

Space Sustainability: Bridging Initiatives and Perspectives

When: Thursday, March 27, 2025 to Friday, March 28, 2025

Where: Lausanne, Switzerland

Agenda Outline and Concept (as of Feb 4, 2025)

Context:

2025 marks a pivotal year for space sustainability discussions, with several major events including the biennial ESA Space Debris Conference and the Summit for Space Sustainability. In this context, this workshop aims to bridge various ongoing initiatives and perspectives in the field of space sustainability. While building on educational foundations like the EPFL Space Sustainability course, the focus of this workshop is on addressing the critical challenges of space as a finite resource, including orbital congestion and collision risks, through a multi-stakeholder approach to sustainable practices.

Overview:

This collaborative one-and-a-half-day workshop is co-organized with the Secure World Foundation, the EU COST network FOGOS, and in partnership with the ITU, the Swiss Foreign Affairs, and the ERC project PlanetStewards. It will convene experts, policymakers, and social scientists to conduct a comprehensive analysis of existing space sustainability capacity-building initiatives. The event aims to evaluate current approaches, identifying where they complement each other and where gaps exist, while introducing fresh perspectives to advance the field. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, the workshop seeks to strengthen the connection between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation in space sustainability.

Objectives

1. Evaluate and compare existing capacity building initiatives
2. Identify synergies and gaps in current approaches
3. Incorporate social science approaches to the assessment of space sustainability
4. Develop recommendations for future capacity building efforts

Expected Outcomes

1. Bridge between academic learning and practical initiatives in space sustainability
2. Identification of best practices and novel insights from interdisciplinary perspectives
3. Review of barriers and opportunities in information sharing around specific space sustainability issues, and synthesis of findings in draft outline for policy paper

Workshop Structure

(preliminary as of Feb 4, 2025, specific session timings and topics will be updated)

Day 1 – Thursday 27th March: 14h00-18h00

Session 1: Stakeholder Mapping

The workshop will begin with a stakeholder mapping exercise, focusing on identifying the different meanings and approaches to sustainability among different stakeholder types, including from the local to national, regional, and inter-governmental. The mapping of these differences provides an overview of where conflicts or convergence may arise in the realm of policymaking in view of the various versions of space sustainability. The stakeholder mapping will as input to discussions on the second/main day of the workshop, highlighting the challenges in achieving a more inclusive approach to space sustainability addressing peace, equity, and environmental concerns.

Day 2 – Friday 28th March: 09h00-17h00

Session 2: From Theory to Practice

This session will begin with a set of presentations on several featured initiatives each focused on enhancing space sustainability capacity in one or more dimensions. These presentations will be followed by interactive discussion on applying concepts to real-world initiatives.

Lunch

Session 3: Barriers and Opportunities in Info sharing for Space Sustainability

In-order to make progress on addressing specific space sustainability challenges, improved information sharing practices are necessary. Drawing on the stakeholder mapping conducted in the prior day this session would discuss perspectives on information sharing needs and challenges in two specific areas of space sustainability effort:

- Improving Space Traffic Coordination
- Environmental Impacts of Space Activities (including Life-Cycle Assessment and other methodologies)

Discussion would consider what might incentivize actors (both governmental and nongovernmental) to increase information sharing in these two areas of sustainability efforts, what might discourage them from doing so, the kind of purposes to be served through information sharing, and the principles that underpin these coordination or assessment efforts (e.g. sustainable for whom). Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, the discussion will also consider the differences between "data" and "info" sharing in this context (e.g. under which conditions should data become useful, actionable, and accessible due to ethical obligations). It would furthermore explore how the types of products and initiatives discussed in the prior sessions can be most useful in addressing these specific challenges.

Coffee Break

Session 4 : Synthesis and Recommendations

Collaborative development of key findings and recommendations.

This event is based upon work from COST Action < FOGOS, CA CA23118 >, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.