

54th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SAFETY, QUALITY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN SPACE
ACTIVITIES (D5)

Knowledge management in the digital transformation (2)

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HOW TO CAPTURE, RETAIN AND TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE FROM PEOPLE: THE EUROPEAN
SPACE AGENCY CASE**Abstract**

In the next ten years, the European Space Agency (ESA) will experience a significant turnover of its employees, as about half of its workforce will retire, mostly due to a recruitment wave around 30 years ago. This so-called “retirement wave” could potentially lead to a critical loss of core knowledge and expertise. The loss impacting technical, scientific or managerial areas alike. This risk was sought to be mitigated with the creation and deployment of a coherent set of processes and tools that support the identification, capture, management, and dissemination of the knowledge and expertise residing only in people’s heads. The set of processes and tools put in place for this purpose include: • a Knowledge Retention and Transfer process – as an emergency activity, in order to identify key retiring people holding one or more critical knowledge areas at greatest risk of being lost and creating a roadmap to retain them • an Expert Directory – where the profile of employees is enriched with skills, competences, and working experiences, retrievable by the search engine in order to enhance cooperation and knowledge exchange; • a Knowledge Portal – a user-friendly, ESA-wide open Content Management System, where multi-media wiki articles can be created by individuals, teams or community of practices to (collectively) curate their knowledge • Expert Lectures – a very successful format of a 90-minute talk where experts recall their activities performed in the Agency and seek to transfer their experience (including lessons learned) to a large audience. Finally, the important role of promotion and communication of all the knowledge management activities. This latter activity includes the organization of communication events, is to provide a platform from which to promote not only the capture and retention activities, but also the dissemination to the largest possible audience the relevant knowledge products. This paper will illustrate how this set of tools and processes were designed and are now employed to mitigate the risk of knowledge loss at ESA and ensure a continuous learning environment.