

27th SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)
Poster Session (P)

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THE CZECH AND POLISH SPACE SECTORS – THE IMPACT OF ESA MEMBERSHIP

Abstract

By the time IAC 2014 takes place, it will be six (Czech Republic) and two (Poland) years since the countries joined the European Space Agency (ESA). These two countries are right now at various stages of their activities within ESA.

Jointly, these countries contribute 42.6 M EUR to the agency, which is approximately 1% of the total ESA budget. This is a low value in comparison to other ESA countries, however the total amount of available funds for space activities from various sources is about 60 M EUR per annum and is still increasing. This value is 15-30 times higher than just 10 years ago, when the amounts available for the space sector were in order of just few M EUR.

This increased funding has already resulted in the development of the regional space sector. The industry and scientific institutes from these countries are now more actively participating in ESA programmes. As a further enlargement of ESA is certain to come in the near future, the analysis of the current state of development in the Czech Republic and Poland indicates the next steps for emerging space sector. The analysis also identifies challenges, which should be solved or minimized in order to support the further development of this branch of industry.

There are already some limited commercial “success stories”, which clearly indicate the potential of the local emerging industry. For example, the first dedicated ESA’s Polish Industry Incentive Scheme calls attracted over 80 submissions, both from newly created specialized start-ups as well as established institutes. In the Czech Republic, the local companies, scientific institutes and universities have successfully involved in the development and manufacture of scientific instruments or critical components of satellites. Finally, these countries attract foreign investments, also in a form of establishing a local branch of a company.

This work is a continuation of studies reported at IAC 2012 and IAC 2013, however this time the authors aim to provide a joint analysis on the regional state of development. We aim to provide a comparison between the Polish and Czech space sectors, present their advantages, their relevance to the European and global space sectors and identify development barriers and their state as of late 2014.