Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This document answers frequently asked questions about the Continental Innovation activity under the Africa–EU Space Partnership Programme (AESPP), including what the activity is, who it supports, and how it helps strengthen Africa's Earth Observation private sector.

If your question is not addressed here, please connect with the programme team at innovation@aespp.africa.

General questions

1. What is the Africa–EU Space Partnership Programme (AESPP)?

As part of the Global Gateway strategy, the **Africa–EU Space Partnership Programme (AESPP)** strengthens collaboration between the European Union (EU) and Africa in the field of space technologies, services, and applications. AESPP is an European Commission-funded initiative, implemented by the European Space Agency (ESA) and in close collaboration with the African Space Agency (AfSA).

Through focused thematic cooperation and high-level strategic dialogues, the programme engages with key stakeholders to stimulate investment in Africa's space sector. It draws on advanced European space technologies, such as Copernicus for Earth Observation, and Galileo and EGNOS for satellite navigation, to support development priorities across the continent.

By increasing the uptake of space-based data and fostering institutional and private sector capacity, the programme empowers African countries to address pressing societal challenges. These include monitoring environmental changes, strengthening resilience to natural disasters, and deploying advanced early warning systems.

2. What is Continental Innovation?

Continental Innovation is one of the AESPP activities. It aims to support African startups and SMEs providing EO services through targeted capacity development and training, business innovation programmes, and direct connections to investors and business partners to help them scale.

3. What is Earth Observation?

Earth Observation (EO) is the gathering of information about the Earth's surface and atmosphere using satellite-based sensors. EO can support practical decision-making in areas such as agriculture, climate resilience, urban development, water, oceans, and disaster risk management.

4. Who is this the Continental Innovation activity for?

This activity is primarily for African startups and SMEs working in Earth Observation. It is also relevant to innovation hubs, entrepreneur support organisations, investors, industry partners, and other stakeholders that help EO businesses grow.

5. How can I get involved in the Continental Innovation programme?

There are several ways to engage, depending on your profile and goals:

1. **As a participant**: Join our training sessions, business innovation programmes, and matchmaking activities designed to help startups and SMEs working in Earth Observation, grow, scale, and connect with the right partners.

2. **As an expert**: We are actively looking for local business and technical experts to contribute to our training and business innovation activities. Share your expertise, mentor innovators, and help shape the next generation of ventures.
3. **As a partner**: Whether you are an industry player, investor, or innovation hub, you can discover high-potential startups and build meaningful collaborations. Join our upcoming matchmaking activities to connect, invest, and create new opportunities.

6. What support will be offered?

AESPP, through Continental Innovation, will support African EO startups and SMEs through targeted capacity development, business innovation programmes, and facilitated connections to investors and business partners. The project also includes mentoring and matchmaking events to help strengthen the ecosystem around EO innovation.

7. What capacity development will be offered through this activity?

Continental Innovation will offer targeted capacity development to help African EO startups and SMEs strengthen both technical and business skills. This is expected to include support that helps participants improve their understanding of EO tools and applications, while also building the entrepreneurial, commercial, and investment-readiness capabilities needed to grow sustainable businesses.

8. What business innovation programmes will be offered?

Through the Business Innovation Programme, Continental Innovation will support selected African-registered EO downstream businesses through a structured 12-month innovation support journey. Each selected business will receive dedicated mentoring from a pool of expert advisors, access to African and European networks, and a €20,000 milestone-based funding voucher. The programme is designed for a range of businesses, from early-stage startups to growth-stage and established SMEs. For more detailed information see here.

9. What matchmaking opportunities will be offered?

Continental Innovation will organise matchmaking opportunities that connect African and European companies, and where relevant, potential future clients (industry players, public institutions and investors). These activities are intended to help participating businesses build partnerships, explore commercial opportunities, and expand the networks that can support their growth.

10. Why does this activity matter?

Africa's EO market is growing, and there is strong demand for locally developed solutions. Continental Innovation is designed to help African innovators strengthen their skills, grow their businesses, and connect with the wider networks needed to scale their impact.

11. What are your focus geographies/regions?

AESPP is designed as a continent-wide initiative, and we will be taking steps to broaden the accessibility of the initiative through our outreach and communications activities. This includes considering both language and existing technical capabilities and also prioritising a balanced age and gender profile of those included in the programme.

12. Who is involved in delivering Continental Innovation?

Continental Innovation is delivered by a European-African consortium with expertise in EO, innovation support, entrepreneurship, capacity development, and communications. The consortium partners are GrowthAfrica, Novaspace, Planetek Italia, and Caribou.

13. How long will the activity run?

The Continental Innovation implementation period spans three years, with operational activities expected to conclude in December 2028.

14. How can I stay informed?

The @AESPPContInnov Linktree contains all relevant links for the activity, including a link to a mailing list you can join to keep up to date.