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Entrepreneurship Around the World (5-GTS.1)

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A SWEDISH PERSPECTIVE ON STRENGTHENING THE SPACE ECOSYSTEM

**Abstract**

Luleå University of Technology (LTU), located in the leading space region of Sweden, has successfully conducted a European Union funded regional development programme for space innovation and growth since 2015. This programme consists of two consecutive multi-year projects with several co-funding partners involved. The programme is based on the idea that the realization of the full potential of research and business opportunities is not yet fully utilised, given that Sweden's main space base, Esrange Space Centre, is located in the region. To address this gap, the university took a leading role in encouraging the major regional stakeholders to enable more development and growth in the space sector. This is based on the region's more than sixty-year-old successful heritage within space technology development, research, and education. With reinforced investment in research and education, the goal was to further strengthen LTU's position as the leading space university in Sweden, as well as its role as an important catalyst for regional growth within the space ecosystem.

The co-funding project partners are a space research institute, major Swedish space industry companies, innovation support actors and regional investors and financiers, such as the municipalities of Kiruna and Luleå, the Region of Norrbotten, a regional bank and the European Union. The programme is conducted by LTU in collaboration with these partners, led by the university's business development company, LTU Business.

The objective of the space innovation and growth programme is to strengthen the regional space ecosystem by encouraging collaboration between industry, academia, regional SME's, and actors within the innovation support system. More explicitly, to create a strong innovation system for growth in the space industry based on collaboration, research, test-driven development, and clustering.

The purpose of this paper is (1) to report results in the programme so far, (2) to present future opportunities and challenges and (3) to encourage external collaboration with the partners in the regional space ecosystem. Six years after the initiation, there are now mechanisms in place to stimulate not only collaboration between the project partners, but also to attract external stakeholders to join our journey towards one of Europe's most prosperous space regions.