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Author: Ms. Niki Giannakou
National and Kapodistrian University Of Athens, Greece, nikolia.giannakou@gmail.com

Ms. Maria Angeliki Gerasimou
National and Kapodistrian University Of Athens, Greece, marger049@gmail.com

FROM YACHTS TO SPACECRAFT: LEGAL ASPECTS OF SPACE TOURISM VENTURES IN
COMPARISON WITH THE LEGAL REGIME GOVERNING MARINE TOURISM**Abstract**

Until recently space travel was considered a privilege of governmental astronauts, with the exception perhaps of a few billionaire space tourists, who had been accommodated on the International Space Station on some rare occasions. Nonetheless, with major space pioneers announcing plans for space tourism activities and after the successful launch in orbit of space tourism vehicles from the Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin companies, academic interest about human spaceflight for purposes of leisure and recreation has ignited. Taking into account that space tourism is in fact an unregulated activity, this paper will firstly examine whether space tourism activities fall under the scope of space law or under the scope of international air law, depending on the planned trajectory of the space tourism vehicle. Furthermore, the author will attempt to draw conclusions concerning the legal implications of space tourism activities through a comparative analysis with the 1974 Athens Convention on the Carriage of Passengers and the Carriage of their Luggage by Sea. This international convention provides a great example on the regulation of touristic ventures, as it refers to commercial touristic activities realized within a *res communis omnium*, *i.e.* the high seas, similarly with touristic activities in space. Moreover, said Convention provides for a specialized regime for touristic activities and is of particular interest, since it has achieved stability and a desirable balance of interests between private tourism operators and passengers. In this connection, the author will evaluate the provisions of the 1974 Athens Convention in comparison with the space treaties applicable to space tourism activities. Furthermore, suggestions will be made as to whether it would be appropriate and feasible to introduce in the space law realm certain rules of law similar to those of the 1974 Athens Convention, in order to facilitate growth in the space tourism sector, without compromising the safety of human spaceflight for space passengers.