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PROMOTING PRODUCTIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN SPACE LAWYERS AND ENGINEERS

Abstract

One of the major non-technical challenges of space activities is ensuring a productive cooperation between people with technical expertise who design the mission, and people with legal expertise who have the task to cover the relevant legal and contractual aspects. Issues in such cooperation mainly arise due to a lack of communication and understanding between the two inherently different professions. More specifically, the basis of these problems lies in the fact that, typically neither lawyers nor engineers cover the elementary essentials of the corresponding field throughout their education. In order to help bridging this communication gap, a group of young experts and professionals in the space field, with the support of senior experts and the Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) started to work on a book project entitled “Promoting Productive Cooperation between Space Lawyers and Engineers”. In this book, insights are provided into basic legal and technical topics that occur while planning and conducting space activities. The two sides will be elaborated using the examples of seven high-profile space missions, three of which are contemporary and the remaining four being planned for the nearby future. These missions will be represented to include: space launchers, suborbital spaceflight, the International Space Station, satellites mega-constellations, on-orbit servicing and space debris removal, asteroid mining and in-situ resource utilization, and finally planetary settlements.

The idea of an interdisciplinary book for space practice also stemmed from the fact that such manual has never been approached in this way thus far. By observing the current status of the space industry and receiving feedback by professionals in the space sector at various levels, the growing necessity of a common understanding of issues from a legal, practical, programmatic, and technical side was evident. Since both should be driven by the same goal, that is to attain mission success, it is vital that the two areas cooperate, appreciate the expertise each has to offer, and maintain a results-oriented relationship. The aim of this paper will be to elaborate on possibilities for such a publication to enhance and promote the comprehension and cooperation that is necessary to drive space utilization and exploration for the benefit of all mankind between experts in different fields. The expected synergies from heightened understanding can nurture and enhance the entire space industry, already consisting of professionals who are passionate about their respective fields, by promoting understanding of other related fields.