Law 4508/2017 reflects this alignment, particularly in licensing, debris mitigation, and environmental reporting. However, gaps remain in fully operationalising these norms, especially regarding private-sector participation and data-sharing governance.

Comparatively, smaller EU Member States such as Portugal[43] and the Czech Republic[44] have followed similar trajectories by establishing dedicated agencies and leveraging EU funding to strengthen their domestic space law programmes. Greece shares these characteristics but could further benefit from structured mechanisms to attract private investment, promote public-private partnerships, and support start-ups through European innovation programmes.

2.3.2. The European Space Agency (ESA)

The European cooperation introduced Europe as a considerable actor in the 'space race' peak in the midst of 1970s, at the time the European Space Agency (ESA) was founded. Greece signed the Convention for the establishment of ESA[45] in March 2005, becoming the 16th Member State of the Organisation.[46]

Greece's participation in ESA entails active involvement in formulating legal frameworks, standards, guidelines, and best practices pertaining to space activities. Greek national law requires adherence to established national, European, and international standards, as well as relevant good practices, until the adoption of the Joint Ministerial Decision specifying environmental impact reporting for space

41 Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) No 912/2010, (EU) No 1285/2013 and (EU) No 377/2014 and Decision No 541/2014/EU (2021) OJ L 170/69.

42 Case 6/64 *Flaminio Costa v. ENEL* (1964) ECR 585, ECLI:EU:C:1964:66.

43 Portugal Space, Portugal Space 2030 Strategy: Current Implementation Status and a Guide for the Future, 2020.

44 Czech Space Office 'National Space Plan 2020- 2025', no date.

45 Convention for the Establishment of a European Space Agency, 1975.

46 Greece becomes 16th ESA member state ESA, 2025.

activities.[47] Furthermore, national law affirms that, for approving space activities, the Minister of Digital Governance may request technical assistance from third parties, Greek, European and International Organisations, agencies, experts, or specialists and scientists, to establish conditions related to the location of the space activity, the operator's main establishment, or the provision of insurance for space and space objects.[48]

2.3.3. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

Being a founding member of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Greece has ratified the ITU Constitution and Convention.[49] Since then, it has actively participated in ITU initiatives and conferences, including hosting major ITU events and conferences, and contributing to the Organisation's objectives and the safeguarding of Member States' interests.[50] Greece has shown dedicated support for ITU's initiatives in 'Smart Sustainable Cities' and has been pivotal in strengthening the Organisation's regional presence. Moreover, it contributes to ITU Study Groups and aligns with ITU-R initiatives aimed at optimising the efficient utilisation of radio spectrum for broadcasting and mobile communications. Greece also consistently adheres to ITU-R satellite coordination procedures to ensure interference-free satellite operations and the effective use of radio spectrum.

Regarding national legislation, it is important to note that, under the current legal framework, radio frequencies are recognised as part of the public domain and are subject to distinct regulatory regimes administered by multiple authorities.[51] The management of radio frequencies falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, in cooperation with the Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission,[52] which acts as the National Regulatory Authority responsible for managing bandwidths allocated to non-State actors. Frequencies allocated for State networks remain under direct governmental management. In addition, the National Council of Radio and Television governs the granting and modification of radio spectrum rights for broadcasting services.[53]

47 Greece's National Framework for Space Activities, 2021.
48 Ibid.
49 Constitution and Convention of the International Telecommunication Union, 1992.
50 See: Greece in ITU, no date; See: The Permanent Mission - Permanent Mission of Greece in Geneva, no date
51 See: Greece – ITU, no date
52 General information, Hellenic Telecommunications & Post Commission, no date.
53 The National Council for Radio and Television [Εθνικό Συμβούλιο Ραδιοτηλεόρασης], no date.

Overall, Greece's active involvement in the ITU Protocols highlights its commitment to fostering cooperation in the telecommunications domain and contributes significantly to the realisation of the ITU's overarching goals. Nevertheless, the delineation of responsibilities among several authorities demonstrates the complex regulatory landscape of radio frequency management. It is, however, true that this multifaceted framework ensures careful oversight and regulation by the designated authorities.

The preceding analysis demonstrates that Greece's space activities are not defined solely by an autonomous national programme, but are instead functionally implemented through its participation in three essential multilateral frameworks: the EU, the ESA, and the ITU. Hence, Greece has strategically positioned itself within the institutional ecosystem that shapes governance. Accordingly, Greece's national space law consolidates its regional and international obligations and cooperative engagements into a coherent national governance for space activities.

3.
National Space Law

The establishment of a national space legislation constitutes a defining milestone in Greece's alignment with international space law. The codification of international commitments into domestic legislation marks a significant shift from participation to regulation. This section first provides a brief analysis of the building blocks that define the legislative foundation of national space regimes and, second, an analysis of Greece's national law, delving into the legal parameters for authorisation, supervision, and liability for outer space activities.

3.1. Introduction: Key Elements of International Space Law as Constructive Concepts of National Space Legislations

The *ad hoc* international space law regime (1.1.), as previously outlined, would undoubtedly be characterised as 'State-centred',[54] since, at the time of its creation, exploration and access to outer space were monopolised by State actors,[55] possessing the requisite financial and technological power.[56] However, States that were not formerly considered space-faring are now increasingly vocal in the international

54 See: Von der Dunk, 2015.
55 See: Walter, 2011.
56 See: Marboe, 2017.

debate, with the enactment of national space legislation. Even more so, almost sixty years after the adoption of the OST, the 'New Space' era has been defined by the rise of private actors, who have identified unprecedented commercial opportunities in outer space.

On those grounds, international space law, enunciating fundamental principles, essentially serves as Ariadne's thread to unravel the conundrum posed by fragmented systems of individual national space legislations. States must fulfil their national obligations by complying with international norms and rules through domestic legislation, while facilitating private incentives in space. National laws must also contribute to reparation for damages, including liability considerations, concerning a State's qualification as the Launching State of a space object.[57] Furthermore, the proliferation of national frameworks strengthens emerging concepts that have not yet acquired legally binding status.[58] Therefore, national laws shall display a certain degree of uniformity and be capable of regulating activities with multinational dimensions.[59] This promotes *consistency and predictability*[60] in the conduct of space activities and provides *a particular regulatory framework for the involvement of non-governmental entities*.[61]

National legal frameworks, therefore, rely on the established 'building blocks': authorisation of space activities, supervision of space activities, liability, registration of space objects, and other topical issues.[62] Under Article VI of the OST, States *shall bear international responsibility for national activities in outer space*. This broadly worded call for national interpretation: first, which activities qualify as 'activities in outer space', primarily dealing with space delimitation issues, and second, what activities qualify as 'national' activities *ratione personae*.[63] Consequently, comprehensive national space legislation must address authorisation and continuous supervision of space activities conducted by non-governmental entities.[64] Authorisation represents the formal governmental approval of space activities, as an administrative procedure[65] constituting a *conditio sine qua non*, through a governmental licensing procedure.[66] In parallel, the 'continuous supervision' remit of Article VI OST shall

57 See: Kerrest, 2010.
58 See: Jakhu and Pelton, 2017.
59 Marchisio, 2010, p. 7.
60 Report of the Working Group on National Legislation Relevant to the Peaceful Exploration and Use of Outer Space, UN Doc A/AC.105/C.2/101, 3 April 2012.
61 UNGA Resolution on "Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration of outer space", UNGA Res 68/74 of 11 December 2013, UN Doc. A/68/74.
62 See: Von der Dunk, 2006.
63 See: Von der Dunk, 2017.
64 See: Soucek and Tapio, 2018.
65 See: Gerhard, 2009.
66 See: Fabio Tronchetti, 2013.

be addressed in national legislation, ensuring both before the commencement of an activity, as well as during its operation, ensuring compliance with international norms. Many national legislations also include sanctions for violation of the law on the non-governmental entity's end.[67]

Another essential element that should be a matter of domestic discipline is a liability regime reflecting the commercialisation of space activities. *Corpus iuris spatialis internationalis* attributes international liability to the Launching State of a space object. Accordingly, a private company may only incur liability for any damages caused, only indirectly via the Launching State of the object that caused such damage.[68] At the same time, a non-governmental entity can only indirectly raise compensatory claims against a Launching State, in the case of damage.[69] Therefore, national legislation must provide comprehensive insurance[70] and third-party liability coverage, facilitating the settlement of claims with private companies[71] and allocating the financial burden accordingly.

Finally, registration of space objects is a duty under Article II(1) of the Registration Convention. States must establish and maintain a National Registry and develop mechanisms for furnishing information to the United Nations Register, pursuant to Article IV of the Register Agreement (Article III (1)). Respectively, the Launching State of an object is internationally bound to the duty of registration.[72]

3.2. Greece's National Space Law Act

Law 4508/2017, *Licensing of space activities – Registration in the National Register of Space Objects – Establishment of the Hellenic Space Agency and other provisions*',[73] represents Greece's first attempt to address the legislative gap concerning the authorisation of space activities and the registration of space objects. This initiative translates Greece's international obligations, derived primarily from the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and the 1975 Registration Convention, into domestic law, thereby ensuring compliance with Article IV OST on authorisation and continuous supervision.

For this paper, attention is directed to the most significant provisions of the law. Article 1 establishes the object and scope of the legislation, regulating the conditions

67 See: Masson-Zwaan and Hofmann, 2019.
68 See: Gorove, 1983.
69 See: Hermida, 2004.
70 See: Sundahl, 2010.
71 See: Pedrazzi, 2008.
72 See: Chatzipanagiotis, 2019.
73 Government Gazette, Law 4508/2017, 2017.

and procedures for obtaining a licence for space activities, while addressing liability[74] for damage caused by space objects and establishing mechanisms for supervision. It also mandates the creation and maintenance of a National Registry of space objects (Article 17).

The scope of these provisions extends to space activities conducted within Greek territory or abroad when involving Greek facilities, personnel, or property under Greek jurisdiction. They also apply to activities conducted by Greek nationals or legal entities when required by an international agreement or treaty. Consequently, Greece bears international responsibility for any activity meeting these criteria, in line with its obligations as a 'Launching State' under international law.

Article 2 sets forth definitions fundamental to the application of the law, such as *space object, operator,* and *effective control.* These definitions closely align with EU and UN instruments, ensuring conceptual harmony with both regional and international standards. Article 3 introduces the principle of prior authorisation, making licensing a prerequisite for conducting space activities. Article 4 outlines the licensing conditions, requiring that activities pose no threat to national security, public order, or environmental protection, and that they comply with Greece's international commitments. Debris mitigation and environmental protection measures are also mandated.

In addition, the Minister of Digital Governance may impose supplementary conditions to safeguard public safety, national interests, and environmental integrity, and may also rely on technical expertise from national or international bodies. Article 11 establishes the operator's obligation to obtain insurance covering liability for damages up to €60 million, adjustable according to mission characteristics. The Minister may reduce or waive insurance for public-interest missions, and the State itself is exempt when acting as operator. Articles 12 and 15 introduce mechanisms for reporting malfunctions and for imposing sanctions on unlicensed activities, ensuring accountability.

Comparatively, Greece's approach aligns with broader European jurisdictions, though on a smaller administrative scale. For example, Luxembourg's 2017 space law focuses on commercial exploitation and space resources, while providing fiscal incentives to attract investment.[75] The UK Space Industry Act 2018 adopts a safety- and risk-based licensing framework.[76] France, through its 2008 law on Space Operations, integrates strong oversight by the Centre national d'études spatiales (CNES)

74 It is noteworthy that the Greek language does not distinguish between the terms "*responsibility*" and "*liability*", both of which are rendered as "ευθύνη". Accordingly, the interpretation of this Article indicates that the reference to "liability for damages" pertains to legal or civil liability, rather than to international responsibility under public international law.

75 Luxembourg, Law on the Exploration and Use of Space Resources, 2017.

76 United Kingdom Space Industry Act (c5), 2018.

and clear liability thresholds.[77] Greece's Law 4508/2017, while more concise, captures the essential components of authorisation and supervision, but remains descriptive rather than strategic in stimulating industrial growth.

Overall, the purpose of the law is twofold: to establish a framework of rules, terms, and conditions for licensing space activities and for the registration of space objects in the National Registry; and to establish a Greek Space Agency, as discussed in **Section 3**. The adoption of this legislation strengthens Greece's presence at both European and international levels, marking a significant step toward the effective utilisation of research and scientific applications emerging from space policies. Such applications include civil protection, Earth observation, wildfire and natural disaster prevention and management, illegal building, and enhanced border surveillance.

3.3. Law 4506/2017: The Hellas Sat Special Concession Agreement

Law 4506/2017[78] serves as a legal instrument through which the Greek Parliament renews and ratifies the Special Concession Agreement between the Hellenic Republic and the private entity, Hellas Sat S.A. Unlike Law 4508/2017, which provides the general framework for space activities, Law 4506/2017 is an *ad hoc* legislative act granting authorisation to a private operator, transforming it from a standard administrative licence to national law.

The core function of the law is to regulate Greece's exclusive right to access to, and use of, the 39° East geostationary orbital slot and the associated satellite radio frequencies registered to Greece within the ITU. This right is exercised through a satellite telecommunications system with nationwide and cross-border coverage. Secondly, by virtue of the law, Greece grants a detailed Special Operating Licence to Hellas Sat for the use and commercial exploitation of the State's orbital slot in geostationary orbit, including the construction, launch, and operation of the satellite system, and the establishment of two Telemetry, Tracking and Command of Earth Control Stations (T.T. & C.). The law provides a mechanism for continuous supervision throughout the duration of the Agreement, mandating *inter alia*, specific terms of authorisation and supervision to fulfil its obligations under international law.

As a result, the law guarantees the longevity and stability of Greece's exploitation rights, an essential precondition for attracting the substantial private investment required for space infrastructure projects. Hellas Sat assumes the capital and technological cost of operating the satellite system, while the State retains legal and political control over the orbital resource. Accordingly, Law 4506/2017 constitutes

77 France, French Space Operations Act No 2008-518, 2008,
78 Government Gazette, Law 4506/2017, 2017.

a critical piece of the Greek national space law puzzle, translating international obligations into a concrete, executable commercial framework and underpinning Greece's position as a responsible and forward-looking actor within the increasingly privatised global space sector.

Taken together, Greece's national space legislation reveals a robust legislative initiative rooted firmly in the foundations of international space law. The foundational concepts of international space law have shaped the formulation of the national framework, ensuring consistency with Greece's international rights and obligations. The general regime established by national space law provides the institutional and procedural architecture for the authorisation and supervision of non-governmental space activities and the registration of space objects. The Hellas Sat Special Concession Agreement operationalises these norms, balancing private participation with essential public oversight.

4.
The Hellenic Space Center (HSC)

Article 18 of Law 4508/2017 established the *Hellenic Space Agency* as the central body for Greece's space activities.[79] Later, under Law 4623/2019,[80] the *Hellenic Space Center* (HSC) was created as the agency's legal successor, assuming all its responsibilities, rights, obligations, and legal relations.[81] The HSC operates under the supervision of the Minister of Digital Governance, who retains the authority over its operational regulation and strategic direction.

According to Article 60 of its founding law, the HSC's primary purposes include formulating strategic proposals for the national space sector and developing a dynamic action plan for Greece's space strategy. This involves collaboration with universities and research institutions, fostering coordination between the public and private sectors, and representing Greece in international organisations to promote, disseminate, and leverage national space policy. These functions reflect the centre's dual role as both a policy coordinator and an innovation facilitator, ensuring alignment with principles of international cooperation and sustainable development embedded in contemporary space governance.

The HSC is also responsible for advancing space technology, applications, services, and ground infrastructure for the benefit of domestic industry and research. This encompasses support for the design and development of satellites, satellite systems,

79 See: Hellenic Space Agency, no date
80 Government Gazette, Law 4623/2019.
81 Ibid.

and related equipment, while strengthening Greece's national space capabilities, alongside its participation in international space organisations and programmes. In this regard, Greece's commitment to climate change mitigation and environmental protection is underscored in the recent launch of the "*National Microsatellite Programme*", aimed at establishing Earth-observation capabilities by 2026.[82] In this respect, the HSC's organisational model bears similarities to other European counterparts, such as the CNES in France and the UK Space Agency, which combine governmental oversight with operational flexibility and strong international engagement.[83] While differing in scale and resources, all three institutions share the aim of aligning national initiatives with broader European and international objectives for space governance.[84]

Overall, the HSC represents further affirmation of Greece's efforts to consolidate and amplify its presence in the global space arena. Having inherited its predecessor's responsibilities and expanded its current mandate, it aims to advance both national interests and the collective goals of the global space community.

5.
Conclusion

Greece's ambition to deepen its involvement in the space sector underscores a resolute commitment to sustainable space exploration and utilisation. The overall legal and policy standing of Greece in the international terrain demonstrates a coherent synthesis of international legal principles, regional and multilateral cooperation, and national implementation. In particular, the enactment of national space legislation and the establishment of the Hellenic Space Center constitute pivotal milestones in solidifying Greece's presence within the space domain. Moreover, the country's dual emphasis on a robust public space sector, as illustrated by the National Microsatellite Programme, and on private-sector activity and technological development reflects a balanced national strategy.

Nevertheless, there is much work to be accomplished. In the authors' view, the rapid evolution of the commercial space sector demands continuous refinement of the national regulatory ecosystem. *De lege ferenda*, Greece would benefit from a more integrated and future-oriented legislative approach capable of anticipating new challenges and risks. Such measures might include secondary legislation, in the form of Ministerial Decisions, as well as technical regulations that offer guidance to private

82 Greece acquires 7 Earth Observation Microsatellites within 2026, no date.
83 Centre National d' Études Spatiales (CNES), 2022; UK Space Agency, 2022.
84 Ibid.

entities seeking authorisation for novel activities, such as small-satellite missions and in-orbit services. Moreover, issues surrounding low-Earth orbit mega-constellations, including non-interference standards, satellite capacity, debris mitigation, and end-of-life disposal, merit further regulatory attention to ensure Greece is positioned at the cutting-edge of the space future.

Finally, the creation of legal incentives that foster private investment and innovation constitutes a turning point in building the competitiveness of the Greek space market. The core objectives of such initiatives aim to strengthen national security interests and maximise the socioeconomic benefits derived from advanced space technologies across public and private spheres. By reinforcing these dimensions, Greece can establish its role as a forward-looking space actor with a dynamic and competitive domestic ecosystem.

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