

FINLAND

National mechanism:

Act on Space Activities, adopted in January 2018, enters into force 23rd January 2018.

Decree of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment on Space Activities, to be adopted and entering into force 23rd January 2018.

Description:

(i) Finland has just enacted a national Act on Space Activities. The act was proposed by the Government to the Parliament in the end of October, accepted by the Parliament in the end of December 2017 and enforced by the President in the beginning of January 2018. The act entered into force 23rd of January 2018. The act is complemented by a decree by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

The scope of the Finnish act on space activities is space activities on the territory of Finland or on vessels or airplanes registered in Finland. The act applies both to governmental and non-governmental space activities. However, provisions on authorization, insurance and supervision are not applied to space activities by the national defence forces.

According to the act, space activities means launching space objects into outer space, operation and control of space objects in outer space and returning space objects to the Earth. Space object means any object launched or intended to be launched into outer space, including the component parts of such an object, and any device and its component parts used or intended to be used for launching an object into outer space. Operator means a natural or legal person who is responsible for the carrying out of space activities.

(ii) According to Section 5 of the act on space activities, space activities may only be carried on subject to prior authorization by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The Ministry may authorize space activities if the conditions specified in the section are met. One of the conditions is that the operator strives to prevent the generation of space debris and adverse environmental impacts on the Earth, in the atmosphere and in outer space in accordance with section 10. Furthermore, it is provided that the operator has to have a plan for terminating the activities in outer space and for the related measures.

Section 10 of the act contains provisions for environmental protection and space debris. According to the first paragraph, space activities shall be carried out in a manner that is environmentally sustainable and promotes the sustainable use of outer space. In its application for authorization, the operator shall assess the environmental impacts of the activity on the Earth, in the airspace and in outer space and present a plan for measures to counter or reduce any possible adverse environmental impacts. Any nuclear materials used in the space object shall be specified in the application for authorization.

The second paragraph of the section applies to space debris. According to it, the operator shall, in accordance with the recognised international guidelines, ensure that the activities in outer space do not generate space debris. It is further specified in the paragraph, that the operator shall in particular restrict the generation of space debris during the normal function of the space object, reduce the risks of breakage and collision of the space object in outer space and strive to remove the space object from its orbit to a less crowded orbit or to atmosphere after it has completed its mission.

Space debris is not defined in the act. In the explanatory memorandum for the Government proposal it is explained that space debris means, in accordance with general international definition, any non-functional space object and its parts, including non-functional satellites, upper-stages of launch vehicles and other loose particles in outer space.

Recognised international guidelines refer to COPUOS and IADC guidelines, European Code of Conduct for Space Debris Mitigation as well as ISO standards.

Further provisions on the environmental impact assessment and the measures necessary to avoid the generation of space debris may be given by decree of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. In its current form the decree states only that a space object must be replaced to a non-crowded orbit or to atmosphere in 25 years after the end of its operational time.

Applicability:

The scope of the Finnish act as well as decree on space activities is space activities on the territory of Finland or on vessels or airplanes registered in Finland.

Relation to international mechanisms:

According to the act, the operator shall, in accordance with the recognised international guidelines, ensure that the activities in outer space do not generate space debris. The recognised international guidelines are not defined in the act. In the explanatory memorandum for the Government proposal it is explained that the recognised international guidelines refer to COPUOS and IADC guidelines, European Code of Conduct for Space Debris Mitigation as well as ISO standards.

Link to other national mechanisms:

None.

References:

See www.tem.fi/en/space. The English translation of the act will be published by the end of January 2018.