

Canadian counterparts in consortiums that carry out projects with potential commercial applications.

Franco-Canadian Cooperation in Space

The favoured relationship between Canada and France is based in particular on their joint participation in cooperative projects in science, rescue operations, and remote sensing. The close links are reinforced by their work together in the European Space Agency (ESA), in which Canada is a cooperating member and France is the largest source of funding, and they have contributed to the development of joint R&D projects and commercial activities on international markets. The leading French firms are Alcatel, Matra Marconi and Aérospatiale. Canada and France also cooperate on some international projects, including the international space station.

Franco-Canadian cooperation plays an important role in some of the goals and priorities of the Canadian government for enhancing the competitiveness of the Canadian space industry on international markets. Thanks to the pivotal role that France plays within ESA and the influence of the large French contractors, the French can play an important role in discussions of Canadian participation in European and international space programs, including the Galileo satellite navigation program and the new telecommunications projects.

Conclusion: We should continue to strengthen Franco-Canadian relations in the space sector by finding new activities that should be undertaken by the two countries and by stimulating opportunities for commercial and R&D cooperation, particularly in regard to preferred supplier relationships that could be established between Canadian firms and big operators, entrepreneurs and subcontractors in France. To achieve these results, we should pursue bilateral cooperation and our participation in ESA.

B. Constraints

France recognizes the problem that it has in trying to benefit downstream from its considerable expenditures on basic research. A new, high-level strategy has been developed to solve this problem. France's economic difficulties have led to modest cuts in public spending on R&D, but corporate spending on research has been more severely affected. This situation will induce French and Canadian partners to find areas in which their cooperation can be mutually profitable.

Funds for research on particular projects are shrinking, but interesting projects with mutual support can usually find the necessary funding. The resources come from corporations themselves, Canadian government programs such as the Technology Partnerships Program, the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP), and Canada's contribution to ESA. Support for university research comes from funding agencies, and support for government research comes from the usual sources of funding for international cooperation projects, in particular the matching fund programs of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The most difficult step in a partnership is finding the best possible collaborator. It takes time to select possible partners, evaluate joint interests, and arrive at arrangements that are beneficial to both parties. Particular attention must also be paid to intellectual property rights.