

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

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THE EUROPEAN ROVER CHALLENGE AS A MOTIVATOR AND INTEGRATOR FOR YOUNG
ROBOTICS TEAMS ON THEIR PATHS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AND COMMERCIALIZE
TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS.

Abstract

article The European Rover Challenge is the biggest space-robotics event popularizing science and new technologies in the East-Central Europe, which since 2014 has been taking place in Poland. It is an event analogous to the University Rover Challenge in the United States, although takes place at a venue widely available to the public and is accompanied by a science-tech picnic (nearly 30 booths in 2014). This makes it possible for anyone interested in the STEM fields to watch the efforts of young robotics teams. The first edition brought together more than 25,000 visitors and 10 teams from 4 continents. The competition was also observed by an international assembly of space experts with whom the students had a chance to talk about their future plans. Moreover, we played host to 54 accredited journalists, thanks to whom we've enjoyed over 2,000 publications in 14 languages, and the communication efforts have reached nearly 30,000,000 media consumers. Thus, an event like the ERC is a proven method of scouting ideas and people, who are about to enter the job market. So, if they will not be able to find education-related work after leaving university, there is a risk they will change their profession. Thanks to the ERC, as well as the large-scale promotion I have discussed earlier and cooperation with the industry, we have an opportunity to keep these young people in the space sector, and thus boosting resources needed to build it, most of all in the developing countries. This, indeed, is the basic conclusion stemming both, from the ERC and the URC, where the number of teams from the developing countries is growing every year. This allows for putting forward an assumption that their potential is significantly greater because of their stronger motivation - they want to catch up with the Western world. The main lesson learned from the ERC 2014 is the need to provide mentor support to young robotics teams, who often do not know how to utilize their success. Thus, during the upcoming edition of the ERC, special workshops will be held for the previous winners of the URC/ERC. They will be lead by representatives of space sector, financial sector and representatives of government agencies. This will help young robotics teams find their professional path and will enrich their knowledge of financing tools and promoting their ideas on the international stage.