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ESA BIC PROCUREMENT: SCALING FOR THE NEW SPACE ENTREPRENEURIAL NEEDS

Abstract

Since 2004 the ESA BICs have been supporting space entrepreneurs to build the biggest space startup support programme of the world. From a few entrepreneurs and startups supported per year to the current almost 200, an effort to streamline the procurement in order to accommodate all these contracts has been performed.

At the inception of the ESA BICs, the centers were integrated in the ESA centers and procurement was fully implemented by ESA. With the time and the need of scalability ESA decided to work with experience partners in incubation to implement the incubation activities on behalf of ESA in a European country or region. By taking this action, ESA also extended its procurement rules to allow the local incubation partner to place contracts following the ESA regulations. With these two main actions, ESA is now able to place contracts with almost 200 companies every year.

ESA is reviewing several aspects of the ESA BIC programme regarding application requirements, procurement mechanisms and other relevant areas. The goal is to facilitate the process for the startups while keeping a high level of quality in the selection process as well as to facilitate understanding of evaluation criteria.

Several improvements have been implemented during the years and this paper is a reflection on how the procurement process can be even further streamlined from the experience of more than 15 years in startup procurement processes.

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