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## **Blast off! The Launch of Odysseus II**

**Science education contest gets underway – youth throughout Europe invited to compete for prizes, internships and travel opportunities**

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**Odysseus II, a fun-based educational contest focusing on space science, is up and running. As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, young people all over Europe can register to take part in an exciting competition that combines scientific learning with hands-on experience. Aimed at learners between the ages of 7 and 22, the contest is designed to engage talented young people with a spirit of discovery and an interest in science.**

Odysseus II challenges European youth to push the boundaries of their knowledge by discovering answers to fundamental questions on topics ranging from satellites and space probes to astrobiology and interplanetary travel. The ultimate aim of the contest is to inspire young Europeans to get involved in space science.

Organized in multiple rounds, the competition will be conducted in two cycles covering the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. Teachers are encouraged to participate by coaching teams and will be offered access to professional mentoring upon request. Entries can be submitted in any of the EU's 24 official languages.

Three academic levels are targeted, with separate competitions for:

- **Skywalkers** (primary school pupils)
- **Pioneers** (secondary school students)
- **Explorers** (university undergraduates)



Participants will first compete at national level on the merits of their submissions addressing one of the contest's broadly defined topics. Experienced judges will evaluate submissions on the basis of scientific knowledge, practical implementation and creativity. Winners will be selected at national, regional and international levels. Prizes include iPads, telescopes, travel opportunities, paid internships at the European Space Agency and trips to the Guiana Space Centre in South America.

**The deadline for entries from students at secondary schools and universities is January 15, 2016. Entries from primary school pupils are expected by March 31, 2016.**

Complete information – including detailed instructions on how to register and submit an entry online – is available at [www.odysseus-contest.eu](http://www.odysseus-contest.eu). **High-resolution logos and a 30-second promotional video are available for download by the media.**

## **Background**

The contest is being organized by the consortium partners of Odysseus II, a three-year project funded through the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. Odysseus II is an expanded version of a pilot project that ran from 2011 to 2013. The current consortium consists of 14 partners and 4 supporting organizations from 11 European countries.

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