

The ESA European Centre for Space Law in Paris – The National Point of Contact Austria

For many years Austria has shown a great commitment to contribute to the space sector, both through high technology companies and the traditionally strong involvement in the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, i.e., the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) is located in Vienna. Despite this variety within the »Austrian space sector« one field has never managed to »step into the light« so far: space law in a university context.

So it was on the initiative of Dr. Gabriel Lafferanderie, former legal advisor of the European Space Agency (ESA, Paris) and now the chairman of the European Centre for Space Law (ECSL, Paris) and Mag. Eva-Maria Schmitzer (Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology), that so called *National Point of Contact Austria* was established at the University of Graz. After a preparation period of nearly one year, I agreed to take over this position in 2001 and in 2003 I became a member of the ECSL board.

The activities of the NPOC are to promote space law and space law issues, maintaining contacts to industries, research institutions and organisations in the field of space, promoting space law teaching at university level (i.e., since winter term of 2005 we have had a course *Space Law*), organising or co-organising conferences, discussions, events dealing with space law issues etc.

In summer 2004, for example, we organised the 13th *ECSL Summer Course on Space Law and Policy* in cooperation with the ECSL at the University of Graz. This was a two-week intensive course with about 50 students from all European countries. In 2004, our intention was

to motivate and invite students especially from Central and South-Eastern Europe and we were very happy to have students from Poland, the Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, Kazakhstan, Albania, Estonia and Lithuania.

In 2005, we organised a symposium titled *Space Flight & Law* at the University of Graz where we tried to light up different space and space law related issues (i.e., rocket launches, space exploration, communication via space, etc.) from both parts – the technical/economical and the legal aspect. A highlight in the programme was the only Austrian space traveller Franz Viehböck, who gave us a very exciting and interesting report on his space flight on the MIR in 1991.

In 2007, we are going to organise the Moot Court (European rounds) on Space Law and Policy at the University of Graz.

The National Point of Contact Austria in cooperation with the European Centre for Space Law is organising an NPOCs General Meeting and a conference titled *National Space Law – Developments in Europe/Challenges for Small Countries*. The event is going to take place at the University of Graz from September 21st to 22nd, 2006. The official language of the event is going to be English. We would like to invite speakers from the countries that already have a national space law and speakers from the new EU-member states/candidates.

The first objective of the NPOCs General Meeting is the personal contact between the existing NPOCs and its members.

Due to the fact that the NPOC Austria is entrusted by the board of ECSL to be the reference point for Central and Eastern Europe, the second objective is to invite representatives of EU-new-member-states and -candidates, especially from the ESA European Cooperating States Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania, furthermore from Croatia. We would appreciate it very much if in one or all of these states first steps could be taken to found an NPOC.

The third objective of the meeting is to discuss a current space law topic. One of these topics is the necessity for the development of national space law. Several perspectives for the development of national space law are going to be examined, namely the perspective of international law and the perspective of a space agency. Furthermore, the state of the art of space development in the European Union and its implication for the development of national space law are going to be

discussed. Against this general background recent trends are going to be analyzed. Exemplary, the situation in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium, France, Germany etc. is going to be presented. Supplementary, representatives, especially from European Cooperating States, are going to talk about their perspectives concerning national space law.

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