

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)

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PROMOTING SPACE ACTIVITIES IN POLAND AND THE REGION IN SUPPORT OF ESA  
ACCESSION THROUGH THE KOSMONAUTA.NET WEB SERVICE

**Abstract**

In late 2012 Poland should join the European Space Agency (ESA) as its 20th member. In consequence, the Polish budget for space activities should rise 5-10 times in comparison to previously allocated funds. However, the development of the space sector still remains ignored in Polish mainstream media. Such minimal coverage has a tendency to be unreliable and does not describe the accurate situation. In consequence, negative opinions, mixed with lack of accurate knowledge are observed, which certainly does not help in promotion and acceptability of Polish space activities.

As the full integration with ESA is approaching, the support for Polish space sector should also increase - otherwise a bigger resistance to higher public spending in this field can be expected. How can this be achieved in the current situation? One option is to use a dedicated web service, which connects professionals and enthusiasts from this field.

Since 2009, Kosmonauta.net explains the space sector to professionals and general public. In the three years since its founding, Kosmonauta.net transformed from a small niche website into early stage regional-international portal with several important rewards and achievements. As of February 2012, in certain times, such as a major scientific finding, the website is accessed by more than 10000 unique visitors. In addition, it is already presented as a "best case" for promoting space activities, also outside of Poland.

In the nearest future, Kosmonauta.net aims to broaden the promotion towards regional space projects and initiatives. The goal is to support and present new ideas from Central Europe and especially the Baltic States, which should result in higher chances for any given project to be understood, accepted and implemented. It will be also a regional link between the space community and the general public, which should result in increased exposure and understanding of space-related topics across Central Europe.

Within Poland, Kosmonauta.net is already successfully using multiple contacts with mainstream Polish media to reprint prepared material and social networking sites to reach a vast number of people. An example could be Kosmonauta.net's report on Polish politicians' views on the national space sector, published in early October 2011. This report has been downloaded more than 10000 times and presents an important step for the space industry lobbying in the country.