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THE WORK ON THE NEW NORWEGIAN ACT ON OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES: GOALS, ISSUES
AND CHALLENGES

Abstract

This paper will present the ongoing work on the reform of the Norwegian space law, and central legal issues discussed by the expert committee appointed to prepare a draft space law act. The Norwegian law currently in force (1969) is one of the oldest pieces of space legislation in the world. The Norwegian space sector has grown and evolved considerably over recent decades. Norwegian space law reform aims at meeting the requirements of the contemporary space sector, which is dynamic, international and increasingly dominated by commercial actors and by the inter-State cooperation. The space law currently in force contains only three articles, which prohibit launching of objects into outer space without permission from competent authorities, and is no longer adequate for the needs of today's space sector. The work on the new law commenced in 2019, with a view to providing a contemporary and up-to-date legislative solution for the space sector. One of the significant issues is what activities should be encompassed by the new law, and what kind of provisions, obligations and requirements the new space law should include. It is also necessary to consider objectives, which may sometimes conflict with each other: being industry-friendly and encouraging commercial space activities with a strong international dimension, while ensuring the adequate level of safety, sustainability (including prevention of space debris) and setting sufficiently stringent requirements for granting the permit, such as financial capacity of the operator, liability and insurance. Norway also has to tackle the novel challenges related to launching small satellites into orbit from within Norway's territory (Andøya Space Centre). This expansion of Norwegian space activities has significant implications for Norway's responsibility and liability under international law.