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ESA ALERT PROCESS

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

The ESA Alert System (EAS) is the tool to ensure awareness of failures and problems experienced in ESA space projects. It is based on the prompt exchange of information among all registered users of the system. This document defines the process for the operation of the EAS.

2. ALERT PROCESS FLOW AND DESCRIPTION

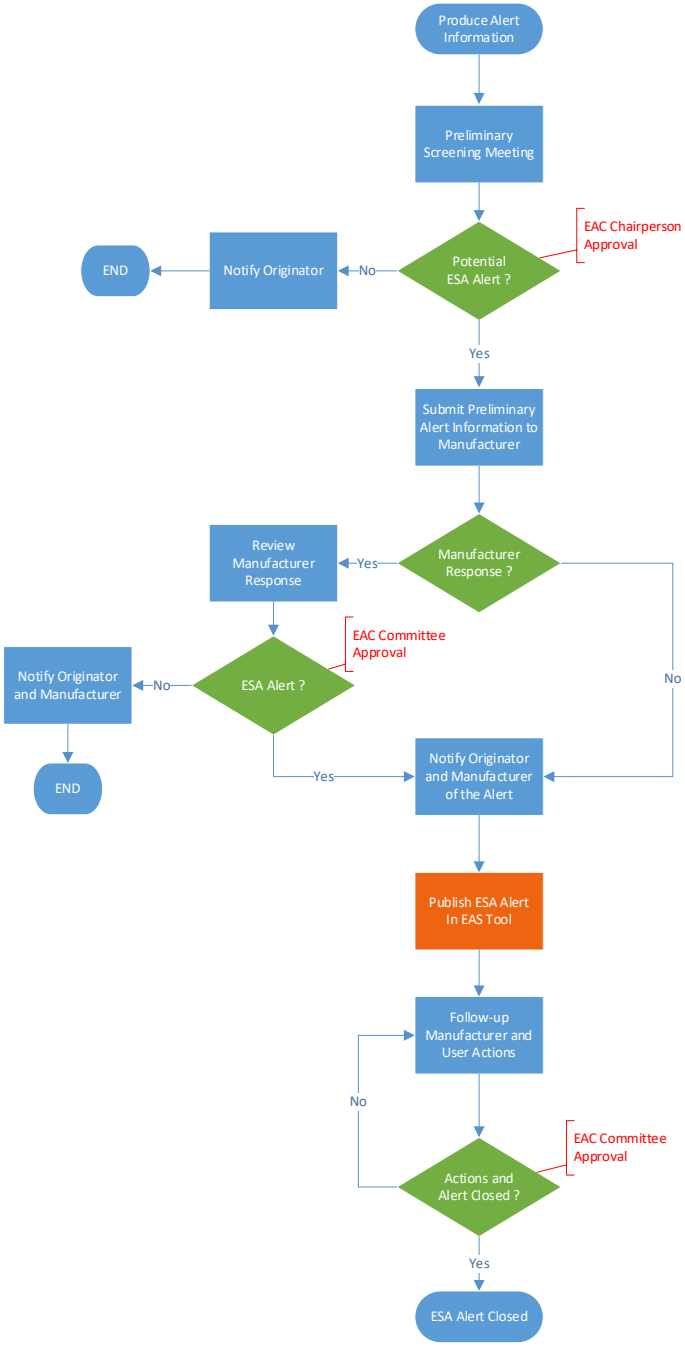

Figure 1 General ESA Alert Process

*Table 1 ESA Alert Process Description (**R=Responsible**; S=Supporting; I=Informed), Further details in Annex.*

ESA Alert Process Description	Participants
Step 1: Produce Alert Information • The Alert Originator detecting a potential Alert provides information to the EAFP on the failure or problem (see EAS tool). Technical meeting to be organised as needed to ensure completeness of data provided.	**Alert Originator (R),** ESA Technical Expert(s) (S), EAFP (S), ESA PA (S)
Step 2: Preliminary Screening Meeting • The EAFP consults the supporting participants in order to screen the Alert issuing criteria and make a recommendation to the EAC Chairperson whether an ESA Alert is needed or not (see Annex E2). • In case an Alert is needed, the EAFP provides to the EAC Chairperson a draft PAI to be submitted to the manufacturer.	**EAFP (R),** Alert Originator (S), ESA Technical Expert(s) (S), ESA PA (S), EAC (I)
Step 3: Potential ESA Alert ? • The EAC Chairperson shall decide whether or not the information submitted could constitute a potential Alert.	**EAC Chairperson (R),** EAFP (S), EAC (S)
Step 4: Submit Preliminary Alert Information to Manufacturer • If the EAC Chairperson decision is positive, the EAFP submit the final PAI to the Manufacturer (see Annex H2).	**EAFP (R)**
Step 5: Manufacturer Response ? • The EAFP monitors any feedback received from the Manufacturer. • In case the Manufacturer choose to not respond, the EAFP informs the EAC and proceeds with Step 8.	**EAFP (R),** EAC Committee (I), Alert Originator (I), ESA Technical Expert(s) (I), ESA PA (I)
Step 6: Review Manufacturer Response • The EAFP communicates the Manufacturer response to the EAC, the Alert Originator, the ESA Technical Expert(s) and the ESA PA. • The EAC decides if further exchange of information and technical screening is necessary.	**EAFP (R),** Alert Originator (S), ESA Technical Expert(s) (S), ESA PA (S), EAC (S)
Step 7: ESA Alert ? • The EAC may call for a meeting and decide whether to release an ESA Alert or to close the case.	**EAC Committee (R),** EAFP (S), Alert Originator (S), ESA Technical Expert(s) (S), ESA PA (S)
Step 8: Notify Originator and Manufacturer of the Alert • In case it is decided to release an ESA Alert, the EAFP informs the Manufacturer and the Alert Originator of the decision of the EAC.	**EAFP (R)**
Step 9: Publish ESA Alert in EAS Tool • The EAFP prepares the final text of the ESA Alert to be released for final approval by the EAC Chairperson (see Annex E3). • Once approved, the EAFP releases the ESA Alert in the EAS Tool.	**EAFP (R),** Alert Originator (S), ESA Technical Expert(s) (S), ESA PA (S), EAC (S)
Step 10: Follow-up Manufacturer and User Actions • The EAFP follows-up the manufacturer and user actions under the responsibility of the EAC and advises the EAC for their close-out (see Annex E4).	**EAFP (R),** ESA Technical Expert(s) (S), Alert Coordinators (S), Alert Originator (S), ESA PA (S) EAC (I)
Step 11: Actions and Alert Closed ? • The EAC shall decide on the formal close-out of the manufacturer and user actions. • As a result, the EAC decides on the validity of the active ESA Alert (see Annex E5).	**EAC Committee (R),** EAFP (S)
Step 12: ESA Alert Closed • The EAFP updates the status of the ESA Alert to “expired” in EAS tool.	**EAFP (R)**

Note: EAFP: ESA Alert Focal Point; EAC: ESA Alert Committee, ESA PA: ESA Product Assurance representative, PAI: Preliminary Alert Information.

ANNEX A. CHANGE LOG AND CHANGE RECORD

A1 Change Log

Reason for change	Issue Nr	Revision Number	Date
QMS review	1	0	12/2013
Audit review	1	1	03/2015
Audit review	2	0	04/2016
DCR64: updated with EAS Focal Point responsibilities, aligning with Tool Issue 2.0, updated for NCR handling and deleted requirement for status list. DCR102: addition of existing provisions for Service review Internal review: change of format for process simplification, added definition of ESA time to publication and updated with EAC composition, EAC responsibilities, technical experts responsibilities and general Alert process.	3	0	10/2022

A2 Change Record

Issue Number 3	Revision Number 0		
Reason for change	Date	Pages	Paragraph(s)
DCR64 DCR102 Internal review	26/10/2022	various	various

ANNEX B. TERMS, DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

B1 Terms and definitions

For the purpose of the present document, the following terms and definitions apply.

Term	Definition
Preliminary Alert Information (PAI)	Preliminary documentation of a failure or problem that has been determined and approved by the ESA Alert Committee (EAC) to meet the criteria to issue an ESA Alert. It is used for the consultation of the manufacturer of the item affected.
Alert	Report providing a prompt warning concerning failures and problems that may affect more than one user, or may recur in other projects or circumstances, if no actions are taken. It describes the observed failure/problem, its cause, the recommended actions to be taken to correct it and to prevent its recurrence, as well as the comments from the manufacturer of the affected item.
ESA Alert	Alert released as such after decision of the EAC.
Validity of active ESA Alerts	Status of active ESA Alerts relating to their rate of recurrence and relevance. Note: The relevance is assessed by the EAC, with regard to factors such as usage of affected items and if technical validity is obsolete (see Annex E5).
ESA time to publication	Time which starts when the recommendation to raise an ESA Alert has been agreed in the Preliminary Screening meeting, up until the Alert is published in EAS (Step 2 to Step 9). Following the Preliminary Screening meeting, the draft Preliminary Alert Information (PAI) shall be prepared by the Technical Expert within 2 weeks.
Alert Originator	Primary contributor to the ESA Alert (i.e. ESA Alert Focal Point or Alert Coordinator of the organization or ESA Technical Expert or ESA PA representative of the project).

B2 Abbreviations

For the purpose of this document, the following abbreviations apply.

AC	Alert Coordinator
AD	Applicable Document
AS	Alert Subscriber
CNES	French Space Agency
DCR	Document Change Request
DLR	German Aerospace Centre
EAC	ESA Alert Committee
EAFP	ESA Alert Focal Point
EAS	ESA Alert System
ECSS	European Cooperation for Space Standardization
ESA	European Space Agency
ESTEC	European Space Research and Technology Centre
IPN	Internal Problem Notification
JAXA	Japanese Space Agency
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NCR	Non-conformance Report
PA	Product Assurance
PAI	Preliminary Alert Information
PMX	TEC-Q web-based NCR management tool
QMS	Quality Management System
Q2	2nd Quarter of the Year
RD	Reference Document
S&MA	Safety and Mission Assurance
TEC-Q	ESA Product Assurance & Safety Department

ANNEX C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The EAS encompasses the following participants:

- ESA TEC-Q, managing authority of the EAS;
- ESA project teams;
- suppliers involved in ESA projects;
- space Agencies of ESA Member States;
- other space-related organizations such as Eumetsat or Eutelsat.

Upon registering in the system, all participants, whether bound by contractual provisions or voluntarily, commit to notifying failures and problems, to co-operating in the investigation of Alert information, and to providing feedback for released Alerts, when relevant.

The EAFP, in coordination with the EAC, will periodically organise events with the participants or use alternative means to gather feedback from the users in order to review intended improvements to the EAS.

Role	Responsibilities
ESA Alert Focal Point Appointed by the Head of TEC-Q and confirmed by EAC The contact information of the EAFP is: ESA Alert Focal Point ESA-ESTEC PO Box 299 2200 AG Noordwijk The Netherlands e-mail: easmail@esa.int	The EAFP is a centralized function within TEC-Q, with the overall responsibility to administrate and co-ordinate the effective functioning of the system i.e.: • to organise and support the proceedings of the EAC; • to act as secretary of the EAC and lead the EAC meetings as EAC Chairperson deputy, except for the formal release of alerts and in controversial cases such as: disagreement between technical experts; high industrial sensitivity of the alert; potential severity of impacts from actions by users; • to collect information from Technical Experts on potential alerts and feedback on released ESA Alerts, as input to the EAC; • to arrange preliminary screening and to assign Technical Expert(s) to draft the PAI (if recommendation is to raise an Alert); • to coordinate and direct the Alert preliminary investigation, including the exchange of information with relevant stakeholders; • to follow-up and report on actions; • to implement interface agreements with other Alert systems, as decided by the EAC; • to perform a yearly status review of Alerts; • to process User requests; • to maintain the list of manufacturers and the list of Technical Experts; • to collect and process users feedback; • to improve and promote the ESA Alert System Tool.
Alert Coordinator Each participating company to the EAS shall assign one Alert Coordinator for communication with the EAFP. Companies with multiple sites may nominate one Alert Coordinator for each of their major site.	The responsibilities of the Alert Coordinator are to create Alerts and to coordinate the flow of Alert information in both directions, and as such: • to initiate an Alert affecting its projects; • to provide information on potential alerts to the EAFP; • to distribute ESA Alerts to the projects inside the participating organisation; • to collect any feedback on released ESA Alerts, and to send it to the EAFP; • upon request from EAFP, to provide status feedback on active Alerts;

Alert Subscribers Companies may nominate one or more Alert Subscribers.	The responsibility of the Alert Subscriber is: • to expedite the distribution of ESA Alerts within the participating company Note: The Alert Subscriber access to the EAS is limited to the simple view of the alert reports as all feedback is expected to be flowed to ESA through the appointed Alert Coordinator. Alert Subscribers do not have the user rights to create alerts nor to send feedback on them.
ESA Alert Committee Permanent participants: • Head of TEC-Q, as chairperson; • the EAFP as secretary to the EAC and EAC Chairperson deputy; • Heads of Divisions and Offices within TEC-Q; • Heads of Product Assurance & Safety Offices; • TEC-Q Lead Engineer(s). Ad-hoc participants: • ESA Product Assurance representative of the affected project(s); • Technical Experts, appointed by line management; • Participant that initiated the Alert.	The responsibilities of the EAC permanent and ad-hoc participants are: • to decide whether the identified failure/problem should be converted into an ESA Alert, based on the relevant information provided and in line with ESA alert criteria; • to decide on the formal close out of the corrective/preventive actions of general interest; • to decide upon the validity of active ESA Alerts; • to establish interface agreements with other Alert systems. Note: The decision of the EAC Committee results from the consensus of all members. If such consensus is not achieved, the Chairperson will determine the final decision.
Technical Experts Within ESA a group of Technical Experts is appointed in each area of expertise by the relevant line manager of that discipline. On request of the EAFP and / or the EAC, additional Technical Experts may be invited to contribute to the decision-making process.	The responsibilities of the Technical Experts are: • to provide the assessment of the failure/problem against the criteria for issuing an alert, and the resulting recommendation on an ESA Alert; • to propose manufacturer and user actions to mitigate the failure/problem consequences and / or to prevent its recurrence; • to draft the preliminary alert information; • to provide technical assessment of the information provided by the manufacturer concerned; • to update the status of projects affected by alerts (affected, not affected); • to provide the technical assessment of any feedback information provided after the release of Alerts; • to provide the assessment of manufacturer and user actions and the advice on their eventual closeout; • to provide update of the Alert to EAFP when new information is available; • to provide status feedback on active Alerts upon request from EAFP.

ANNEX D. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

D1 Applicable Documents

The following documents are applicable to the extent specified herein:

	Reference	Title
AD1	ESA/ADMIN(95)15	ESA Alert System
AD2	ESA/DG/INST/ORG-TEC/OPS(2016)1	Technology and Operations Area: Directorate of Technology, Engineering and Quality (D/TEC) and Directorate of Operations (D/OPS)
AD3	ESA-TEC-PR-0005	TEC Procedure for Continual Improvement

D2 Reference Documents

The following documents do not form part of this document but provide relevant information.

N/A

D3 Records and Outputs

The following records and outputs result from this process and shall be retained by the EAFP:

Record	Responsible	Retention Period
Baseline documentation for the alert system	EAFP	ESA Amin and procedure: until the next document revision or 5 years. Tool version: Until the next delivery Tool User Manual: Stored electronically in the EAS tool and never deleted.
User feedback and improvement requests	EAFP	Stored electronically in the EAS tool and never deleted.
Alert	EAFP	Stored electronically in the EAS tool and never deleted.
Alert files	EAFP	10 years.
Yearly status review of the ESA Alerts	EAFP	5 years.
Registered users	EAFP	Stored electronically in the EAS tool and never deleted.
Technical Expert List	EAFP	Stored electronically in the EAS tool and never deleted.
Alert Coordinator List	EAFP	Stored electronically in the EAS tool and never deleted.

ANNEX E. COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION RELATED TO THE ALERT PROCESS

E1 Alert Categories

The EAS covers failures related to different disciplines and technologies. To indicate which one is affected most, each alert is assigned a category identified by the following code convention:

Category	Discipline/Technology
CAM	Civil Aviation & Military Equipment
EEE	Electrical, Electronic and Electromechanical parts
EAE	Electrical and Electronic Equipment
FQP	Flight Equipment
GSE	Ground Support Equipment
MAT	Materials
QMP	Quality, Methods, Processes & Procedures
MPA	Mechanical Parts & Mechanisms
PYR	Pyrotechnic devices
SWE	Software
OTH	Others

At the same time an alert can address different issues, like for instance:

- safety
- (cyber)security
- manufacturing processes
- handling procedures
- standard test methods
- standard operational procedures

E2 Alert Issuing Criteria

a. An ESA Alert shall be issued only when all the following criteria are met:

1. **The item with the observed failure or problem has multiple applications**, which may have implications for more than one project, thus requiring prompt action.

2. **The failure/problem has occurred in the application of an item within its specified design and usage limitations.** However, an Alert may be raised when failures/problems due to usage within reasonably expected limits of performance occur, if these limits have not been specified precisely.

3. **A preliminary investigation has provided sufficient evidence of the root cause of the failure/problem.**

   NOTE In case of investigations of long duration, consideration shall be given to waiving this criterion in favour of the prompt release of information that could prevent significant impacts on multiple users, provided that the description of the failure/problem is accurate and factual, the

manufacturer of the item affected is consulted, and any related ESA Alert is revised as necessary as soon as the investigation is completed.

4. **The failure/problem is confirmed not to be an isolated case or of a random nature.**

5. **The manufacturer has not informed all its customers impacted by this issue or a complete and unambiguous traceability of all the affected items to the impacted users is not possible.**

   NOTE Exceptions can be considered and assessed on a case by case basis by the EAC.

b. The failure/problem description in ESA Alerts shall be correct and limited only to observed facts, without opinions or speculations.

E3 Publication of ESA Alert in EAS Tool

The EAFP shall:

1. Prepare the final text of the ESA Alert to be released with the support of the Technical Expert, including the response from the manufacturer, for approval by the EAC Chairperson.
2. Make sure that all actions for an ESA Alert are clearly identified and entered into the EAS Tool.
3. Make sure that the corrective and preventive actions prompted by an ESA Alert distinguish between:
   (a) manufacturer's actions to be implemented by the manufacturer to correct the failure/problem on existing items and those to prevent their reoccurrence;
   (b) user actions, actions recommended for implementation by the users, with clear indication of the specific actions for each stage of use.
   NOTE For example, items not yet assembled (in stock, screened), assembled (board, equipment), in service.
4. Make the final released revision of ESA Alerts available on the EAS Tool.
   NOTE 1 Typical content of an alert is listed in Annex H4.
   NOTE 2 The status of a released alert is automatically set to “Active”.
5. When a new ESA Alert is released a notification is automatically sent to all participants by an e-mail, containing title, number and link to the EAS tool.

E4 Follow-up of Manufacturer / User Actions and Processing of Alert Feedback

The implementation of user actions is under the responsibility of the user. The EAC may select some of the manufacturer or user actions for follow-up within the EAS depending on the significance of the issue and its impact to projects.

1. Continuous feedback
   a. ESA participants in EAS shall provide prompt feedback to the EAFP when applicable, on:
      i. the validity and accuracy of the information contained in an ESA Alert;
      ii. the effectiveness of recommended actions to the user;
      iii. alternative/complementary actions to correct the problem/failure.
   b. The EAFP and Technical Experts, as relevant, shall screen the feedback information on ESA Alerts, and advise the EAC on any resulting follow-on needed.

c. The EAC Chairperson shall decide the appropriate course of action, which may include consultation with the manufacturer and review of the ESA Alert.

2. Annual feedback

At the yearly (completion during Q2) status review of all active Alerts, the EAFP can request feedback from Alert Coordinators, manufacturer and ESA Technical Experts considering the status of an Active Alert. The collected feedback should be discussed in an EAC meeting where a decision is taken to expire the Alert or keep it active.

E5 Review of Validity and Status of ESA Alerts

a. The published ESA Alerts shall be reviewed one time per year, to determine their status in accordance with the following criteria:
   1. **Draft**: a draft Alert under discussion which has not been released yet;
   2. **Active**: an Alert affecting items likely to be either:
      (a) still available on sales, in the distribution chain or in storage; OR
      (b) embedded in assemblies, equipment or spacecraft, not yet launched or in early operations;
   3. **Updated**: an Alert which has been updated and a newer revision exists;
   4. **Expired**: an Alert which is no longer 'Active', a change to this status has to be agreed by the EAC.

b. The status of ESA Alerts shall be clearly identified within the EAS Tool.

c. "Expired" and "Updated" Alerts shall still be accessible within the EAS Tool for historical reference and possible failure investigations of systems in operations.

d. Records of the periodic reviews of the alerts shall be kept by the EAFP

E6 Alert Revision and Versioning

a. Additional information on an existing alert shall be distributed by the EAFP through an update to a new revision of the ESA Alert within the EAS Tool.
   NOTE For information that does not require a new revision of the Alert, status update may be inserted as a comment in the EAS user feedback field.

b. Updating of an alert is possible in the following cases:
   1. when new information is received from the manufacturer;
   2. when closure of manufacturer or user actions imply a radical change to the alert content;
   3. as a consequence of a validity review (see Annex E5);
   4. when a user feedback is received (see Annex E4).

In each of these cases the EAC shall decide on the reissuing of the Alert by iterating the general process steps 3, 4, 5 and 6.

NOTE A new version letter (A, B, C ...) is automatically assigned by the EAS Tool.
For instance, an alert numbered EA-2010-EEE-01-A is changed to EA-2010-EEE-01-B.
The updated alert (issue B) is automatically set to Active and the previous issue (issue A) to Updated.
A link to the previous revision of the updated alert exists in the EAS Tool.
A link to the reissued alert exists in the EAS Tool.
Clicking any of these links will automatically open the indicated revision of the alert.
An automatic notification is sent to all EAS users when an Alert changes status.

ANNEX F. COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION RELATED TO THE EAS TOOL

F1 EAS Software Tool

The official tool for the storage and management of the ESA alerts is the web-based EAS Tool, accessible at the web address https://alerts.esa.int. The overall usage of the Alert system tool is described in the EAS User Manual which is available in the ESA Alert system.

F2 Administration of the EAS

F21 ESA Alert Status Review

In the frame of the yearly of status review of ESA Alerts, the EAFP shall update the EAS database accordingly.

F22 User Registration

- *Internal and External users*

The EAFP shall process the registration of internal and external users of the EAS Tool according to the procedure accessible at the web address https://alerts.esa.int.

- *List of registered users and Technical Experts*

The EAFP shall maintain a list of all internal and external registered users within the EAS Tool and a list of nominated Technical Experts. The list should be maintained up to date by actively filtering out inactive users.

F23 Alerts Related Information

In addition to the information stored within the EAS Tool, the EAFP shall maintain the following records:

1. General Information on the Alert system
   (a) Baseline documentation for the alert system:
      (1) ADMIN;
      (2) Procedure;
      (3) Tool Version;
      (4) Tool User Manual;
   (b) User feedback and improvement requests on baseline documentation.
2. For each Alert a file containing:
   (a) Minutes of meetings organized by EAFP.
   (b) All correspondence with the manufacturer.
   (c) All documentation related to manufacturer actions follow-up and closeout.
3. Records of the periodic review of the ESA Alerts (see Annex E5).

F3 Non-conforming service

The management of non-conformances related to the EAS is covered in the general process for continual improvement (AD3). Should a non-conformance occurs, an ESA internal NCR should be issued by the EAFP in the PMX system.

ANNEX G. EXCHANGE OF ALERTS OUTSIDE THE EAS

G1 Overview

The exchange of alerts beyond the boundaries of the EAS implies:

1. Providing ESA Alerts to organizations that are not participants in the EAS and that may have their own alert system or not.
2. Receiving Alerts from organizations having their own alert system and distribute them to the users of the EAS.

It is an ESA responsibility to establish agreements for the exchange of alerts with organizations that have their own alert systems. Examples of such organizations are: CNES, DLR, major European contractors, NASA, JAXA.
NOTE For further details concerning agreements with NASA and JAXA see G21 and G22.

ESA is responsible for the decision of providing ESA Alerts to organizations that are not participants in the EAS.

G2 Process

G21 Distribution of ESA Alerts to International Partners (NASA and JAXA)

a. Every new Alert published on the EAS shall be submitted to review the EAC to assess the 'need to know' of the international partners participating to the Alert Exchange process.

b. The EAC, in order to decide on the distribution to an international partner, shall take into account whether the Alert:
   1. has safety implications or is applicable to the cooperative projects;
   2. has any impacts on the contributions of the partner to the cooperative projects;
   3. may be of interest for the corporate-level S&MA organization.

c. Whenever in doubt, the EAC shall enquire the partner about the potential applicability to the cooperative projects.

d. Once the distribution to an international partner has been approved on the basis of the above criteria, the EAC shall use a Distribution Restriction Form to identify one of the following levels of distribution restrictions as applicable:
   1. **internal to cooperative programs**: The receiver can use the alert information only internally to the programs identified in the Distribution Restriction Form and is not allowed to redistribute it to external parties without explicit consent of ESA.
   2. **external to cooperative programs**: The receiver can distribute the alert information to external cooperative programs only.
   3. **internal to all programs**: The receiver can use the alert information only internally.
   4. **external to all programs:** No restrictions apply to the redistribution of the alert information to the participants of the receiver's organization and its partners.

e. The alert shall be redistributed unmodified "as-is" both in content and in format.

f. The distribution files shall be sent by the EAFP to the international partner and shall contain:
   1. the EAS alert and its attachments;
   2. the Distribution Restriction Form duly filled in.

The process of distribution of ESA alerts to the international partners is depicted in Figure 2:

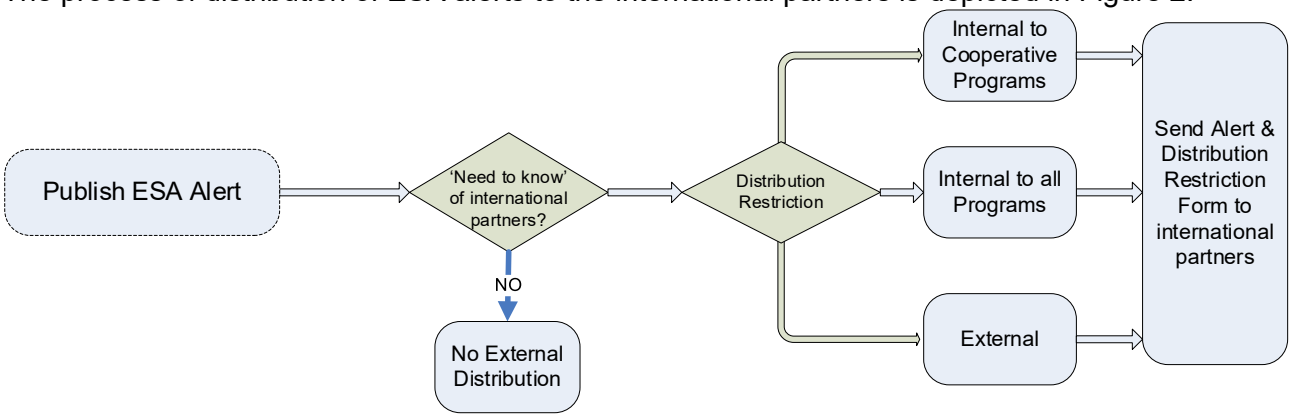

Figure 2 Decision on the Distribution of the ESA Alert to international partners

G22 Incorporation of Alerts from other alert systems (NASA and JAXA)

a. In case ESA obtains the permission from an international partner to redistribute their alerts, such alerts shall be handled as follows:
   1. the EAC shall assess the potential relevance of the external alert to ESA and national space projects, as much as feasible;
   2. the EAC shall decide on the completeness and consistency of the alert;
   3. the EAC shall decide whether some aspects of the alert or on the distribution restriction have to be clarified with the partner.

b. If the EAC decides to redistribute the external alert, the EAFP shall distribute it:
   1. with some comments, if relevant (optional);
   2. with a disclaimer that ESA is neither responsible for the accuracy of the information nor liable for any adverse consequences resulting from its use;
   3. respecting the distribution restrictions instructions included in the Distribution Restriction Form;
   4. publishing it on a dedicated repository of the EAS Tool (Alerts Partners).

      NOTE Once the alert is filed into the dedicated repository of the EAS Tool, an automatic notification process takes care of informing all the users entitled to access the alert as per Distribution Restriction instructions received from the partner with the alert.

The process of incorporation in the EAS of Alerts from other Alert systems (e.g. JAXA, NASA and CNES) is depicted in Figure 3.

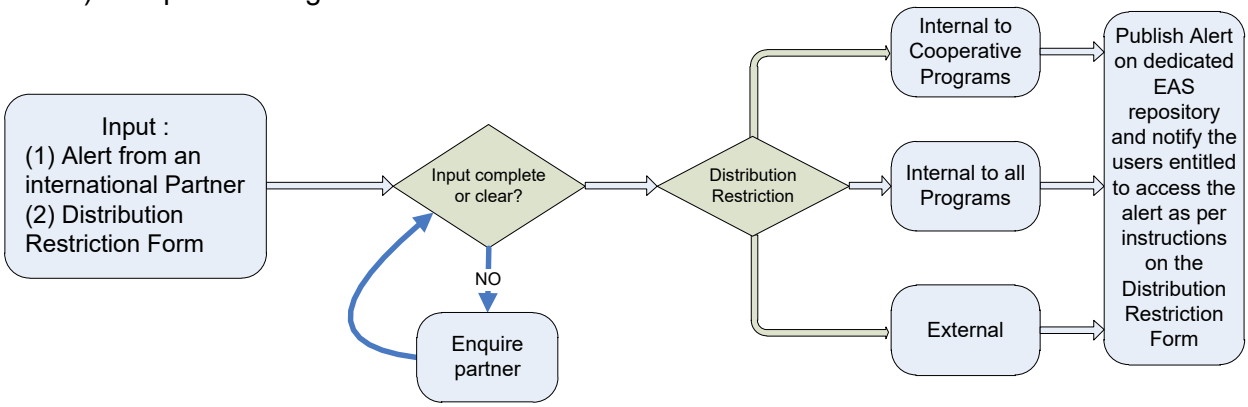

Figure 3 Incorporation of External Alerts into the EAS

ANNEX H. SUPPORTING TEMPLATES

Relevant templates are to be found in the EAS Tool at the web address https://alerts.esa.int.

H1 Alert information to be sent to the EAFP

H2 Preliminary Alert Information

H3 Standard Letter to Manufacturer

H4 Data in the ESA Alerts for release to participants