

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

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BESPACE: THE COMMUNITY FOR SPACE ENTHUSIASTS IN BELGIUM

Abstract

beSPACE is a Belgian volunteer-based non-profit organization with the ambition to create a community for space enthusiasts who work, study or live in Belgium. beSPACE was created in 2013 with the goal of connecting students and professionals with the industry and academia, and it organized its first networking event, the Space Dinner, that same year. Since then the number of members has increased significantly, currently reaching more than 250, while the variety of events has expanded as well – from the Space Dinner and Award session oriented towards the general public to company visits and smaller sessions on specific topics. In 2017 beSPACE introduced the beSPACE Awards session during the Space Dinner to recognize and reward one individual (Personality of the Year) and one team (Team of the Year) that have made exceptional contributions to the Belgian space scene. The goal is to draw the general public's attention to the space-related efforts and accomplishments achieved within Belgium.

This paper intends to share a successful experience of growing a local community of enthusiasts . It will tell in details about the activities organized by the beSPACE core team such as the Space Dinner, sessions on different topics, company visits, etc. It will discuss the outcomes, lessons learnt and best practices. One part will be dedicated to the white paper “Belgium in space: beSPACE’s vision”, in which the core team outlines its recommendations in order for Belgium to remain a competitive European partner. Special attention will be given to the future goals and expansion strategy to encourage communication and collaboration between different space enthusiasts (professional, academic or other) in Belgium.