ESA's SME Policy and Initiative

ESA Industry Space Days 2026

17/09/2026

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

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The SME Office

Who we are

- The SME Office is part of the ESA's Directorate of Controlling, Finance and Operational Procurement (CFO)

What we do

- The Office implements and manages the SME Policy adopted by Member States, and coordinates its activities with other institutional actors, such as the national space agencies

What are our objectives

- To facilitate the involvement of SMEs, including start-ups and newcomers, in the research and development activities of the Agency
- To address problems that are traditionally faced by SMEs (sustainability, viability, access to programmes, visibility, proper and timely information, etc)

ESA's industrial policy

About 85% of ESA's budget is spent on contracts with European industry.

ESA's industrial policy:

- Ensures that Member States get a **fair return** on their investment;
- Improves **competitiveness** of European industry;
- **Maintains and develops space technology**;
- Exploits the advantages of **open competitive bidding**, except where incompatible with objectives of the industrial policy;
- Encourages the **development of an industrial structure** appropriate to market requirements, making use of existing industrial potential of all Member States

ESAs SME Policy

The ESA SME Policy is a central element of the Agency's industrial policy and aims at facilitating the involvement of SMEs in the activities of the Agency and their integration in the European supply chain:

Training

Training of SME on all aspects concerning Business with ESA delivered through a centralised platform offering tailored training, guidance and resources with about 6000 users.

Matchmaking

Supporting networking and visibility of SME through a dynamic matchmaking tool connecting companies (17000) with potential partners. Events such as the biannual Industry Space Days (2300 participants).

Support Measures

Various procurement and Industrial Policy measures supporting the inclusion of SME in ESA procurements and their viability (Reserved SME share, SME Clauses (C1-C4), Advance Payments, Model Subcontract, etc.)

Dialogue

The SME Forum and cooperation with SME Industry associations provide structured channels for dialogue with the SMEs and the issues affecting their space business.

Industry Knowledge

Insight in the industry working with ESA and analysis of their involvement & economic evolution.

SME Section

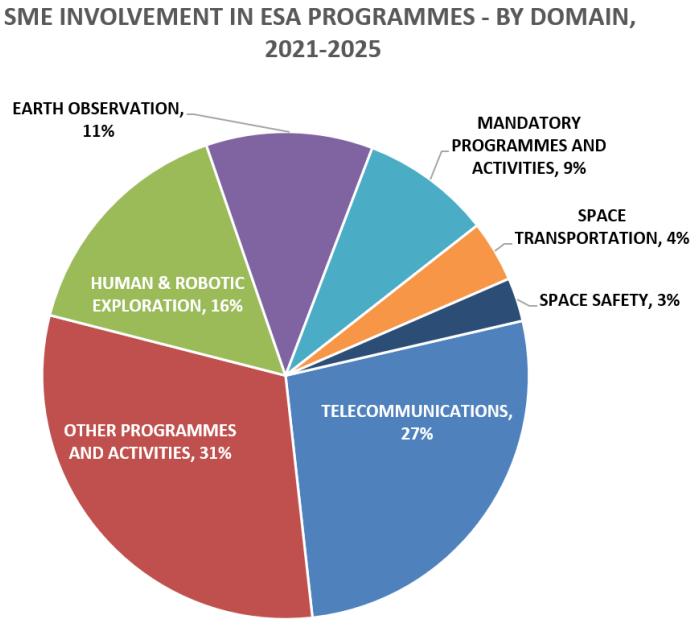
Focal point and help-desk for all SME

SME industrial landscape @ESA

- Seen over the last five years[2] the 1753 SME working with ESA
  - represent about 32% of the +5400 contracted companies,
  - are involved in more than 38% of all the contracts placed,
  - receiving about 13% of the corresponding commitments and
  - are active in all domains of ESA's activities

- Since 2015 the number of SME working with ESA has increased by 53%

- In 2024 about **2000** SME working with ESA and the EU[3]
  - together had an annual turnover (Space & Non-Space) of **5,4B€**
  - with a total of **39151** employees with **51% of the space SME** being **Micro-SME**
  - 25% of these SME have been founded since 2019



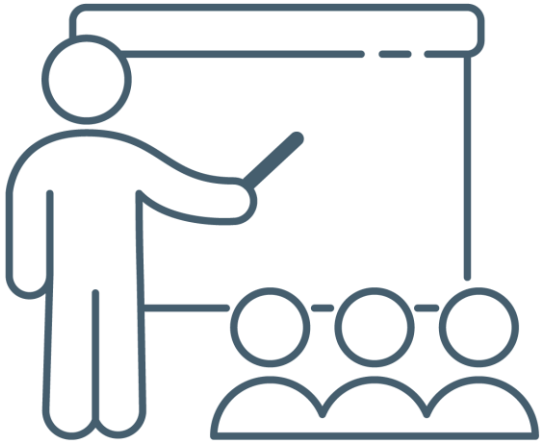
[1] EC Recommendation 2003/361/EG 06/052003
[2] ESA Commitments 2021-2025 as per Q4-25,
[3] Annual joined analysis ESA, SME4SPACE & KU Leuven

Relations with Industry

The SME Office interacts with SME and SME Associations in areas such as:

- SME Help-desk: information on available support and all matters related to business with ESA
- Networking and visibility events for SME such as the ISD
- SME Forum: Annual consultation process open to all SME and their associations to share their views and give feedback about topics which affect their work in the space sector.
- Cooperation with SME4SPACE to support the SME Office (and other ESA services) concerning training, analyses and surveys of the SME industrial landscape as well as support to networking, communication and outreach to SME community, e.g:
    - Consultation and surveys: Training needs, Access to Finance, COVID-19, SME Forum, Future of Work, Profit policy, Export .....
    - Annual study SME Office, SME4SPACE, KUL: Economic importance and financial health of SMEs in the European space industry, see IAC 68054
- and consultations with industry associations such as AKRK and YEES

Training



R&D Proposal Writing

Product Assurance in ESA Projects

EEE Components Procurement

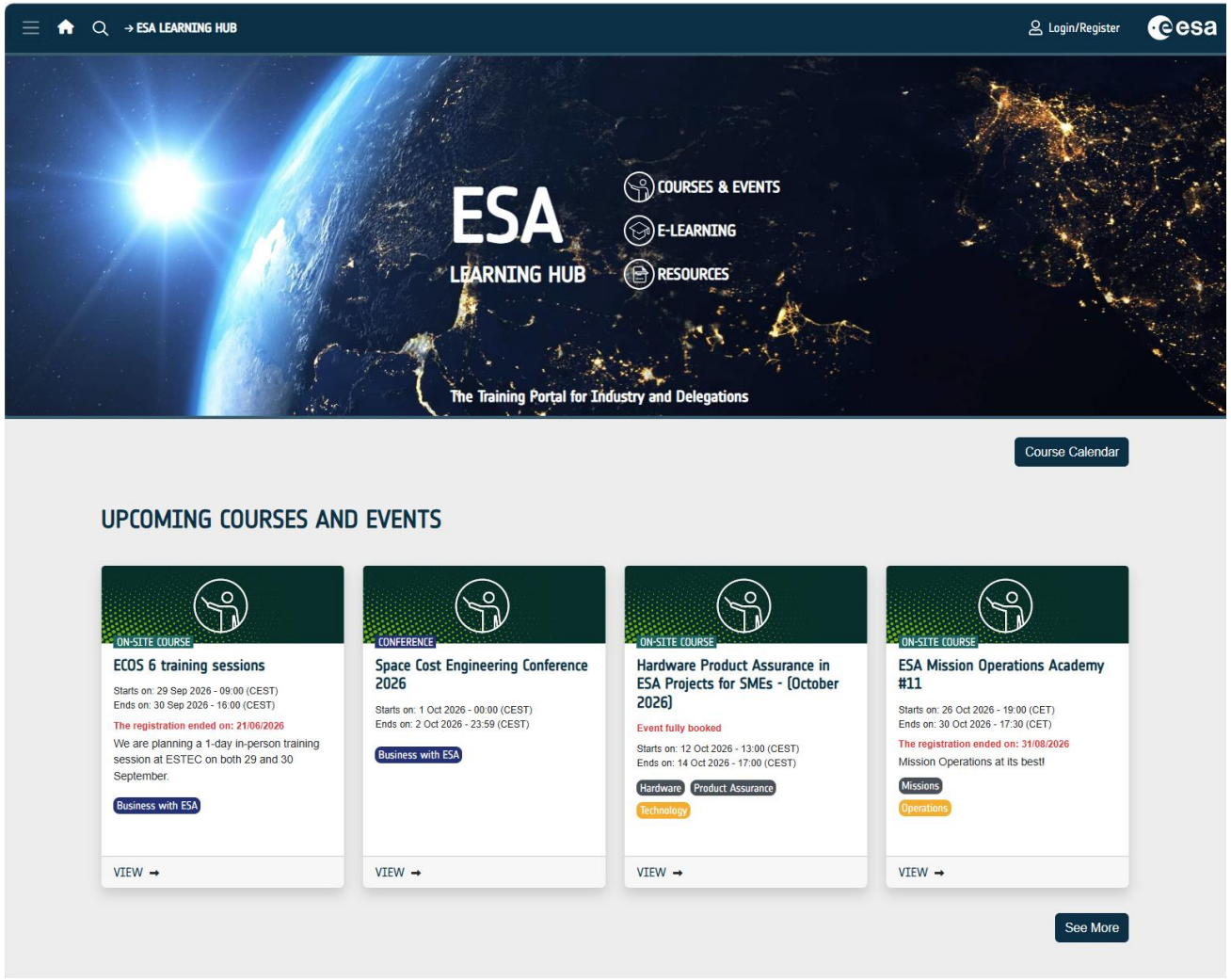
ECSS

Compliant Industrial Rates

PSS Forms

IP&Patents

and many more



https://learninghub.esa.int

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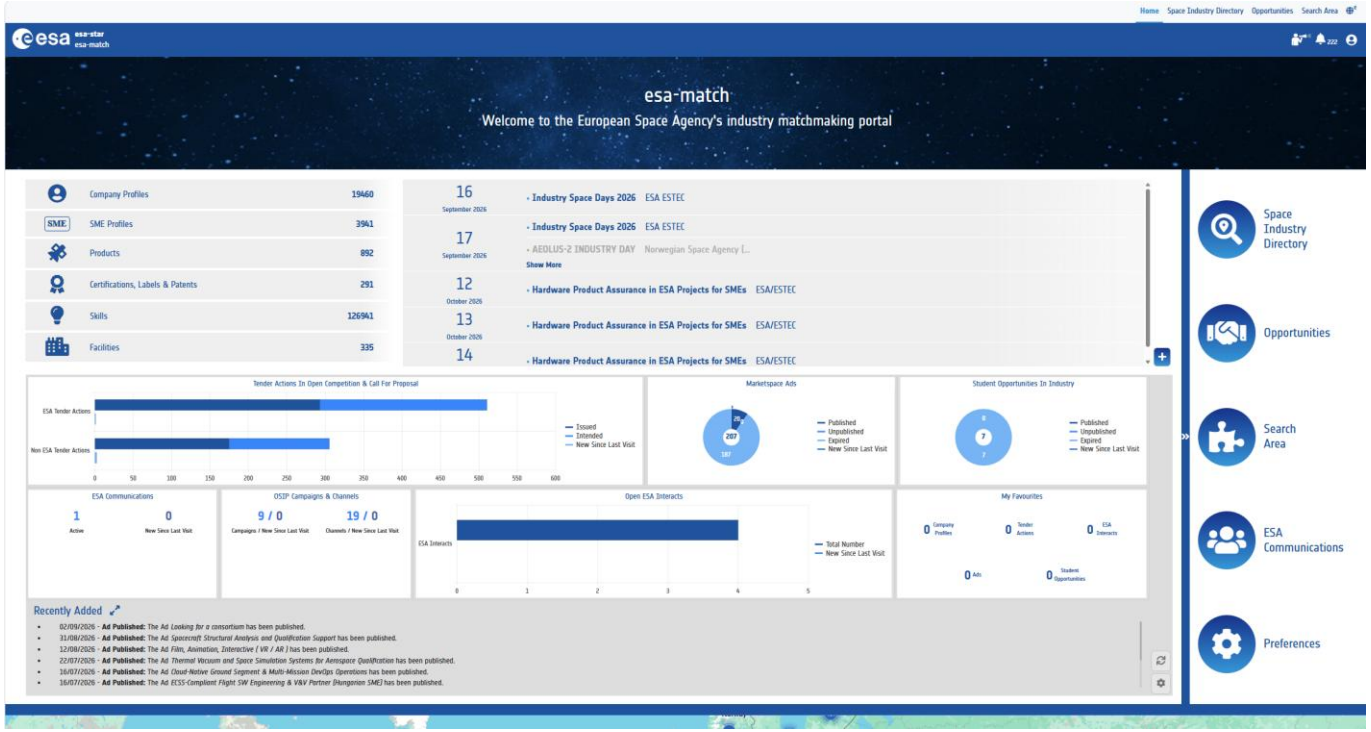
esa-match is the Agency's industry **matchmaking tool**

Main objectives:

- support entities in their **networking and visibility efforts** and help them **showcase their products, services and experience**;
- **facilitate partnering, teaming and cooperation between companies,** especially SMEs, and key partners and customers;
- **bring together (potentially unknown) products or services and (latent) needs**;
- help entities to become involved in **ESA programmes** and **develop their space business;**
- serve as **single point of information** for business **opportunities**.



Learn more at: https://match.esa.int/

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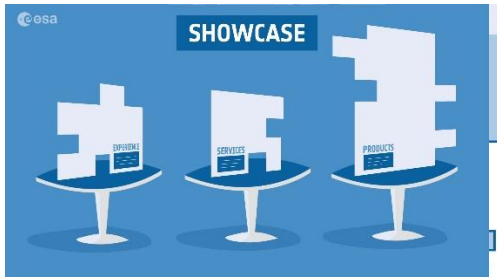
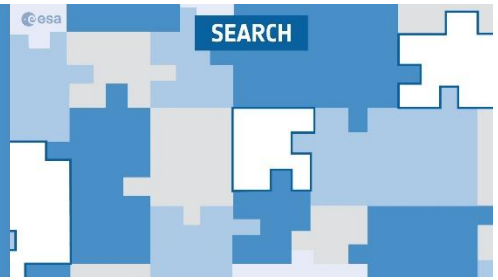
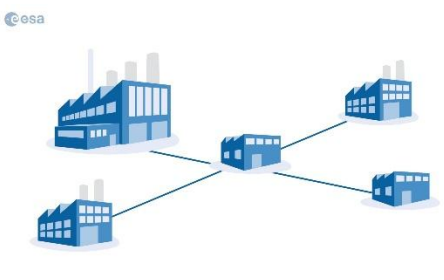
esa-match: BENEFITS – why you should use the tool

- esa-match users (including ESA employees and LSIs) use esa-match to find information about company **competences and capabilities**;
- The public part of esa-match lets you **showcase your entity's competences and capabilities openly to a global audience** in an ESA-operated system;
- The system lets you **communicate directly with potential partners** through build-in features;
- It **facilitates your own search** of potential collaborators, products and services;
- The system is **integrated with other ESA applications**, gathering interesting information in one place.







esa-match: FEATURES

Dashboard

Customisable view of the homepage to show useful information (new tender actions since last visit, views of profile by other entities, and many more)

Space Industry Directory

List of all registered entities with ESA (from MS, AS, CS) with many filtering options

Entity profile pages

For entities to introduce themselves and present their products, services and capabilities

B2B Area

Private virtual room to communicate with other esa-match entities

Opportunities

Marketspace: Area to place ads to look for partners and collaborators. It also lets entities react to ads and communicate with others

Student Opportunities in Industry: Area to place ads to look for interns, trainees or thesis students

Tenders Area: Area to access to ESA and non-ESA tender actions in open competition and information about potential partners

ESA Interacts: Access to “ESA Interacts” published via esa-star Publication

OSIP Campaigns & Channels: Access to available OSIP Campaigns & Channels

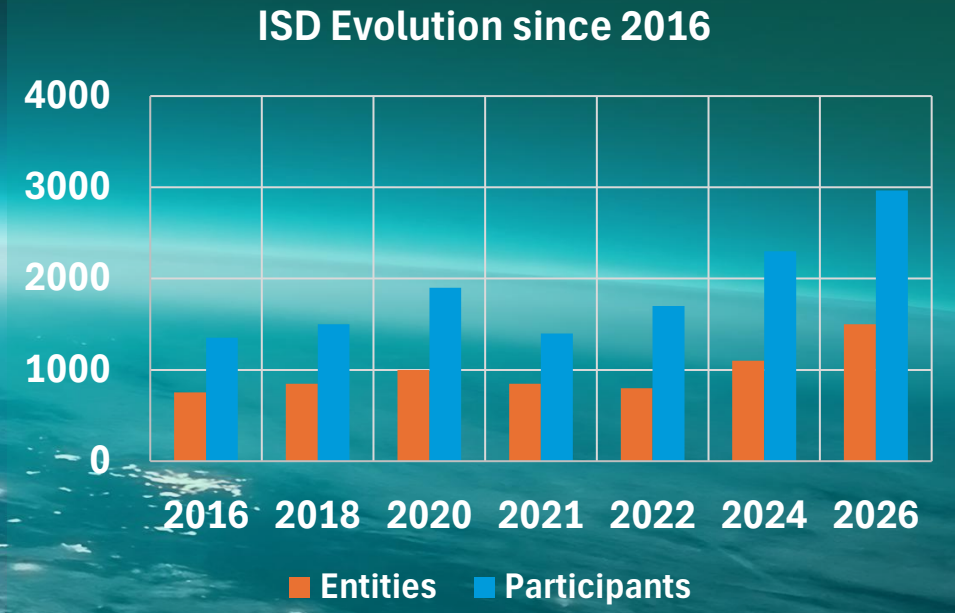
Programme Overview: Overview of selected ESA programmes

ESA Industry Space Days

The Industry Space Days are a key instrument of ESA's industrial and SME policy, bringing together the full European space value chain to facilitate partnerships, improve the visibility and integration of SMEs and newcomers, and connect industry with ESA's future programmes and business opportunities

Main elements:

- **B2B meetings** (industry/industry and ESA/industry)
- **Industry exhibition and** space for ESA, LSI and other primes
- **Conference presentations** covering (ESA) business opportunities, space perspectives and market trends



Interest in the ISD has increased sine 2026 by more than 200%

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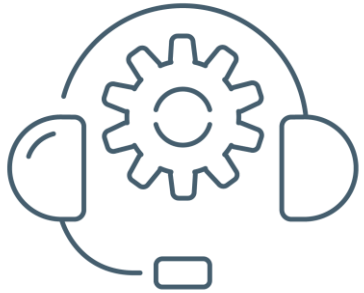
Information for SMEs

- SME Newsletter: ESA Newsletters Subscription page
- SME Portal: www.esa.int/sme
- esa-match: https://match.esa.int/
- LinkedIn: Business with ESA
- ESA Learning Hub: https://learninghub.esa.int/

- SME Office **Helpdesk** sme-office@esa.int
- See us in the ESA Village: Booth C39
- Next **ISD** will take place in **September 2028**



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THANK YOU!

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