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LDE UNIVERSITIES SPACE FOR SCIENCE & SOCIETY PROGRAMME

Abstract

In 2012 Leiden University, TU Delft and Erasmus University in Rotterdam started the LDE universities alliance to stimulate collaboration between the three universities in research and education. Less than 35 km apart, and with nearly the full spectrum of disciplines, these universities offer a unique opportunity for collaboration in education and research. Over the last ten years this alliance has resulted in multiple collaborative programmes. Recently the alliance has started working on the next area of collaboration: space.

Within the alliance there are several space education programmes and departments including Space Engineering, Astronomy, Air Space Law and Space Business. Each already offering internationally high-ranking bachelor and master degrees in their fields as well as high level international research activities. Standing strong on their own, these programmes and departments form a unique opportunity for the development of shared education and research activities.

In 2021 the LDE Space for Science Society programme has been initiated to advance collaboration in education and research in the domain of space. With the existing departments as a starting point, the goal is stimulating the involvement of other departments and education programmes. Space is after all a working field that needs expertise from all trades and crafts. For the education activities, the programme is focussing on interdisciplinarity by allowing students to learn the basics from other disciplines and experience working with students from other disciplines in projects. With this approach, the programme intends to make space available to all students and show them the wide range of possibilities for a career in space.

Besides collaboration among the universities the programmes strive for connecting with the space sector. With around 80 percent of the Dutch space sector in proximity, there are opportunities to work together with start-ups, large industry, institutes, upstream and downstream businesses for, lectures, thesis assignments and group projects. Strategic partner of the programme for collaboration with the sector is the NL Space Campus in Noordwijk with ESA ESTEC, ESA's Research and Technology centre.

This paper will describe the LDE Space for Science Society programme. While still in its infancy, the first shared space minor and interdisciplinary projects have taken place in collaboration between departments and with the sector. The paper will address the current activities and how they fit in the long-term plan and objectives of the programme to benefit science and society for all.