

## IISL COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E7)

## Launching into Outer Space (4)

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## THE APPROACH TO SPACE PORTS AND LAUNCHES UNDER PORTUGUESE LAW

**Abstract**

The Portuguese law on space activities (Decree-Law 16/2019, of 22 January) was very recently amended to introduce a set of new provisions with relation to access to space activities and, in addition, to foresee a new framework for the licensing of launching centres. With relation to access to space activities, Decree-Law 20/2024, of 2 February, introduced legal amendments aimed to better clarify the scope of application of the law and facilitate licensing, including for constellations of satellites. In this scope, the types of licenses were further detailed: in addition to the individual and blanket license for space operations (including launching), which already existed, the joint license (integrated and multiple) was created, with a view to creating flexibility for operators seeking licensing. A single procedure for obtaining licenses by more than one operator is also now foreseen, as is for space operations carried out abroad by Portuguese operators. Experimental activities were also expressly defined, and benefit from a special licensing framework and from the waiver or reduction of insurance coverage. With relation to launching centres, a new procedure was introduced for licensing their operation, subject to prior approval by the Government. This approach establishes a new vision on space ports in Portugal, representing an evolution of the prior approach focused on a public space port the operation of which would be assumed by a private entity under a concession agreement. This paper explains the main changes to the Portuguese space law, the new framework for launch centers, the steps being taken by Portugal for setting up a space port in the country and the differences with relation to the prior regime. This paper further assesses additional amendments to the space law with relation to topics such as sustainability, the role of the Portuguese Space Agency and the role of the Autonomous Regions. In this respect, analysis is made of the effect of the amendments on the Azores regional legislation that required a regional license for space operations taking place therein, and how such amendments ensure a more streamlined, and national, procedure. The paper concludes with an assessment of the impact of the recent amendments on new means and methods of launching, as well as on such relevant topics as liability and insurance.