

AGENCY

Engineering and sciences students dive into Space Law thanks to ESA Academy Programme

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ESA's Education Office recently teamed up with ESA's Legal Services Department to run the second edition of the Introduction to Space Law Training Course. From 17 to 21 June 2019, 30 university students from 13 different [ESA Member States and Canada](#) attended the training course, hosted at the [ESA Academy's Training and Learning Facility](#), ESEC-Galaxia, Belgium.

The goal of the training course was to provide future scientists and engineers with an introduction to laws applicable to space activities. Why is it necessary to regulate spaceflight, and how does space law apply in a practical sense to actual missions? Delivered by ESA specialists and external experts, it was designed to be a comprehensive overview that would serve the students well in their future careers.

"This training course has taught me what it takes to understand and apply international law and space law from the perspective of an engineer, introducing me to a different, legal, mindset that I was not familiar with before. Initially, I was not sure to what extent Space Law was applicable to engineers, but after taking this course I have come to view it as an essential part of my engineering repertoire." explained a Dutch student from the Delft University of Technology.

The training course got off to a strong start with lectures on the wider context of space law and how it relates to space projects. Fundamental legal notions, such as the status of

— Getting a first taste of Space Law

launching states, along with the concept of sovereignty and responsibility, were presented. The students also seized the opportunity to visit ESEC-Redu and tour the PROBA Control Room. *"This week was a fantastic combination of Space, Law and fun,"* said a Portuguese student from the Instituto Superior Técnico. *"It was a life-changing experience and I am sure I will take it with me for the rest of my life. Everyone should experience it at least once in their lives."*

The following days were filled with fascinating discussions. The students learnt about national space law, how it is built from scratch, and the implications it has for scientists and engineers. The framework for the International Space Station was used as a real-life example of international space laws and cooperation. It was explained that national and international space laws can sometimes influence each other, and even come into conflict.

The lifecycles of space missions were examined from a legal perspective. From the authorisation process to start a spacecraft design to the use of satellites in orbit, every part of a space mission has legal aspects to consider. The students also found out about military and security considerations in space law and how these can affect missions. Certain hot topics, including [space debris](#), [CubeSats](#), and [mega-constellations](#) were also analysed.

— Group Picture with certificates

The students were then challenged to demonstrate their newfound knowledge with a mini UN Council simulation! Divided into teams of three, the students represented

different countries. Their task was to negotiate a proposal on a possible Climate Change Observing System. However, each team had its own secret objectives to achieve before and during the negotiations, which certainly added to the sense of realism! The students debated through three intense hours in an attempt to come to an agreement and sign the treaty. Ultimately, signatures were not obtained – although the teams did commit to a public declaration on the content of a future treaty! The trainers were suitably impressed by the students' conduct, and evaluated them in order to award grades for course transcripts. This document, in conjunction with certificates of participation, will allow the students to claim [ECTS credit\(s\)](#) from their universities.