

ESPI Executive Brief

Business Facilitators and Happiness in ESA

How senior expertise can be made available to market entrants from countries aspiring to ESA Membership

The two biggest challenges for countries embarking on the path to ESA membership are to make their industry and scientific institutions fit for winning work in tough competition with incumbents from established member states and to make their industry part of the ESA culture.

Business facilitators can help in this, particularly on the cultural side.

There is a wealth of space industry expertise with retirees, and many retirees express an interest in continuing to be involved with space on a ‘hobby’ or part time basis. Many retirees would not want to assist companies that would be in direct competition with the company they served in the past, but could be interested in bringing their expertise to bear in companies that try to break in to the ESA space business. They might do a degree of mentoring in this role, they might serve on the board of such market entrants, and they might give access to their network, without necessarily forcing the market entrant into the arms of their old employer.

The market entrants who could benefit from such business facilitator involvement will typically not be start-ups, but established companies with existing manufacturing and high tech core businesses, who would like to become involved in space as well. They might often not need access to new capital, as a traditional ‘business angel’ or venture capitalist would bring, since these market entrants normally already would have well-established capital sourcing systems. Entering the space business would hence often not lead to equity dilution. What market entrants will be looking for is primarily space market experience, expertise and a useful network.

The collectivity of EU Member States not yet members of ESA might want to consider to create together an association or umbrella organisation which will act as a clearing house for retired senior executives ready to become involved and the market entrants having their sights set on ESA business, alternatively business associations in the countries might get together to create a suitable match-making function.

ESA is doing a lot to assist start-ups wanting to commercialise space technology in non-space contexts. What is mooted here is, in a sense, the inverse. Aspiring ESA Member States could, under their own steam, consider using the facilitator tool to bring space business expertise to non-space companies wanting to expand into the space business when their home-countries become members of ESA.

By the way, one specific tool ESA is using to assist technology transfer is that of incubators. What countries on the road to ESA membership could also do to help industrial involvement in space could be to do something similar and institute incubator programmes in their

countries to ready start-ups for involvement in the space business. This requires investment by the countries but when ESA membership is close this might be one of the most potent tools for achieving happiness in the ESA family!

If you are interested in more information on this topic, please read the ESPI Report reflecting the discussions at the workshop on ESA Enlargement that will be coming out before summer. In this report you will also find ideas for other measures aspiring ESA Member States can undertake in order to ease the process of “rapprochement”.



Mission Statement of ESPI

The European Space Policy Institute (ESPI) provides decision-makers with an informed view on mid-to long-term issues relevant to Europe's space activities. In this context, ESPI acts as an independent platform for developing positions and strategies.

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