

Beginning my career as a YGT for ESA

A dream come true: Of all the students working in space related fields at their home universities, who has not dreamt of an opportunity to work with the European Space Agency? Wouldn't this be a fantastic opportunity to work space projects alongside space professionals? My personal dream was to help build and launch a satellite. In February 2005 I was given this chance. Not only did this position help me to fulfil my dream but it has also allowed me to go beyond. I now work along with students and so assisting them in realizing their own dreams.

Working as a Young Graduate Trainee: Various YGT positions are opened each year in many different fields. It can be anything from human resources, public relations, science, engineering or almost any other discipline one can think of. Generally it gives an opportunity for recently graduated students to have a first job on space related projects. But it is also far more! It is an opening into a space industry that can otherwise be hard to enter, by helping you to meet people, gain experience, it helps you to find your direction towards future work.

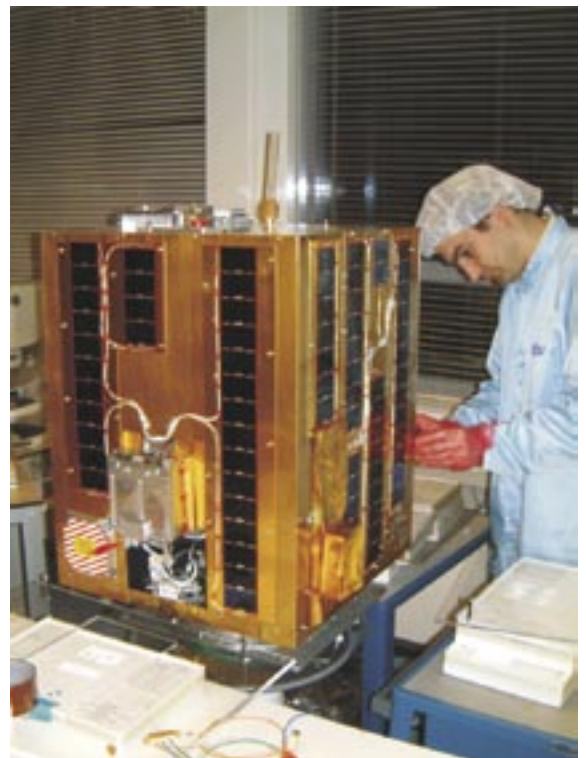
Three months as a YGT: I knew most of these things before I started and those were my reasons for applying. Further I wanted to be involved in a satellite project. I am now systems engineer on the SSETI ESEO satellite, the European Student Earth Orbiter. This means supervising all the students (over a hundred) working on the satellite. It's for example making sure one team isn't measuring in feet while the other is measuring in meters! More usually making sure all parts are taken care of and that nothing is forgotten. Briefly told technical leader of the project. But reading through student's reports on their work progress is by far not the only thing to do in this position. Workshops are held twice a year and representatives of all the student teams are gathered here at ESTEC for a week to solve issues that are hard to solve over the Internet and the phone. A workshop of 60 students takes up more than just a normal 8-hour workday, but is more than worth it both for the YGT and for the students.

As in any other field it is very interesting if not critical to know what is going on in your domain and to let others know of your projects progress. This is done by attending relevant conferences. Until now I have been to a small satellite conference in Berlin, Germany and Student Technology and Education Conference in Aalborg, Denmark. Furthermore on site many courses are held by ESA to keep the employees up to date on related subjects. For new engineers and other technical minded YGTs a general course in systems engineering is even mandatory. Other subjects are "intelligent materials", "Institutions and decision making process in EU", "lessons learned" and many others. As an YGT you choose which of these courses and lectures you wish to attend. Having 80 YGTs and 120 stagiaires, and research fellows each year means that we often meet each other at such courses. Discussions can often continue to late into the evenings over a beer...

Being a YGT at ESA is truly an incredible experience both personally and professionally. If work in space projects is what you dream of, it may well launch your dream!

Tor Viscor
Young graduate trainee at ESTEC, the Netherlands

*Integration of SSETI Express.
Picture: ESA*



Born in Cambridge 1976, Czech father Danish mother. Lived in Belgium for 3 years. High school in Silkeborg, Denmark. 2 years mathematics/physics Aarhus, Denmark. 5 years engineering Aalborg, Denmark. While there build the AAU Cubesat (www.cubesat.auc.dk), successfully launched in June 2003, participated in ESA student parabolic flight campaign with MIEMA (www.control.auc.dk/miema), stage in Sherbrooke Canada and 2.nd flight with MIEMA 2004

Motto: NOTHING is impossible.