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Author: Mr. Cornelis Eldering  
European Space Agency (ESA), The Netherlands, niels.eldering@esa.int

Dr. Willem Hulsink  
Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands, whulsink@rsm.nl

THE CREATION OF AN EXTENSIVE PAN-EUROPEAN NETWORK OF TECHNOLOGY-BASED  
BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTERS BY THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

**Abstract**

Space research and the development of space technologies began decades ago in the domain of mission-based science where fundamental and new multi-disciplinary research is used to meet challenges that have not yet been realized, such as travelling to the International Space Station. The European Space Agency (ESA) not only procures space technology and infrastructure, but also provides access to those technologies and infrastructure with the aim for businesses to commercialise market-proven applications in non-space sectors. Besides well-established industry, also start-up entrepreneurs reap the benefits of space-based research and development. To service these start-ups, ESA has established a pan-European network of Business Incubation Centers (ESA BICs). All ESA BICs are stemming from the same space-industrial procurement practices ESA employs. This explains the uniformity in operational procedures amongst all the ESA BICs. At the same time, all ESA BICs have a strong focus on local entrepreneurs and resources. They are part of a regional economic development strategy and are operated by local partners. In this paper, we explore the history, lessons learned and procurement principles that have shaped the basis of ESA's incubation approach and its set-up as a framework that can be replicated across Europe and the world.