

Science Minister in Italy for first meeting with European Space Agency

This week (Monday 17 October), recently appointed Minister for Science and Investment Security Nusrat Ghani arrived at the European Space Agency (ESA)'s Centre for Earth Observation to meet with ESA's Director General Josef Aschbacher, and Austrian Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility and Technology, Leonore Gewessler.

Minister Ghani was joined by UK Space Agency CEO Paul Bate for the visit, the Minister's first trip outside the UK since being appointed in her ministerial position within the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

The meeting with Dr. Aschbacher came ahead of this year's ESA Council of Ministers (CMIN22), set to take place in November, at which member states look to invest in the next evolution of ESA missions and programmes, and at which the UK contribution to ESA will be confirmed.

November's Ministerial council will present an exciting opportunity to help set the future direction of ESA, and to achieve an outcome for the UK that delivers on our [National Space Strategy](#) (NSS) objectives while driving growth and supporting safety and sustainability on Earth.

Minister for Science and Investment Security Nusrat Ghani said:

I am proud to be representing the UK space sector as we discuss our ambitions ahead of the ESA Council of Ministers next month. There are a series of important programmes on the table, and I want to harness opportunities in space to grow the UK economy, create jobs and inspire young people into STEM careers.

It was important to me that my first international trip was with ESA and I look forward to the Council of Ministers meeting in November and campaigning for 2025 UK Presidency.

We're also making new funding available now to strengthen the UK's position as a world leader in the satellite communications market, and I look forward to seeing the results of the competition.

Having committed £374 million per year over five years to ESA in 2019, the UK's investment and collaboration with the agency is of significant value to the economy and domestic sector, illustrated by new [UK Space Agency report](#) findings published this week, which find that for every £1 invested, ESA will generate an overall return of £11.80 for the UK economy.

The visit to Italy also coincided with Minister Ghani's unveiling of a [new £15 million fund](#) for UK businesses to revolutionise satellite communications technology. The competition will prioritise customer needs, support

sustainable growth and catalyse further investment into the UK space sector, which already employs 47,000 people.

The trip was indicative of the UK's strong commitment to the space and R&D sector both at home and across Europe. The UK's European and global partnerships form an essential part of this government's ambitions in the field as we begin to explore the possibility of bidding for the ESA presidency for 2025, continue to advocate for our association to the Horizon Europe research programme, and look ahead to a busy pipeline of bilateral engagements across R&D.