

AGENCY

Students expand their horizons with new Space Law training course

08/06/2017 1373 VIEWS 9 LIKES

ESA / Education / ESA Academy

Since the early days of spaceflight 50 years ago, space law has enabled countries and organisations around the world to explore space cooperatively and peacefully. This is a monumental achievement, but one that is often taken for granted. Space law is integral to ESA missions, and as such a group of 22 student scientists and engineers just completed a new training course: Introduction to Space Law.

This pioneering course is a collaboration between ESA's Education Office and the Legal Services Department. It was designed with the idea to empower the students and instill in them an appreciation of inter-disciplinary knowledge and understanding.

From 29 May to 2 June the students completed 11 modules ranging from Core Principles and Concepts of International Law to UN Space Treaties. Thirty-two hours of lectures on space law designed specifically for trainee scientists and engineers were delivered by teleconference and in person by 16 experts from ESA, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO), and the University of Leuven (KUL).

Early on, students learned about how an international legal framework governs space activities from the beginning of a mission until its very end. They came to discover that

— Legal issues in Introduction to Space Law training course

national space laws play an important role in the development of space missions and, more broadly, in the development of the space sector in a country. The students came to appreciate that a space mission is an interdisciplinary endeavour spanning topics beyond science and technology to include national and international policy, funding, and law.

At the end of the week the students had an opportunity to put their new knowledge into practise with a mini-project. They were divided into teams representing different states and held an international negotiation round modelled on the United Nations. They discussed a framework agreement for establishing an open, global space-based UN climate observing system. By applying all that they had learnt, the students performed extremely well!

Upon completion of the course, the students were keen to express their enjoyment of the experience:

"I strongly recommend the ESA Academy's Introduction to Space Law training course! It has been an amazing week, everything was very well organised with super cool facilities and great lecturers. They managed to integrate the law applicable to space operations with the technological aspects of spaceflight in a way which made it very interesting for engineers and scientists alike."

- Danish student from the Technical University of Denmark. [Peter]

"The greatest element of this course was about learning the vastness and complexities of Law. It seems obvious now, but prior to taking this course I hadn't considered all the rules and regulations that must be implemented in order to get a piece of technology in space."

- British student from the University of Bradford. [Liam]

"One of the best experiences ever, even though Law is far away from an engineer's day-to-day work, this course has made me see everything from a very different point of view, and it has helped me grow as a better person and a better engineer."

- Spanish student from the University of Sevilla. [Diego]

"The Space Law workshop is an excellent way for engineers and scientists to step out of their comfort zone and learn how laws and legislation affect the projects they work on. Not only did I learn a lot, I also made tons of friends from all over Europe. This has been the best learning experience of my life!"

- Danish student from the Technical University of Denmark. [Benjamin]

The Introduction to Space Law training course was held at the [ESA Academy's Training and Learning Centre](#) in Belgium.

ESA Academy regularly run training courses, workshops, and events similar to Introduction to Space Law. To find out more, please visit the [Current Opportunities](#) webpage.

For more information about the ESA Academy Training and Learning Programme activities, please contact: esa.academy@esa.int

— Group picture - participants to Introduction to Space Law training course