



## **Brussels Science Apéro Space: A journey on the edges of the impossible**

*A large influx of public enjoyed the Brussels Science Apéro dedicated to Space*

The last edition of the Brussels Science Apéro took place on Wednesday the 30<sup>th</sup> at the lounge bar of the Marriot Hotel. The event, organized by Minerva Communication, aimed to show the audience the most exciting details of the daily life of an astronaut, as well as to give an insight into the present and future of Space Exploration.

The event, named "Space: The Final Frontier", counted with the participation of Simonetta Di Pippo, Head of the European Space Policy Observatory at the Italian Space Agency and President of Women in Aerospace Europe. Di Pippo, who can boast of having a namesake asteroid, unveiled not only the practicalities of human life on board of the International Space Station, but also the political intricacies of Space exploration.

A total of 58 attendants attended the event, attracted by the prospects of an amusing conversation about Space over a drink.

### **Space exploration or Star Wars?**

One of the recurring themes of the debate was on the benefits of Space exploration down on Earth. Are public investments in this field making a positive impact in the life of ordinary citizens?

Di Pippo ensures: "Yes. There are many technologies developed in Space that we use in our everyday life. For instance, as an average, each of us uses 10 satellites per day". However, not everything that shines is made of gold. Thus, the speaker admits that the story of the space race is also a tale of competition: "Space is still used as a way of showing political power. At that time of the Cold War between the URSS and the US, mastering Space technologies was considered the way of demonstrating the power of a country. That is exactly what is going on since few years with China. They want to show the world that they have the technology to do it".

Competition in the field does not necessary entail a negative phenomenon, but it rather

works as an innovation engine. She claims: "Sometimes in the past Chinese echoed what we are doing in Europe. They are right now in a very good position in terms of innovative technologies and they will probably do something very interesting. This is a stimulus for governments and for us to do something more. And not because of a sort of a competition, but because space exploration must be a cooperative effort, and not anymore a race, if we want to provide a sustainable future for humankind"

Di Pippo explains that this trend also takes place within Europe: "On a regular basis the US disclose the results of Space technologies development for civilian objectives. Every time they do that, the gap between the EU and the USA becomes wider in terms of innovation. Then we rush and get close to them and immediately they disclosed new technologies and we are behind again. That's what I have experienced in the last three decades in my professional career"

Currently, application programmes are considered with strong interest by Governments in Europe, because they can lead to practical results with a positive effect in the daily life of the citizens. Along these lines, she explains: "Application programmes are useful because we can touch the results, through innovative services to citizens. However, if a Government decides to spend money in developing technologies to send humans to Mars, the possibility to use this on the day by day life is only on the long term. That is why there is an increasing interest in Government on application programmes, even if most of the innovation technologies are a straight consequence of challenging objectives and goals, i.e. the human exploration of the Solar System".

### **Space tourism and colonization of other planets**

Space tourism and the colonization of other planets still seem as the content of Science Fiction literature and movies. However, the arrival of the man on the moon was also seen as an impossible deed until it was actually achieved. That is why Di Pippo does not hesitate to talk about the possibility of expanding the human habitat beyond the limits of the stratosphere to the extent that she claims: "Step by step, it is important to start understanding how to survive on another planet in the future"

On this sense, she explains: "Our planetary system existence is about 4.5 billion years. There will be a point in which the sun will inflate and the temperature will increase. Then, probably the conditions in Mars will be good enough to support life".

Even when this statement sounds encouraging, the astrophysicist clarifies: "For now, we in Europe do not have the skill to land on other planet, not yet. Two key technologies you need to think of before sending someone to other planet are those to send people there, and those to bring them back. That, unless you want to stay in Mars forever, which is another story."

However, according as the idea of space tourism is taking shape, Di Pippo considers that this commercial development is a good sign: "The more we help people flying, the more they will get convinced that Space is important".

After an intense hour and a half of questions and answers between Simonetta Di Pippo, the attendants and the Minerva Communication team, with the mind full of future projects and possibilities in places beyond the scope of human eyes, the event closed with an inspiring video on astronauts in space and everyone toasted to Science.

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