

ASGARDIA: SPACE NATION OR PIE IN SKY?

What is Asgardia? Asgardia is the nation-state of space, a new nation dedicated to expanding peaceful exploration of space for the benefit of humanity. It is led by Igor Ashurbeyli, chairman of UNESCO's Science of Space Committee and founder of the Aerospace International Research Centre in Vienna. At first glance, it's an amazing concept and surely one that every space scientist should welcome.

According to its website, Asgardia will offer an independent platform, free from the constraint of a land-based country's laws. It will become a place in orbit which is truly 'no man's land'. Its first aim is to launch a satellite in October 2017, on the 60th anniversary of the launch of

Sputnik. Another goal is to create a "protective shield" from threats to life on Earth, such as space debris, coronal mass ejections and asteroids.

The project, announced at a press conference in Paris on October 12, 2016, is urging people to sign up to become citizens.

Ashurbeyli has said that when the number of applications goes above 100,000, the organisation can officially apply to the UN for the status of state. The claims are visionary – but could they be something of a mirage?

In Norse mythology, Asgard is one of the Nine Worlds of the ancient gods, ruled over by Odin. Set in the skies, it is connected to Earth by the rainbow bridge, Bifrost. In taking the name Asgardia for the new "nation state", the founders call upon its potential citizens to create an independent world of peaceful scientific cooperation

Space. People regard it as the final frontier after centuries of conquest and settlement on Earth. However, many consider space exploration as something only large powerful countries can explore. Igor Ashurbeyli, the founder of Asgardia, plans to change all that. He believes that an orbiting space station has the potential to become a sovereign nation capable of protecting those on Earth and promoting peaceful space exploration. Asgardia's homepage says:

Asgardia is the prototype of a free and unrestricted society which holds knowledge, intelligence and science at its core along with the recognition of the ultimate value of each human life.

We could be on the cusp of a new era in space exploration. This project has the potential to foster a love of space unlike any before it. Who wants to be a terrestrial when you can have dual citizenship as an Asgardian? Can you imagine having a passport stamped with an Asgardian emblem? The sky is no longer the limit. It's the future.

The hopes of Asgardia include:

- **Fostering peaceful space exploration**
- **Giving more countries access to space technology**
- **Protecting Earthlings from celestial objects and space junk**

The Asgardia project, among other things, may help prepare better answers to the future governance of outer space – a topic of major concern to the United Nations. **There are more than 1400 members registered already, and once that number reaches 100,000 it can apply to join the UN as a new, independent nation.**

If you want to join, it's as easy as signing up online and, theoretically, you can become a citizen of Asgardia without ever leaving home. At least in the beginning, people won't actually reside on the satellite, but living in different countries all-over Earth



Artist's impression. Image via James Vaughan



Igor Ashurbeyli, chairman of UNESCO's Science of Space Committee and founder of the Aerospace International Research Centre

