

First German Sea Launch Expected in 2024

“Space exploration also ensures progress on Earth –
this progress can become a game changer for all of humanity.”
(BDI-Study Presentation October 2023: Space inspired Germany)[1]



What originated as a visionary idea at the BDI Space Congress in 2019 is taking real shape. The German Offshore Spaceport Alliance (GOSA) is embarking on its first demo mission and will launch the first rockets from the North Sea in 2024.

Sabine von der Recke, member of GOSA's management board, made the announcement at the Federation of German Industries (BDI) Space Congress in Berlin in October 2023: "I am very proud that after intensive preparation we are now moving from planning to implementation and I fully believe that we will soon launch the first rocket from the North Sea. With our demo mission we will show: Germany can lift-off launch vehicles - even on water!" [2]

“From the North Sea into space: In April 2024, a rocket is scheduled to be launched into space from the new German spaceport for the first time.” *Siegfried Russwurm*, President of the BDI, also confirmed at the BDI 2023 space conference. [1]

But his announcement also indicated that the launch date of the first rocket, originally planned to be launched from the new German spaceport end of 2023 has been postponed.



The new German spaceport has little in common with the launch facilities at Cape Canaveral, Florida USA. It will be located on a Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) ship. The GOSA RoRo-ship is designed as a floating launch platform with a special ramp and has its home port in Bremerhaven.

To launch a rocket, the ship travels to the so-called Duckbill, more than 350 kilometers the most remote corner of the zone, in which Germany still has certain sovereign rights.

In 2024, a rocket provided by the Dutch company ‘T-Minus’ and is scheduled to lift off from the launch platform as part of a demo mission.

The operating consortium of the ‘Spaceport Alliance’ was founded by four companies in 2020, consisting of Bremen-based space company OHB, the Hessian engineering service provider Tractebel-Engineering through its Bremen branch Tractebel DOC Offshore, the Bremen satellite communications technology manufacturer MediaMobil Communication, and the Bremen shipping company Harren & Partner. [3]

OHB is also playing a leading role in the development of the small rocket RFA-One, built by the start-up company Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA), but sees the North Sea spaceport as an open system that other European or international rocket operators could also use.

A study, called “Space-enabled Germany”, jointly prepared by the strategy consultancy Roland Berger (Germany) and BDI, demonstrated the importance of *NewSpace* for German industry. *NewSpace* refers to the commercialization of space and its growing integration with the non-space economy. Future technologies such as autonomous driving or Industry 4.0 are based on innovations that are anchored in space. Precise weather forecasts and climate monitoring are inconceivable without satellites, and satellite-based navigation systems are already indispensable in the field of transport and logistics. *NewSpace* is therefore the collection point for ideas and applications for the commercial use of space. [4]

The market for space-based applications is predicted to grow by 7.4 percent annually to 1.25 trillion euros by 2040, according to one of the key findings. It will be of particular importance for agriculture, the automotive sector and the consumer goods, tourism and health sectors. [5]

The Vision: Low Cost Access to Space

Germany is benefiting from the boom of the New Space movement. A growing number of start-ups and small and medium-sized companies offering space-based solutions is revitalizing the space industry in Germany. An own Spaceport would offer this growing New Space location the historic opportunity to develop a cluster in a future market and thereby create an economic ecosystem that includes everything from the manufacturer of the smallest part to the complete application of the product. [6]

Russwurm (BDI): Anyone who is not at the forefront in space will not be a technology leader on Earth. This applies to a growing number of industries. [1]

In September 2023, the Budget Committee of the German Bundestag decided to support the development and construction of infrastructure for lifting-off launch vehicles from a sea-based platform on German territory with a total of two million euros up to 2025. However it remains to be seen whether this support will still be granted after the big December 2023 revision of the federal budget for 2024. [6]

References

[1] <https://bdi.eu/weltraumkongress>

[2] <https://www.ohb.de/en/news/first-launches-in-the-north-sea-planned-for-2024-gosa-starts-its-first-demo-mission>

[3] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Offshore_Spaceport_Alliances

[4] <https://www.iabg.de/en/focus-topics/newspace#:~:text=NewSpace%20refers%20to%20the%20commercialisation,that%20are%20anchored%20in%20space.>

[5] <https://bdi.eu/artikel/7news/die-bedeutung-von-newspace-fuer-die-deutsche-industrie>

[6] <https://www.offshore-spaceport.de/de/>