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ACCELERATION OF SPACE STARTUPS: LESSONS LEARNED

Abstract

A very visible effect of the growth of a global space sector is a rising number of new commercial ventures, also known as "startups". Generally, startups are known to take much higher risks and attempt to reduce the development time, complexity and/or cost of their concepts. In return, potential profits (technological or financial) can be higher or faster to achieve than in the case of "traditional" space companies.

In parallel to the rise in the number of startups, a number of activities supporting their growth can be also observed. Among them there is an activity named acceleration, which is the topic of this work at IAC 2021. Acceleration is an intensive short term (e.g. three - six months) course, during which accepted startups receive business and technical knowledge, validation, access to markets and funding. As of early 2021, there are more than 50 major European acceleration programmes, both commercial in nature and governmentally sponsored. Several of these accept space sector startups.

This presentation at IAC 2021 investigates the outcome of a number of acceleration schemes organised in Europe since 2015 for both "space" and "non-space" startups. One of them is the Space3ac - an accelerator also focusing on space startups. The impact of acceleration to space startups is compared with the impact to general technological startups (especially the ICT sector). In addition, the interest of larger industries to use products or services from startups is also provided. All together, this data provides lessons learned for the space sector and highlights differences between this industry and non-space ventures.