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SKIES: Career opportunities and personal developments for young astronomy scientists

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The SKIES project is part of Horizon 2020 funded by the EU, and aimed to provide training on innovation, entrepreneurship and open science topics to Dutch astronomy PhD students and early-career researchers in combination with an individual mentoring programme. The training course was developed in collaboration with research institutes in Germany, Poland, Portugal, South Africa and external expert partners in entrepreneurship and space science, like the Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship (ECE) in Rotterdam and dotSPACE. In this talk, I will discuss the topics on which the pilot program focused and the outcome of our workshops and mentoring program offered to the Dutch astronomy young scientists. The workshops provided by the SKIES trainers during the pilot program showed that there is a real need from the astronomy PhD students to be concretely supported to achieving quality education in entrepreneurial skills and in transferring their skills to the industry and in the private sector in general, especially considering that the majority of them will not land a permanent position in academia. Overall, the lack of dedicated resources to ensure the sustainability of the entrepreneurship education of the Dutch PhD young scientists, limits their prospects of transferring their knowledge to the society and enrich industries with their expertise. We propose the continuation of the SKIES program to implement the courses and strengthen the connections between the astronomy departments and entrepreneurship, especially in the space sector. A direct involvement of the astronomical institutions in supporting the human resources engaged in the SKIES program, will ensure the quality of the entrepreneurship education and career development of the astronomy PhD students concretely.

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