
Space Governance in Peripheral European Nations: A Policy Comparison between Portugal and Luxembourg

Rafaela Palácio*^{†1}, Haimi Tefera¹, Miguel Pina E Cunha¹, and Pedro Pais Penedos¹

¹NOVA - School of Business and Economics (NOVA SBE) – Campus de Carcavelos, Rua da Holanda,
2775-405 Carcavelos., Portugal

Abstract

This comparative study analyzes the contrasting approaches to space policy and regulation in Portugal and Luxembourg, two European countries with a strong social connection but vastly different strategies for space sector development. Despite their close ties, their regulatory environments in space law are starkly opposed.

Luxembourg has established itself as a pioneer in space governance, being the first European country (and second worldwide) to offer a legal framework for space resource exploration and utilization. With a clear and ambitious national space strategy (2023–2027), laws on space exploration (2017), space activities (2020), and plans for future regulations on Earth Observation data, Luxembourg has positioned itself as a European case study in sectoral growth.

In contrast, Portugal's space policy framework remains fragmented and less ambitious. Despite initiatives such as the New Space Portugal program and some government and space agency efforts, the country's regulatory approach lacks the coherence and forward-thinking legal structures seen in Luxembourg.

This study aims to compare the legal and policy landscapes of both countries, emphasizing how Luxembourg's proactive stance could serve as a model for Portugal. This analysis will contribute to the discourse on how peripheral European nations can strategically develop their space industries, offering practical recommendations for policy alignment between the two countries.

Keywords: Comparative analysis, Legal framework, National strategy, Peripheral nations, Space policy, Space sector development

*Speaker

[†]Corresponding author: rafaelapalacio@gmail.com