

30th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)
International Cooperation - a cornerstone of 50 years UN Space Law and space diplomacy (1)

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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW ESA MEMBER STATES

Abstract

The European Space Agency (ESA) is an intergovernmental organisation. Its purpose is to provide and promote a peaceful cooperation among European states in space research, technologies development and space applications. ESA has 22 member states. The last states that joined ESA are: Czech Republic (18th member states since 12 November 2008), Romania (19th member states since 22 December 2011), Poland (20th member states since 19 November 2012), Estonia (21st member states since 4 February 2015) and Hungary (22nd member states since 24 February 2015).

History of their space industry dates back to the 70s and Soviet space program Interkosmos. After political changes in the 90s, they established a cooperation with new partners and later joined ESA. ESA membership opened new opportunities for their academic and industry organisations. The Czech Republic increased the ESA contribution from 7.12 M EUR in 2009 to 32.70 M EUR in 2017, Romania from 7.62 M EUR in 2012 to 30.03 M EUR in 2017, Poland from 28.94 M EUR in 2013 to 34.57 M EUR in 2017, Estonia from 2.48 M EUR in 2016 to 2.54 M EUR in 2017, only Hungary decreased the ESA contribution from 6.36 M EUR in 2016 to 6.20 M EUR in 2017. These numbers show that the space industry in these new member states is developing rapidly.

But they also have to face many challenges. Along with the increase of their ESA contribution, the supporting infrastructure and coordination of space activities at a governmental level have to be more effective. These countries have chosen different strategies. Space activities in the Czech Republic are coordinated by the Ministry of Transportation, in Romania by the Romanian Space Agency (ROSA), in Poland by the Polish Space Agency (POLSA), in Estonia by the Estonian Space Office (EAS), and in Hungary by the Hungarian Space Office (HSO).

This paper summarises the analysis of these five new ESA member states, their space policy and strategy, development of their space industry, and challenges they have to face. The outputs of this analysis are important for future expansion of ESA. Six other countries are members of the ESA Cooperating States and should become full members of ESA in the coming years.