European Space Sciences Committee (ESSC)

The European Space Sciences Committee, established in 1975, grew out of the need for a collaborative effort that would ensure European space scientists made their voices heard on the other side of the Atlantic. More than 30 years later the ESSC has become even more relevant today as it acts as an interface with the European Space Agency (ESA), the European Commission, national space agencies, and ESF Member Organisations on space-related aspects. The mission of the ESSC is to provide an independent European voice on European space research and policy.

The ESSC is non-governmental and provides an independent forum for scientists to debate space sciences issues. It is represented ex officio in ESA’s scientific advisory bodies, in ESA’s High-level Science Policy Advisory Committee advising its Director General, in the EC’s FP7 Space Advisory Group, and it holds an observer status in ESA’s Ministerial Councils. At the international level, ESSC maintains strong relationships with the NRC’s Space Studies Board in the U.S., and corresponding bodies in Japan and China.
Note

This document is intended to describe the structure and modus operandi of the ESSC-ESF. It complements the formal ESSC Terms of Reference (see appendix) and describes in greater detail the various actors of the ESSC (i.e. ESSC members, ESF, and ESSC Funding Organisations), their role, responsibilities and duties with regard to the position taken by, and activities of, the ESSC. It presents their working principles, as well as the interfaces existing between them.

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1 ESSC Mission

The mission of the ESSC is to “provide an independent voice on European space research and policy”. The ESSC is an integral part of the ESF. It is the ESF’s Expert Board dealing with space sciences, and its interface with ESA, the European Commission, and national agencies on space science related issues.

The ESSC Strategic Plan 2007-2010 bases the activity of the Committee on the following three pillars:

- underlining the role of space sciences and technology developments as basic pillars of the European space venture;
- supporting European visibility and advising for a role of Europe in global space initiatives;
- regularly assessing the status and perspectives of European space activities

To carry out these overarching tasks, the Committee, in coherence with the ESF, shall:

- monitor, review, and produce independent advice on space sciences and related research and technology;
- facilitate the definition and the organisation of space research programmes at the European level;
- encourage the coordination of space research and related technology and applications by providing adequate discussion forums;
- promote space sciences related activities and increase public awareness of these fields at the European and international level.

In the pursuit of these tasks, the ESSC seeks interaction with the major bodies and supranational entities at the European and world levels, in particular with the European Space Agency (ESA) and with appropriate institutions of the European Union such as the European Commission (EC) or national space agencies. The ESSC shall also seek interaction and establish partnerships with bodies outside Europe, e.g. with the Space Studies Board in the USA, or similar bodies in Japan, China, India.

The ESSC profiles its work and that of its Funding Organisations and of ESF through a range of backward- and forward-looking scientific evaluations, conferences, publications, and online communications.

The Committee is supported by the ESF Space Sciences Unit, whose ESSC-related activities are entirely financed by the ESSC Funding Organisations. The Secretariat was based in Illkirch (France) between 1994 and 2004; the space sciences unit is located since 2005 in the ESF Headquarters in Strasbourg. It provides ESSC and its sponsors with a high quality service in support of the objectives of the Committee.

The ESF provides the legal entity to ESSC, which includes professional management support on financial, contractual, human resources, communication, administration, IT, and legal matters. In return, the ESSC pays overheads to the ESF.

Each year, the ESSC provisional budget is prepared by the Head of Unit, and approved by the Committee and by the ESF. The Head of Unit also reports on the expenditures of the previous year. The finance office of the ESF provides the audited accounts.
2 ESSC Members

An ESSC Member must be a scientist of international stature and recognition within the community, with substantial research experience in one of the areas of space sciences. Scientific excellence is thus the essential criterion determining membership in the ESSC.

ESSC members are appointed ad personam and thus are not national representatives. However individual ESSC members are required to maintain close contacts with the institution(s) supporting the ESSC in their countries, brief them on the progress in the activities of the Committee, and report back to the ESSC on specific requests or suggestions emanating from the EFOs.

ESSC must not be a biased space lobbying organisation and should only promote the use of space where space is best used for science. To this end members should be selected and recruited only for their high scientific expertise as well as visibility in national agencies and community. A formal bias and conflict procedure has been set in place so that members can have an open discussion on potential biases and conflicts between some of their individual activities or declared positions, and the tasks of, or positions taken by, the ESSC, e.g. qualifications and background useful to the committee in addressing its task; current involvement in space projects; sources of funding; affiliations with bodies towards which the ESSC has, or may have, an advisory role. The goal is to create an environment which will prevent any appearance of bias by the committee when it produces recommendations or position papers.

ESSC members are expected to attend the two annual plenary meetings and participate to the deliberations taking place in plenary sessions as well as in their disciplinary panels. Members are required to openly debate the issues put forth on the agendas of these meetings and collectively agree on conclusions and/or recommendations. Approved ESSC reports convey the collective wisdom and advice of all ESSC members.

Between plenary meetings ESSC members are expected to support Committee-related requests and enquiries by the ESSC Chair, Core Group, or ESSC Office. In particular ESSC members can be invited to play an active role in the peer-reviews that the Committee may be asked to perform, from ESA or other institutions.

3 Membership renewal procedure

ESSC members are appointed by the ESF for a 3-year term, renewable once upon proposal of the Chair and Core Group. The following membership renewal procedure has been agreed with the ESF and the ESSC Funding Organisations.

Search and proposition of candidates

The Committee members are appointed for a 3-year term, renewable once for another 3-year period upon proposition of the Chairperson or the Core Group. Approximately one-third of the members should be rotated every year. In due time before the envisaged appointment of new Committee Members by the ESF (i.e. not less than four months in advance), the ESSC Chairperson/Executive Scientific Secretary prepares a list of required disciplinary fields for which new members are needed, along with suggestions of geographical distribution and gender balance for these fields. The ESSC will then provide
suggestions for each of these fields, with replacements. Until nomination by the ESF Governing Council, this process is confidential.

Consultation with ESSC Funding Organisations and related bodies

The ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary informs the contact persons in the ESSC Funding Organisations (EFOs) of these needs, asking for a timely response. EFOs are entitled to make alternative or additional suggestions regarding the proposed geographical distribution. The ESSC will then propose its new members chosen from this pool of names. In the event of disagreement, the ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary mediates an alternative proposition which must find the support of the ESSC-ESF and of its EFOs.

Appointment of the new Committee Members

Upon the positive conclusion of this consultation action, the ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary officially informs the new Committee Members of their nominations. After agreement by the selected candidates, the ESF Governing Council is then asked to approve their nominations. The ESF Head of Unit for Space Sciences, together with the ESSC Chairperson, informs ESSC, ESF and ESSC Funding Organisations of these appointments.

4 ESSC Plenary Meetings

The ESSC normally meets twice a year in plenary meetings. The agendas of plenary meetings are proposed by the Chair, in consultation with the Core Group. Major and strategic decisions are taken there by consensus or voting, e.g. agreeing on such actions as:

- setting up of ad hoc working groups or steering committees;
- approval of publications and position papers;
- endorsement of the Chair and Office reports and budgetary issues;
- participation in external contracts.

The plenary meeting’s discussions and decisions are summarised in the plenary meeting minutes issued by the ESSC Office after approval by the Chair, commented on and formally approved by the ESSC members at the subsequent plenary meeting or by correspondence.

Representatives of ESA, of the EC, of national space agencies or appropriate national institutions, and of international partners can be invited to attend the meetings of the ESSC. The Committee may invite experts and representatives of relevant organisations to assist in their deliberations and activities, on a case by case basis. Guests are normally excluded from executive sessions.

5 ESSC Funding Organisations (EFOs)

The ESSC Funding Organisations (EFOs) are major national or Europe-wide space scientific institutes and/or space agencies and/or research performing or research funding councils. EFOs are not limited to ESF Member Organisations. Each EFO nominates a representative to serve as liaison to the ESSC.

Due to the specific nature of the ESSC where members are appointed ad personam, EFOs are not formal members of the ESSC. Nevertheless, continued interaction between ESSC and its (EFOs) is actively sought and supported through annual meetings, ad hoc visits, invitations to plenary meetings, or any other opportunities for exchange (web, ad hoc
forums, etc). ESSC can support the development of EFO strategies and both parties can work together to integrate European national research councils and space agencies’ strategic interest in all domains of space (science & technology). Through ESSC an independent collective vision on Europe’s space research can emerge, in full connection with national priorities, e.g. through strategic/disciplinary surveys. EFOs can pool to suggest activity topics to ESSC. In particular the membership renewal process and the search for a new Chairperson are carried out in close consultation with EFOs.

The EFOs annually contribute the funds for the financing of the ESSC’s activities and the running costs of the ESSC Office according to a scale of contributions approved by the ESSC and the ESF, and normally based on the country’s civilian space budget. As appropriate, the Committee may explore access to other sources of funding. The calls for contributions are sent by the ESF in the spring of each year and payment is expected before the end of the calendar year. The Committee and ESF can propose to establish bilateral agreements and/or Memorandums of Understanding in consultation with the EFOs. Should an EFO wish to withdraw its contribution to the ESSC as of year N, notice of withdrawal should reach the Head of the ESF Space Sciences Unit prior to 30 September of year N-1.

The ESSC being funded through organisations that are not necessarily ESF Member Organisations, major decisions concerning the life of the Committee such as financial planning or staff-related aspects do not depend solely on ESF decisions but must include appropriate consultation of the relevant EFOs.

6 Committee structure – Panels and Core Group

The ESSC disciplinary panels are the primary foresight and priority setting mechanism of the ESSC. The ESSC establishes and regularly reviews the adequacy of its panel structure. As of 11 January 2008 the ESSC has four such panels, dealing with:

- **Astronomy and fundamental physics – AFP.** This panel covers the areas of stellar physics and exoplanets; galactic astronomy; star formation and interstellar medium; cosmology and high-energy astrophysics; fundamental physics and astroparticles;
- **Earth sciences – ESP.** This panel covers the domains of atmospheric physics and chemistry; solid Earth; oceanography and continental interfaces; glaciology and cryosphere; biosphere and land; GMES and disaster management; space policy and law;
- **Research in weightlessness – RWP.** This panel covers all of life and physical sciences in space, i.e. material sciences; fluid physics and complex plasmas; fundamental physics in space; dust physics; biology; physiology and neurophysiology;
- **Solar system and exploration – SSEP.** This panel deals with Earth and space physics; solar and heliospheric physics; planetary sciences, moons and small bodies; exobiology.

The panels meet in splinter sessions during ESSC plenary meetings, or on specific occasions after agreement by the Chair and Executive Scientific Secretary. The panel meetings are led by panel Chairs, appointed by the ESSC Chair. The panel Chairs constitute the ESSC Core Group, whose task is to support the ESSC Chair between plenary meetings. The Core Group is convened by the ESSC Chair, normally twice a year.
In addition the ESSC may decide to establish ad hoc working groups on subjects which are considered by its members or EFOs to be of strategic importance for space sciences but have yet to be addressed properly or lacking visibility.

7 ESSC Chairperson

The ESSC Chair is responsible for the vision and leadership of the Committee. Working with the Executive Scientific Secretary, they both represent the Committee externally and foster close collaborative relationships with other institutions, agencies and policy makers nationally and internationally.

With the assistance of the Executive Scientific Secretary, the ESSC Chair is responsible for ensuring that the ESSC members receive accurate, timely and clear information, in particular to enable the Committee to take sound decisions in order to promote the success of its activities. The ESSC Chair presides over meetings of the Committee and Core Group and:

- ensures their smooth running, keeping order, and ensuring that sufficient time is given to consider critical issues and successful completion of business;
- ensures that discussion points are relevant to the agenda;
- approves reports of meetings chaired and endorses plenary meeting agendas;
- discusses options and issues;
- provides insight regarding external developments.

The ESSC has a unique role to play on the European space scene, recognised by all of its actors. The ESSC Chair thus participates in European and international forums with a very high visibility, sits ex officio in a number of advisory bodies of ESA and EC, and is the ESF observer and “speaker for science” in the ESA Councils at ministerial level, together with the ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary.

Finally the ESSC Chair advises the ESF (and therefore European research councils and academies) on space science related matters. In particular the ESSC Chair attends regular meetings of ESF Committee Chairs, convened by the ESF Chief Executive or the ESF Director of Science and Strategy.

The ESSC Chair should therefore be a respected, senior and very experienced scientist of international stature and recognition in one of the areas of space research, being able to combine strong personal views with a preparedness to take advice from others. The ESSC Chair should be able to combine views across the many different space science disciplines and the ability to facilitate effective decision making. The ESSC Chair should have sufficient time to dedicate to this activity and be capable of “selling” the ESSC vision and ideals to decision-makers at the highest level.

8 ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary

The Committee is managed on a daily basis by an Executive Scientific Secretary who supports the ESSC Chairperson and the Committee in all aspects of its work. The ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary is the Head of the ESF Space Sciences Unit, who is part of the senior management of ESF and thus also reports to his/her hierarchy on the objectives and achievements of the Committee. ESF must consult the Committee and the relevant EFOs on contractual decisions concerning the Executive Scientific Secretary.
The ESSC Chairperson can delegate specific tasks to the ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary. The Executive Scientific Secretary participates to and supports the Core Group meetings.

The Executive Scientific Secretary manages all aspects of the Committee work and activities, in particular, but not limited to:

- management of the ESF Space Sciences Unit
  o financial planning and budget management
  o staff recruitment and supervision
  o reporting to ESF and cross-ESF unit activities
  o participation to the ESF senior management structure
  o management of approved ESF instruments relevant for the space community;
- strategy definition and monitoring of initiatives relevant to the Committee charge
- activity planning and brainstorming on future activities
- evaluation and review
- external relations
- report drafting and publication
- participation to all meetings relevant to the Committee charge and activities
- support to the ESSC Chair, Core Group and members

The ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary should therefore be a recognised and experienced scientist of international stature and recognition in one of the areas of space research, with practical knowledge of the other areas. He/she should have sufficient experience in science management and should be autonomous and creative. The ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary should also be capable of “selling” the ESSC vision and ideals to decision-makers at the highest level.

9 ESSC Office in ESF

The ESF Space Sciences Unit is the ESSC supporting office. This office is in charge of overall coordination and management of the ESSC and supports the activities recommended by the Committee, in full compliance with the ESF rules and practices. The Office carries out and implements the decisions taken at plenary meetings and Core Group Meetings; furthermore it is pro-active with regard to addressing relevant matters occurring between meetings.

Reporting directly to the Head of the ESF Space Sciences Unit, the Office is responsible for serving as the principal focal point for ESSC Chair, panel Chairs, ESSC members, and EFOS.

As a continuous task the ESSC Office has the key role of monitoring space research developments, keeping abreast of developments at national, European and global levels. In this context, the Office supports the Committee in collating and synthesising information on space research, and providing analyses, forecasts and reports to the European research community. It prepares commentaries and reports; contributes to reports and ad hoc studies on topics arising.

Office activities require adequate staffing in terms of science officers and administrators. Staffing is managed through ESF and ESSC Office employees are ESF staff.
10 External representation

On activities of relevance for the ESSC considered as such by its members or suggested by its EFOs and where clear added value has been identified, the ESSC can interact at different levels in external activities. For such interaction and when personal involvement is required, the ESSC can be represented by its Chair, Core Group member, one of its members or a member from the Office. Representation is validated by the ESSC Chair.

Examples of such interactions include:

- participation as full partner of European-wide initiative with participation in the decision making structure and contractual duties;
- member of advisory panels;
- observer to external structures and/or project;
- participation in organising committee of relevant scientific events;
- support to the organisation or setting up of events, projects or structures;
- endorsement of external initiatives.

In particular the ESSC has a long history of collaborating with the Space Studies Board of the US National Academies/NRC. Both committees exchange observers and liaisons, attend each other’s plenary meetings and ad hoc events, and interact through joint projects. Similar interactions have started to develop with similar bodies or individuals in Japan and China.

11 Reporting

The ESSC positions and advice are published as ESSC-ESF study reports, position papers, recommendations, newsletters, leaflets, ESF policy briefings, or any other adequate means. For strategy/policy reports, position papers or recommendations, the overall publication process abides by the following rules:

- **Approval of the report contents.** When the Committee itself is carrying out the related evaluation or reflexion, approval is managed at plenary meetings or, should the activity timeline prevent waiting for the next plenary meeting, done through correspondence with all ESSC members. In cases where an ad hoc group or steering committee has ownership of the consultation process, approval is first formally obtained from the group prior to official approval by the ESSC.

- **External independent peer-review.** All ESSC position papers should be externally peer-reviewed by a set of referees who did not take part in the consultation process leading to the production of the report. Referees are chosen for their diverse perspectives and expertise in accordance with procedures used by the ESF. The purpose of the review is to provide additional critical comments to assist ESF and ESSC in making the published report as sound as possible and to ensure that it meets standards for objectivity, evidence and responsiveness to the study charge. All referees’ comments must be addressed and replied to. The contents of the review comments and draft manuscript remain confidential to protect the integrity of the deliberative process, but referees are normally acknowledged.

- **Endorsement by ESF governance.** After adequate external review reports are formally endorsed by the ESF Chief Executive, who ensures that the procedure has been completed in compliance with ESF’s rules and quality standards.
• **Publication.** Regardless of the study charge and guidelines all ESSC-ESF reports and position papers are made available to the general public after publication, and widely disseminated to its Member Organisations, EFOs, and scientific community through hardcopies and/or the internet.
12 APPENDIX – ESSC TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the ESSC are defined below in accordance with the views of the Committee and the recommendations of the 1996 and 2003 ESF Review Panel for the ESSC. Beyond these Terms of Reference, the Statutes of the ESF shall apply where relevant.

1. ESSC Mission and Status
The mission of the ESSC is to provide an independent voice on European space research and policy. The ESSC is an integral part of the ESF. It is the ESF’s Expert Board dealing with space sciences, and its interface with ESA and the European Commission on space sciences issues.

2. ESSC Role
The ESSC has the overall responsibility of:

- underlining the role of space sciences and technology developments as basic pillars of the European space venture;
- supporting European visibility and advising for a role of Europe in global space initiatives;
- regularly assessing the status and perspectives of European space activities

To carry out these overarching tasks, the Committee, in coherence with the ESF, shall:

- monitor, review, and produce independent advice on space sciences and related research and technology;
- facilitate the definition and the organisation of space research programmes at the European level;
- encourage the coordination of space research and related technology and applications by providing adequate discussion forums;
- promote space sciences related activities and increase public awareness of these fields at the European and international level.

In the pursuit of these tasks, the ESSC seeks interaction with the major bodies and supranational entities at the European and world levels, in particular with the European Space Agency (ESA) and with appropriate institutions of the European Union such as the European Commission. The ESSC also seeks interaction and establishes partnerships with bodies outside Europe, e.g. with the Space Studies Board in the USA.

3. ESSC Committee Membership and Chairmanship
Committee Members are drawn from reputed experts active in all fields of space sciences on the basis of scientific expertise and recognition within the community, so as to ensure the authority and credibility of the Committee. The Members are appointed *ad personam* by the ESF for a three-year term, renewable once, after appropriate consultation with the ESSC and its Funding Organisations. Committee Members are however required to maintain strong links with their national ESF Member Organisation(s) or with their national ESSC Funding Organisation involved in space sciences and in space technology applications for science and research. The detailed membership procedure is described in section 3 of the ESSC-ESF guidelines.
The committee membership must allow a credible coverage of space sciences disciplines, as well as geographical balance of its members. If they wish, ESF Standing Committees may appoint Liaison Members to ESSC.

The Chairman of the ESSC is appointed by the ESF, after appropriate consultation and search action. The ESF Chief Executive appoints a small Search Committee and its Chairperson after appropriate consultation with the ESSC Funding Organisations. This Search Committee is responsible to the ESF Chief Executive for evaluating the various candidates suggested by the Committee, the ESF and the ESSC Funding Organisations. The Search Committee shall establish a shortlist of no more than three candidates and organise their interview with the ESF support. Following which, the Chair of the Search Committee shall recommend a candidate to the ESF Chief Executive.

The Committee is managed on a daily basis by an Executive Scientific Secretary who supports the ESSC Chairperson and the Committee in its work. The ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary is the Head of the ESF Space Sciences Unit.

4. **ESSC Funding Organisations (EFOs)**

The ESSC Funding Organisations (EFOs) – financing the budget of the Committee – should be involved directly or indirectly in space sciences and technology research, in the operation of related facilities, and/or in space technology applications for science and research.

Subscribing EFOs generally belong to the Member Organisations of the ESF. Beyond these, a national or supra-national institute or agency can become an EFO if its statutes are consistent with those of the ESSC and the ESF. To detail the duties and responsibilities of EFOs and ESSC, the Committee and ESF can establish bilateral agreements and/or Memorandums of Understanding in consultation with the EFOs.

The term of EFOs shall continue as long as the association of the Committee with the ESF is effective. An EFO may withdraw from ESSC at the end of the ESF financial year by providing ESSC-ESF with a 3-month notice of withdrawal, i.e. no later than 30 September.

The ESSC being funded through organisations that are not necessarily ESF Member Organisations, major decisions concerning the life of the Committee such as financial planning or staff-related aspects do not depend solely on ESF decisions but must include appropriate consultation of the relevant EFOs.

5. **ESSC Modus Operandi**

The Committee generally holds two plenary meetings per year at which all business items except financial matters are considered. The financial report is provided and discussed at the first plenary meeting of ESF’s financial year. The committee meetings are convened by the ESSC Chairperson.

The ESSC Chairperson can delegate specific tasks to the ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary.

The Committee establishes structures and procedures as necessary to meet its mission. The Committee works through four disciplinary panels: (i) Astronomy and Fundamental Physics; (ii) Earth Sciences; (iii) Solar System and Exploration; and (iv) Research in Weightlessness. The Panel Chairs are appointed by the Chair and constitute the ESSC Core Group, led by the ESSC Chairperson and assisted by the Executive Scientific Secretary. The Core Group assists
the ESSC Chairperson in his tasks. The Committee may set up additional panels and ad hoc groups to carry out particular tasks, involving also external members of the community.

The Committee, if it is deemed necessary, may draw up a set of regulations for its modus operandi, in line with the Terms of Reference.

6. ESSC Finance

The budget of the ESSC is contributed à-la-carte by the EFOs. Contributions from other bodies – such as the European Commission or the European Parliament – may also be sought. The budget of the ESSC (income and outflow) is managed by the ESF. Financial commitments for the Committee’s operation and work, including those for scientific and secretarial assistance, are made through the ESF.

The Committee sets up annual or multi-annual Financial and Implementation Plans within the envelope of its foreseen inflow budget.

7. Reporting and Advising

The Committee reports to the ESF Governing Council and General Assembly. The Head of the ESF Space Sciences Unit is part of the senior management of ESF and thus reports to his/her hierarchy on the objectives and achievements of the Committee.

In making recommendations to external bodies, the ESSC acts responsibly and independently within the framework and procedures of the ESF and a proper scientific code of conduct. The Committee will ensure that the ESF governance and Chief Executive are appropriately consulted before the publication of such advice. ESSC views expressed in such reports do not necessarily represent the opinions of the EFOs or the ESF Member Organisations, and would not bind the sponsors in any way.

ESSC reports, position papers, etc should be peer-reviewed prior to publication, according to ESF rules.

8. Review of ESSC

The ESF will enable the review of the work and mandate of the ESSC at least every five years. To this end the ESF will establish an independent Review Panel composed of highly reputed experts and nominate its Chairperson. The Review Panel tasks will include reviewing the activities of the Committee since the last review and auditing members of the Committee, in particular its Chairperson and the ESSC Executive Scientific Secretary. The Review Panel will produce a set of recommendations for the ESF Chief Executive, who will then decide on a continuation of the ESSC, in consultation with relevant parties.

These Terms of Reference were approved by the 36th ESSC plenary meeting on 9 June 2008.