

EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SPACE DEBRIS MITIGATION

International mechanism:

European Code of Conduct for Space Debris Mitigation, Issue 1.0, 28 June 2004

Description:

The European Code of Conduct for Space Debris Mitigation (in the following: the Code) has been developed and formally adopted, upon signature by their Directors General, by the Italian Space Agency (ASI), the British National Space Centre (BNSC⁴), the French Space Agency (CNES), the German Aerospace Agency (DLR) and the European Space Agency (ESA).

The primary objectives of the Code are a) to help preventing on-orbit break-ups and collisions of spacecraft, b) to facilitate the removal from useful densely populated orbit regions and subsequent disposal of spacecraft and orbital stages that have reached the end of mission operations and c) to help limiting objects released during normal spacecraft operations. To reach these goals, the Code presents fundamental mitigation, safety and protection measures for the design and operation of space systems. These measures are grouped into 1) management measures, 2) design measures including end-of-life measures, 3) operational measures including end-of-life measures, 4) impact protection measures and 5) re-entry safety measures. It does not cover the launch phase safety.

The Code is accompanied by a “Support to Implementation” document aiming at providing appropriate sources of information and tools to individuals involved in the management, design, operation and mission control of spacecraft.

Applicability:

The application of the Code is on voluntary basis. The agencies having adopted it recommend its application “by any other space project conducted in Europe, or by a European entity acting outside Europe, including operators” (Article 2.2 of the Code). The Code contains provisions that “may be given binding effect by means of legal instruments between contracting parties”.

Relation to international mechanisms:

The Code is consistent with the IADC Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines (which, in turn, were used as a foundation for the development of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee), while providing greater (technical) detail and explanations. The Code, in its introduction, furthermore makes reference to Articles I and IX of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 and to the Liability Convention of 1972.

⁴ now UK Space Agency

References:

None.