

→ ESA USER GUIDE

TO LOW GRAVITY PLATFORMS

Title: ESA User Guide to Low Gravity Platforms

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→ FOREWORD

Welcome to the exciting world of microgravity research. ESA invites you to embark on a tour through all the platforms and ground-based facilities available to European scientists. Apart from giving an overview of all the microgravity research opportunities, part of this journey is devoted to explaining how to gain access to the related facilities and resources.

This ESA User Guide to Low Gravity Platforms provides up to date information on the International Space Station, as well as on other ESA low-gravity platforms and ground-based facilities. It is also a first step in familiarising potential users with this fascinating research environment.

This guide is a 'living document'. Sections will be updated as required by the development in a given area. Please check also our website eug.spaceflight.esa.int for the latest applicable version.

A shining example of global cooperation, the International Space Station has become a versatile research laboratory and a test centre for new technologies. Scientific utilisation is well underway and produces good results for the scientific community in Europe and beyond.

I sincerely hope that this guide encourages you to consider the unique opportunity ESA is offering to utilise an extensive range of facilities and resources for performing your scientific experiments.

Thomas Reiter
ESA Director of Human Spaceflight and Operations

→ PURPOSE OF THE USER GUIDE

The ESA User Guide to Low Gravity Platforms is intended to provide an overview of what the four low gravity platforms sponsored by ESA are, and how they are made available to people wishing to use them for either scientific, educational or commercial purposes. For the same purpose, a chapter about ground-based facilities has been added to this guide giving an overview of available facilities in Europe.

The four low gravity platforms covered by this Guide are the following:

- drop tower;
- parabolic flights;
- sounding rockets;
- International Space Station (ISS).

The Guide does not seek to lay down rules, but as it suggests, simply offers guidance in understanding whether or not the capabilities and resources provided by each of the four platforms meet the requirements of the Users' needs. The Guide has been written with the intention of satisfying three classes of people:

- the general public;
- potential users of ESA sponsored low gravity platforms and ground-based facilities;
- current/experienced users of ESA sponsored low gravity platforms and ground-based facilities.

In order to understand all the details involved in accessing the platforms, a considerable amount of information has to be studied and understood. It would be impossible, within the scope of this Guide, to cover all this material, and it is for this reason that the major objective is to only present the most important basic information. Where more details are required, Users are given the appropriate document references, web links, or contact coordinates.

For regular updates of information and contact coordinates please visit the following website for the on-line version of the ESA User Guide to Low Gravity Platforms: eug.spaceflight.esa.int

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