NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Manatū Aorere

DECEMBER 2024

Opportunities in Germany's Space Sector

MARKET INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Summary

- Germany is one of Europe's top space-faring nations, heavily invested in the European Space Agency (ESA) and home to established players and a growing start-up scene.

- In line with its ambition to be a global leader in space, the German government adopted a new Space Strategy in 2023 to address the growing importance of space for society, the economy and security. Several of its priorities align with New Zealand's space capabilities and expertise.

- Germany is one of New Zealand's primary space partners, going beyond science and technology. It values New Zealand's unique geography, innovation and expertise.

- Opportunities for New Zealand space companies include: corporate venture capital; collaboration opportunities particularly in satellite technology, space exploration and green technology; strategic partnerships; joint Horizon Europe research bids with the German Aerospace Agency (DLR); and funding from Germany's Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation SPRIND.

Report

A new German Space Strategy reflecting increased space relevance

In October 2023, the German government adopted a new Space Strategy – its first update since 2010. Titled “New Times, New Relevance”, the strategy addresses the growing importance of space for society, the economy and national security, and recognises the critical role of space-based infrastructure. It emphasises the need for Germany to maintain and expand its space capabilities to meet current and future challenges, including climate change, digitalisation, and global stability. The strategy outlines nine action areas including international cooperation, green space initiatives, digital applications, security and talent attraction. It stresses the importance of supporting private-sector initiatives, particularly the NewSpace industry. The strategy also focuses on Germany’s role as an attractive partner in space exploration, with an emphasis on advancing key technologies like robotics and artificial intelligence.

New Zealand-Germany space collaboration: From research to strategic partners

Germany is New Zealand’s fifth largest science partner globally and a significant provider of research and science infrastructure with over three percent of GDP going to research and development. Since 2020, a set of eight collaborative research projects, jointly funded by MBIE and the German Aerospace Center (DLR), has deepened the relationship, covering topics such as quantum memory, maritime surveillance, in-space propulsion, and remote sensing. Recognising the growing strategic relationship, in 2022 New Zealand's Space Agency and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs (BMWK) signed a space agreement. It envisions a closer working relationship not just in research but also formalises policy and regulatory collaboration, space security and expanding commercial links.

Star Bucks: Maximising commercial space opportunities

The European space industry is the world’s second largest, within which the German space sector generates revenues of EUR 3 billion and employs some 10,000 people (BDLI, 2023 data). There are opportunities for greater commercial links between

erman corporations and New Zealand early-stage space-related technology companies. This could take the form of corporate venture capital or strategic partnerships to accelerate development. Joint Horizon Europe bids with DLR as a research partner can be explored as Germany continues to value New Zealand's unique geography, innovation and expertise. DLR is involved in Horizon Europe space research consortia such as DISCO 2030, which develops multi-material components for rocket engines, ship engines and hydrogen tanks, and ENLIGHTEN, which focuses on advancements in space propulsion for reusable rocket engines).

New Zealand's small yet dynamic space ecosystem is well-positioned to attract complementary European technology partners to establish a presence in New Zealand. For New Zealand space start-ups pioneering technology, Germany's Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation SPRIND offers financial support and coaching to research and development projects with breakthrough innovation potential. While SPRIND's "challenges" target European participants, New Zealand companies can either join a European team or submit their own project for a separate line of funding, as demonstrated by the success of New Zealand company Emrod.

Key German players and institutions

- German Aerospace Center (DLR): Germany's national research center for aerospace, energy, and transportation, driving innovation in space exploration, satellite technology, and aeronautics through cutting-edge research and development. DLR has a Space working group.
- Airbus Defence and Space: a leading global provider of satellite systems, space exploration technologies and defence services. New Zealand entities have been involved in the Airbus supply chain and have collaborated on technological advancements.
- OHB SE: a prominent player in the global small satellite market specialising in satellite communication and Earth observation
- BDLI: The German Aerospace Industries Association representing 250 German members along the entire supply chain, covering all industry segments and company sizes, from engineering service providers to medium-sized suppliers and international system manufacturers.
- BDI NewSpace Initiative: This initiative of the Federation of German Industries brings together 90 German NewSpace start-ups, space companies, associations, traditional industrial companies and the digital economy.

In addition, Germany has a thriving ecosystem of space SMEs, startups and research institutions and universities working on cutting-edge technologies, such as satellite data applications and advanced propulsion systems.

Regional Space clusters and ecosystems

Bavaria is a powerhouse in Germany's aerospace sector supported by **EUR 700 million in state investments. Key projects include the development of Europe's largest aerospace campus at the Technical University Munich** and the **Moon Mission Control Centre** at the DLR site in Oberpfaffenhofen which is set to become Europe's equivalent of NASA's Houston from 2027. Bavaria's Aerospace Cluster (bavAIRia e.V.) promotes collaboration between science and industry, positioning the region as a leader in satellite technology.

Bremen: Known as the "city of space," Bremen hosts major aerospace companies like **OHB SE** and **Airbus**, as well as the **Center for Applied Space Technology and Microgravity (ZARM)**. Bremen is a key location for the production of large space components, including modules for the International Space Station (ISS) and satellite systems.

Berlin-Brandenburg: The region's space start-up cluster focuses on satellite communication technologies, Earth observation systems, and the development of space hardware. The Technical University Berlin is the university with the most satellites in orbit worldwide. Research is conducted into hydrogen and fuel cell-powered propulsion systems in the interest of climate neutrality.

Trade fairs

The following trade fairs offer opportunities to network with German space companies and institutions:

- Aerospace Aviation Congress Interdisciplinary International (AACII) in Nürnberg, 12 February 2025 (annual)
- Munich Satellite Navigation Summit in Munich, 26-28 March 2025 (annual)
- IAC-International Aeronautical Congress in Sydney, 29 September-3 October 2025 (annual)
- AIRTEC specialising in the supplier industry, in Augsburg, 22-24 October 2025 (annual)
- Munich New Space Summit in Garching near Munich, October 2025 dates still tbc (annual)
- Space Tech Expo Europe in Bremen, 18-20 November 2025 (annual)
- ILA Berlin 10-14 June 2026 (biennial)

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