

# **Electric Propulsion Missions in Europe, a lesson learned**

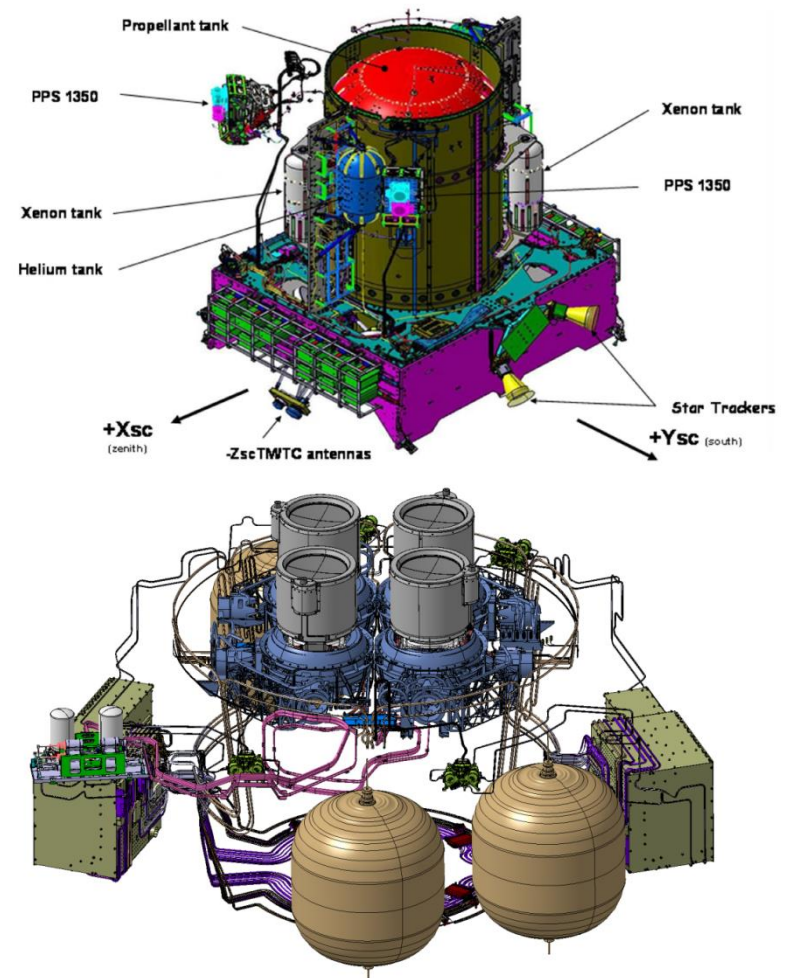
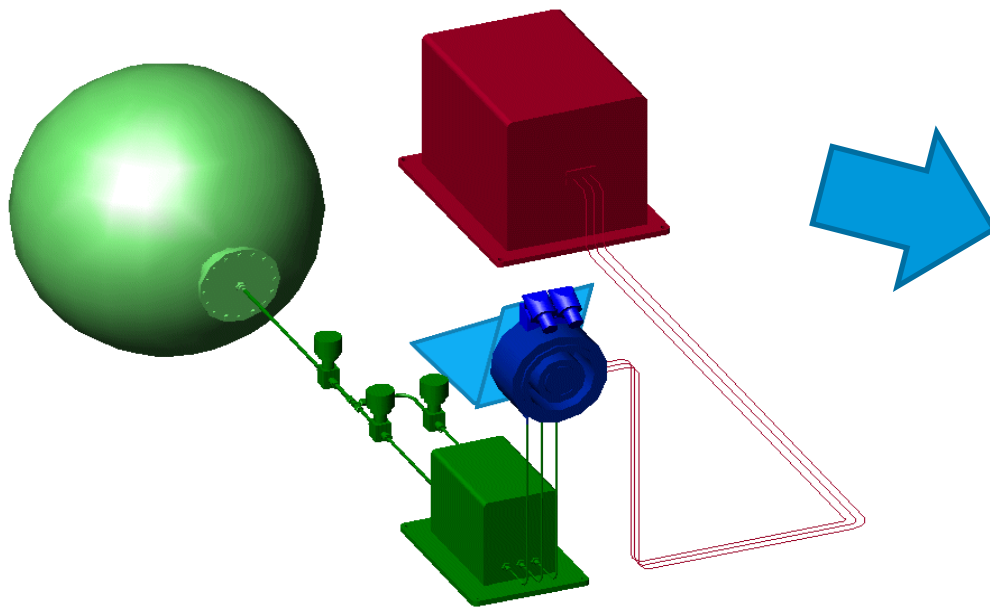
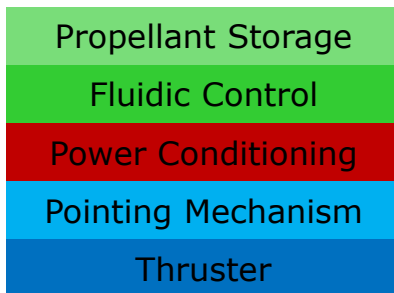
J. A. Gonzalez del Amo (ESA)

Madrid 14 June 2019

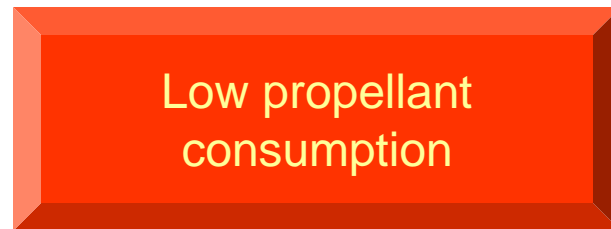
International Conference on Tethers in Space

1. Introduction
2. Applications
  - 2.1 Commercial Spacecraft
  - 2.2 Navigation
  - 2.3 Science and Earth Observation
  - 2.4 Exploration
3. Important Technology Developments
4. EPIC: H2020
5. ESA Capabilities: ESA Propulsion Lab
6. Challenges and Applications for the Tether Community
7. Conclusions

# Electric Propulsion Systems



The most important advantages of electric propulsion with respect to conventional propulsion systems are:



More payload

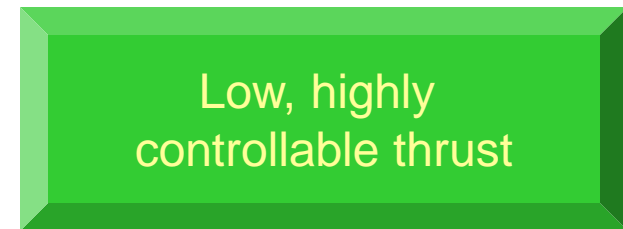
Longer mission

Cheaper launchers

Telecoms

Science

Earth Observation



Precise pointing

Science

Earth Observation

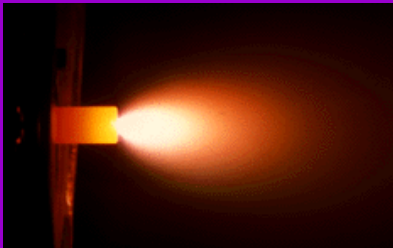
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## Spacecraft Electric Propulsion (EP) technologies

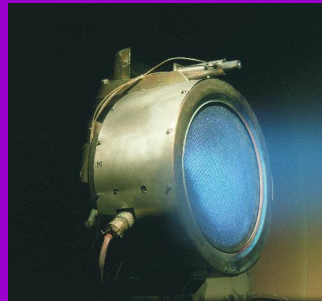
use electrical power to accelerate a propellant and, consequently, to apply a change of velocity to the spacecraft in a very efficient manner.

Depending on the process used to accelerate the propellant, electric propulsion thrusters are classified in:

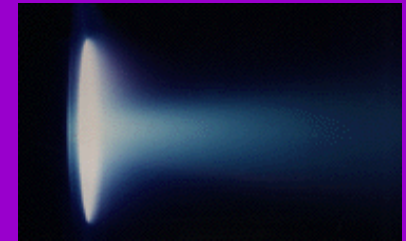
### Electrothermal



### Electrostatic

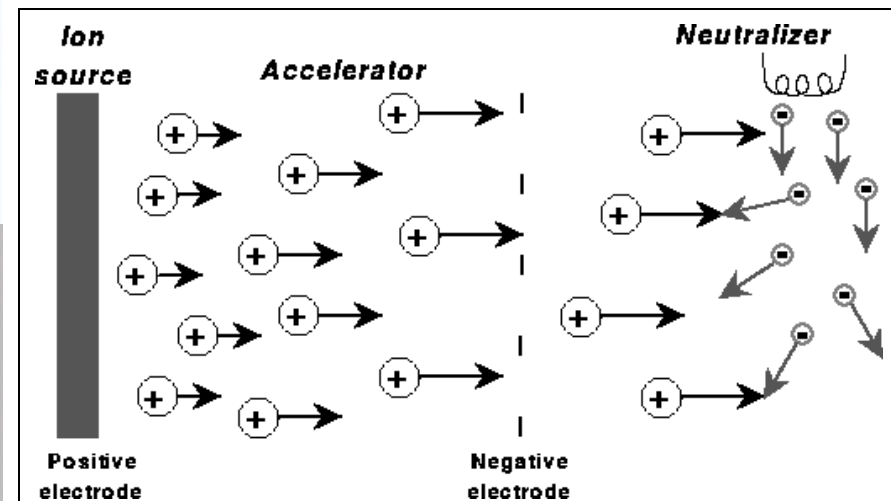
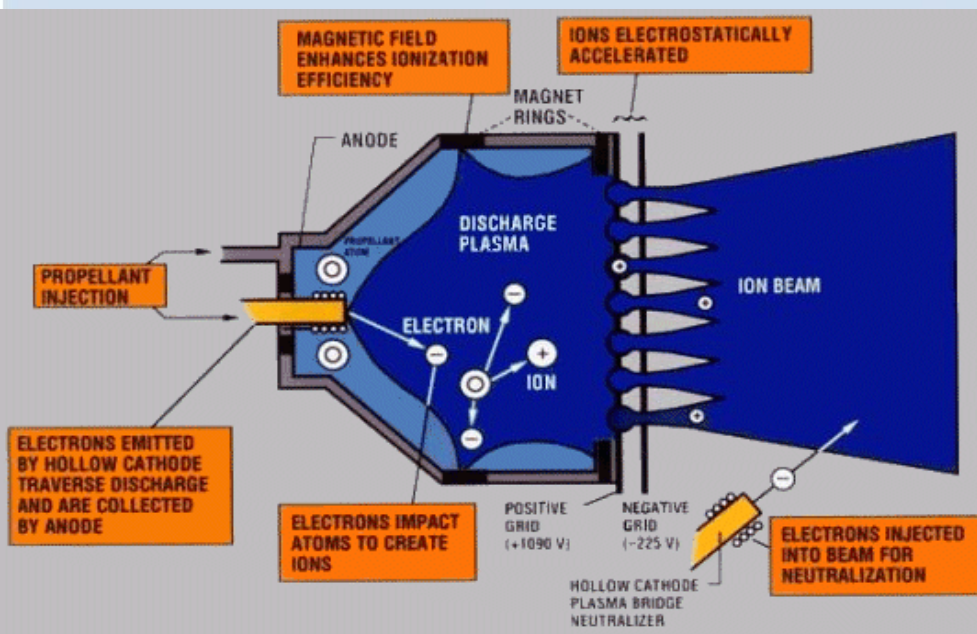
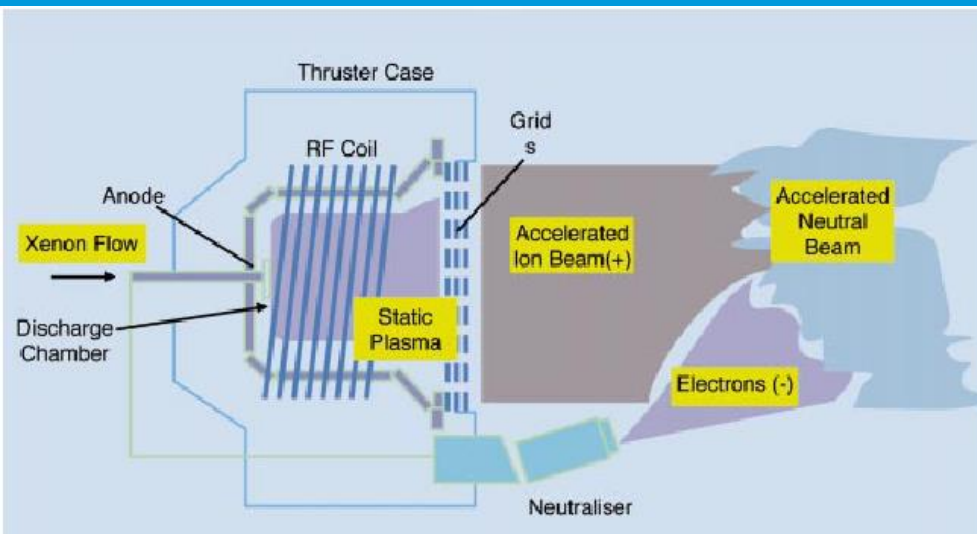


### Electromagnetic



# Gridded Ion Engines

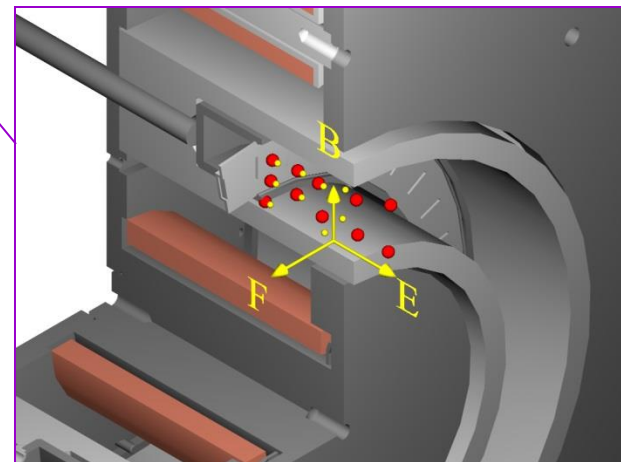
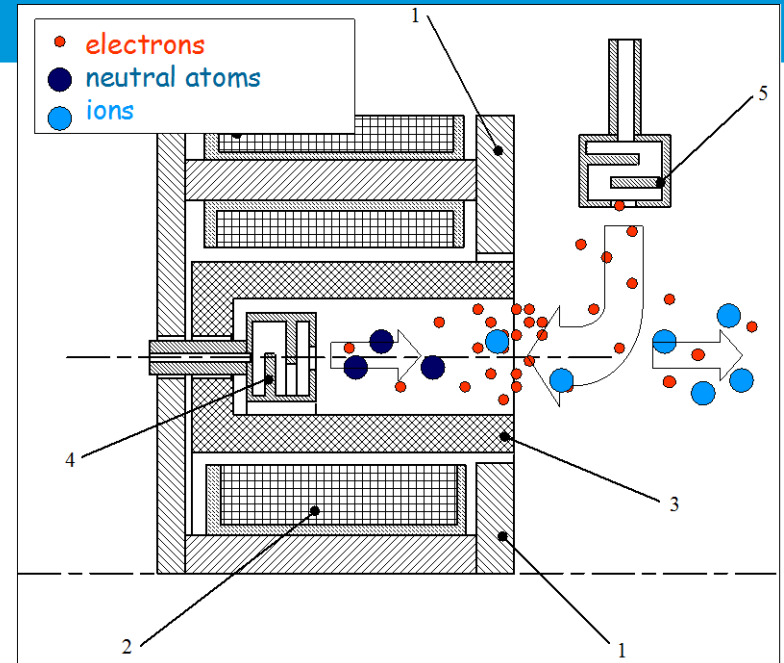
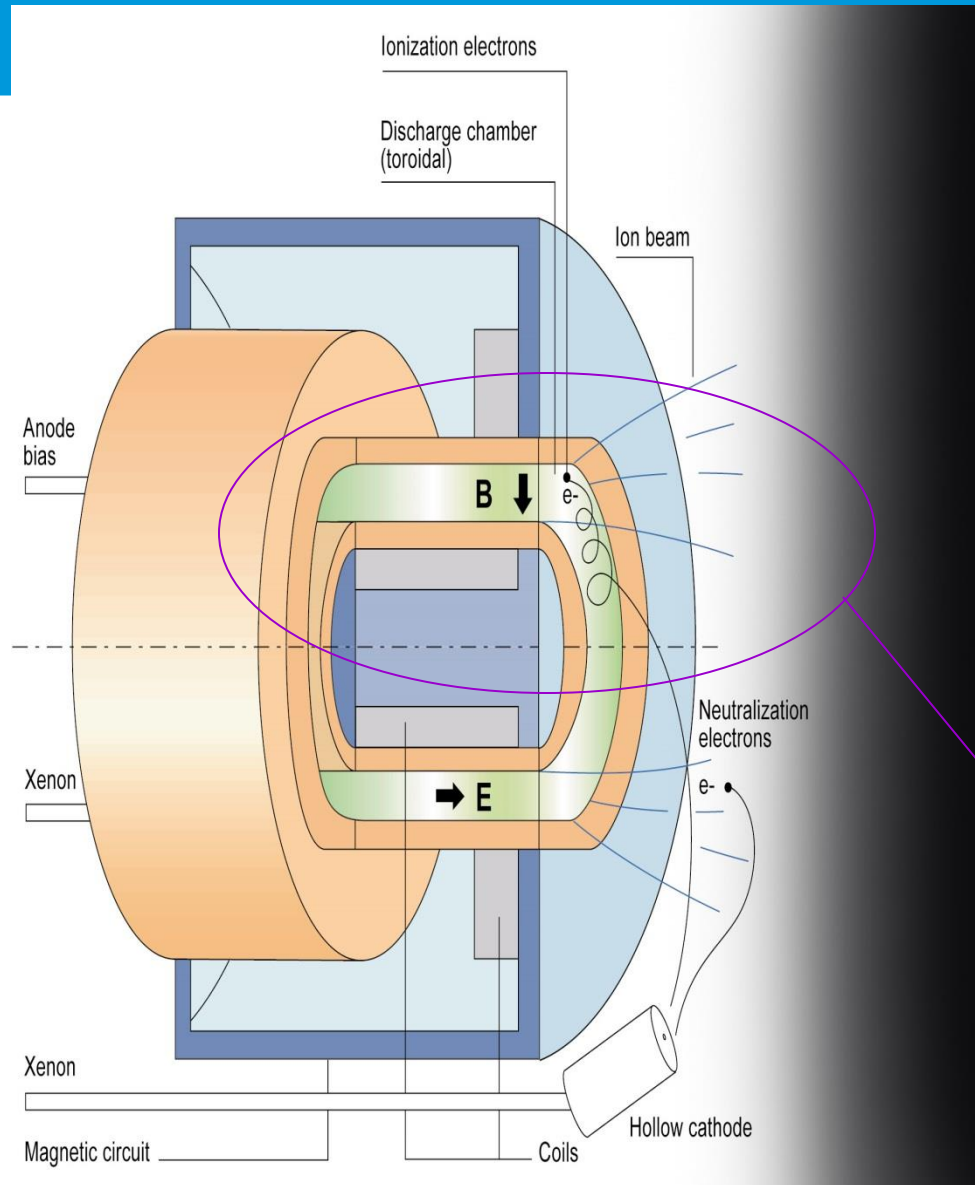
## Radiofrequency Ionisation Thruster (RIT) Working Principle



## Electron Bombardment Thruster Working Principle

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# Hall-effect thrusters



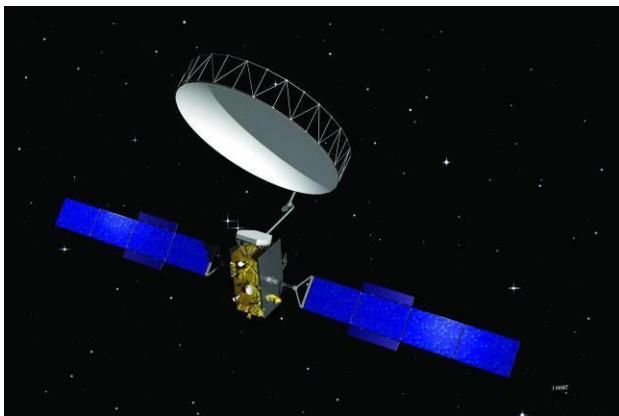




ESA **Artemis** satellite using 4 ion engines (2 RIT and 2 UK-10) has paved the way for the use of electric propulsion in telecommunication spacecraft.



Airbus and Thales with many spacecraft launched (4 **Inmarsat**, 1 **Intelsat** and 1 **Yasat** satellites, ...) and many more satellites in construction have the most important experience in Europe in integration of Electric Propulsion Systems.



Airbus and Thales have demonstrated their capability to integrate this technology in GEO satellites. The ESA **Alphasat** spacecraft will use PPS1350 for NSSK operations. Alphasat evolution will also consider Electric propulsion for future missions.

**Small GEO** satellite has 4 Hall Effect thrusters, SPT-100,

**NEOSAT and ELECTRA** will have EP for station keeping and ORBIT RAISING manoeuvres. FULL EP SPACECRAFT (PPS5000). Astrium and Thales will use the HET technology in Eurostar and Spacebus platforms.



# Telecommunication Applications

## Future Architectures

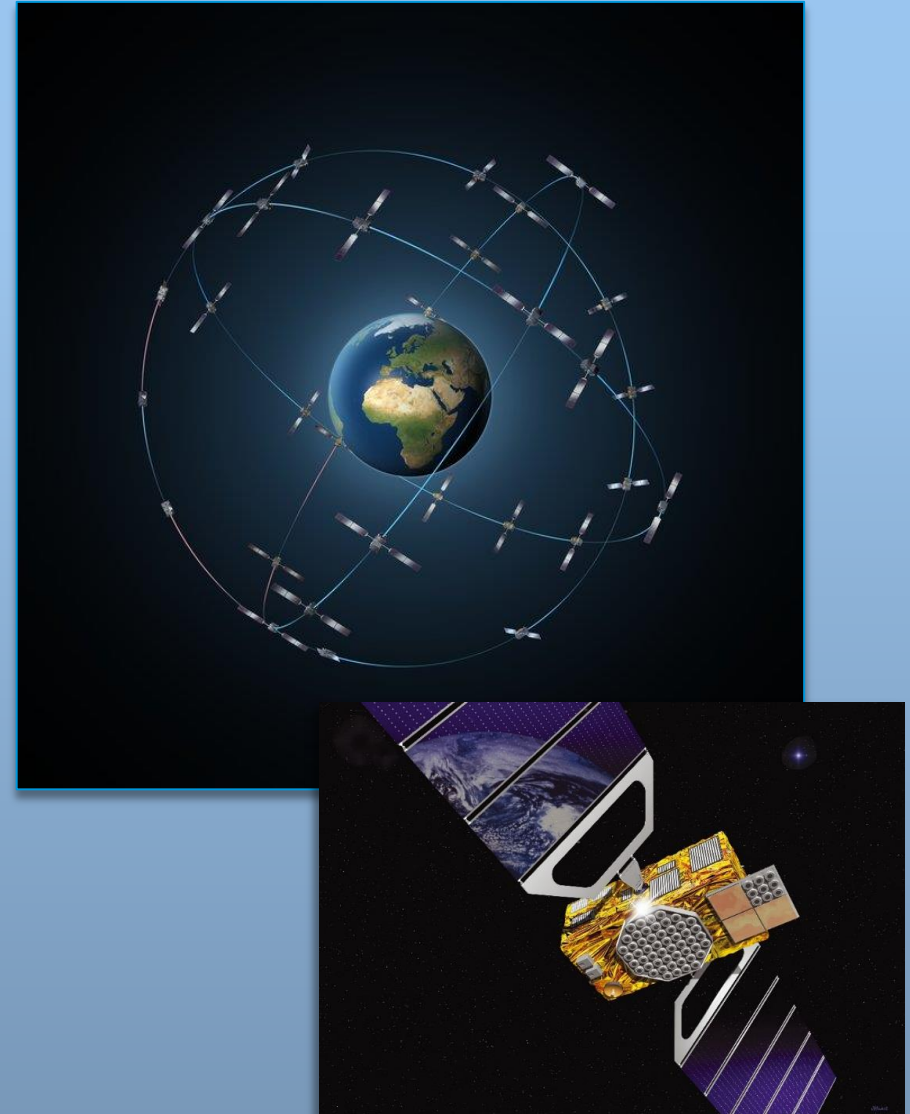


- The use of Electric Propulsion in the telecommunication space market is essential to improve the position of the European space sector. The announcement of Boeing in 2012 on the procurement of 4 telecommunication spacecraft (platform 702SP) , offered for only 125 million dollars each including launch, thanks to the use of electric propulsion for both NSSK and orbit raising from GTO to GEO, has been noted by European operators and primes. The launch of the first 2 spacecraft took place on the 1 March 2015. AsianSat has already ask for another extra-satellite.
- ESA is now fully involved in the preparation of several telecommunication programmes (**NeoSat, Electra**) that will make use of electric propulsion for all the key maneuvers, paving the way for the commercial use of all-electric platforms by the primes Astrium, Thales and OHB Systems.
- Eutelsat and SES have bought in the last years several spacecraft using electric propulsion as main system for orbit raising and station keeping operations.
- Boeing has selected the Falcon 9 for the launch of these spacecraft. Current and future European launchers will need to be capable to optimise their performances, interfaces and operations to offer the best launch options to new all-electric platforms.

# Navigation – Galileo 2nd Generation (G2G)



- ESA is preparing the future replacement of GALILEO constellation and is targeting the possibility to increase the Galileo Payload capability without impacting the launch costs (and possibly reducing them).
- The increase in payload capability could be achieved by changing the launch injection strategy and by using Electric Propulsion to transfer the satellite from the injection orbit to the target operational orbit.
- The use of the Electric Propulsion system might allow to use small launchers such as VEGA or place more spacecraft in the current SOYUZ and Ariane 5 launchers.
- GIE and HET subsystems are currently considered for the transfer by the selected Primes of Phase A/B1.



# Commercial Spacecraft: Constellations



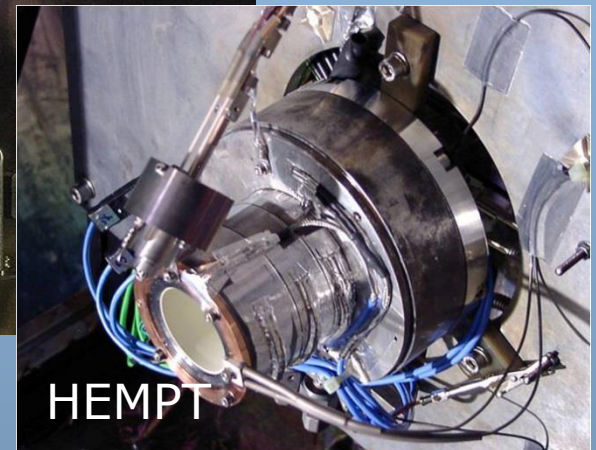
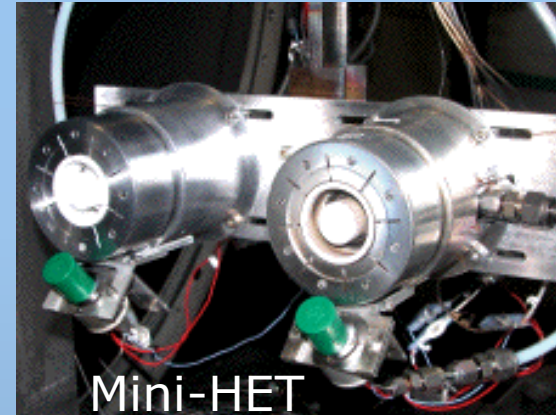
1. Space X/ Starlink: >5000 spacecraft using mini-HET
2. OneWeb: > 700 spacecraft may also use electric propulsion
3. Others (Leosat, etc.)

Constellations will use propulsion to perform;

- orbit acquisition, maintenance and de-orbiting from low earth orbit (around 1000km)

Satellites

- ~ 200 kg with
- powers for propulsion ~ 200 W.
- Mini-HET is one of the most interesting options.
- Spacecraft cost around 500 000 \$
- the propulsion system (thruster ~15 000 \$ and electronics ~25 000 \$)

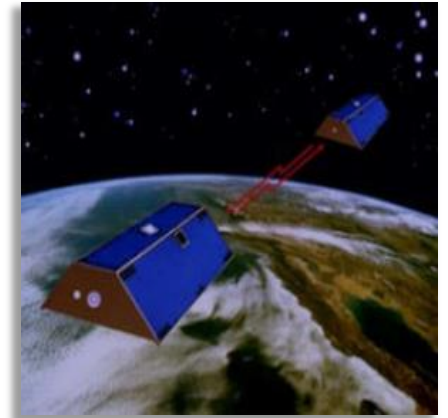




***GOCE***



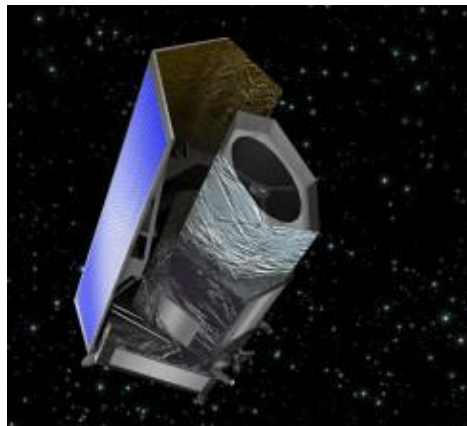
***Smart-1***



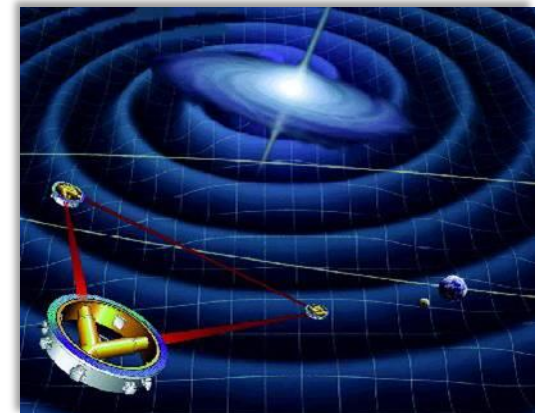
***NGGM***



***Bepi-Colombo***



***Euclid***



***LISA***

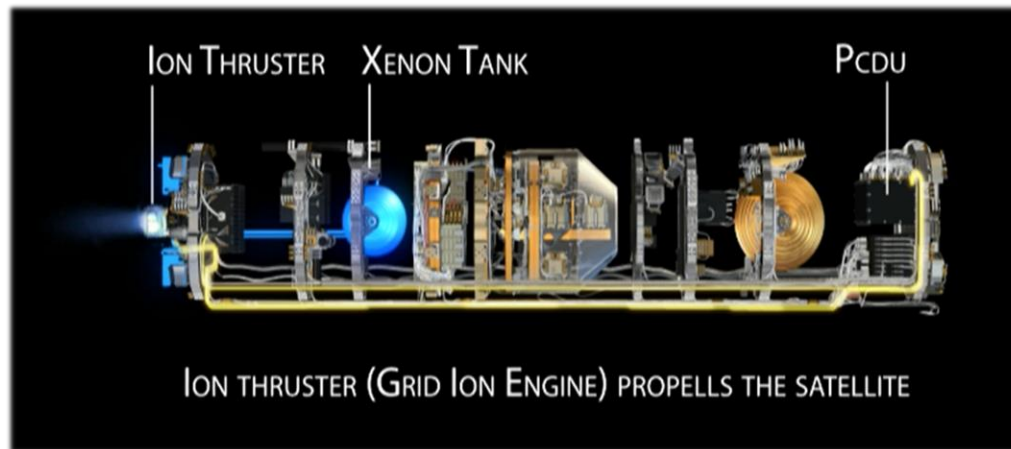


# GOCE: 'Ferrari of space' Mission Complete



After nearly tripling its planned lifetime, the Gravity field and steady-state Ocean Circulation Explorer – GOCE – completed its mission in October 2013

In mid-October 2013, the mission came to a natural end when it ran out of fuel and the satellite began its descent towards Earth from a height of about 224 km.



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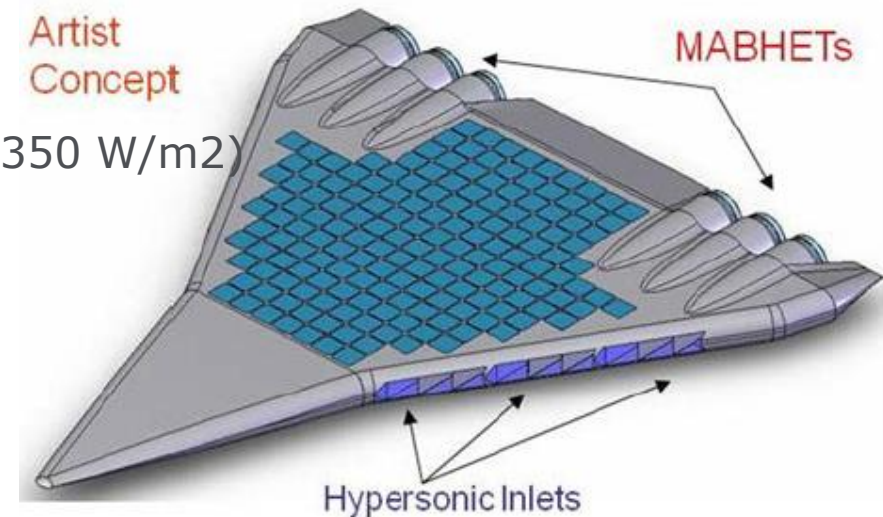
1. In 2007, an high level ESA-CDF feasibility study concluded that to compensate the drag of a spacecraft operating at altitudes as lower as 180 km, a ram-EP concept, could be a feasible solution. As such lift-times can become far longer than with conventional electric thrusters today.
2. In 2010, under TRP contract, two test campaigns were carried out on Snecma's PPS1350 Hall Thruster and on RIT-10 ion engine for performance characterization with atmospheric propellants:
  - a. HET and RIT technologies are compatible with N<sub>2</sub>/O<sub>2</sub> mixture, which is of interest for RAM-EP applications in LEO (200-250 km).
  - b. The thruster lifetime and lifetime prediction are strongly affected by corrosion/erosion phenomena. However, with the appropriate choice of materials, the lifetime can still be in the 1000-10000 hours range.

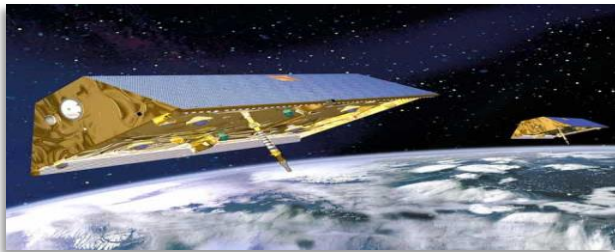
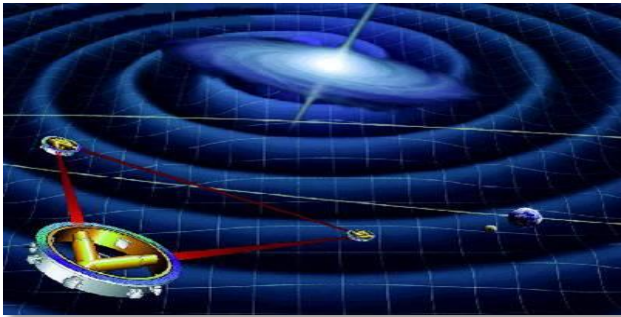


# Martian Atmosphere Breathing Hall Effect Thruster (MABHET) by Busek & NASA : Extremely Long Mission Capabilities



1. Concept studies by BUSEK / Nasa Glenn: ( **K.Hohman, V. Hruby, H. Kamhawi** )
2. Solar Electric Power Orbiting Spacecraft that ingests Mars Atmosphere, Ionizes a Fraction of that Gas and Accelerates the Ions to High Velocity
3. Mars atmosphere is thin and composed mainly CO<sub>2</sub>
4. The altitudes of interest are 120-180km due to drag and power requirements
5. The orbital velocity is around 3.4km/s
6. Solar Flux is about 584 W/m<sup>2</sup> (Earth ~1350 W/m<sup>2</sup>)

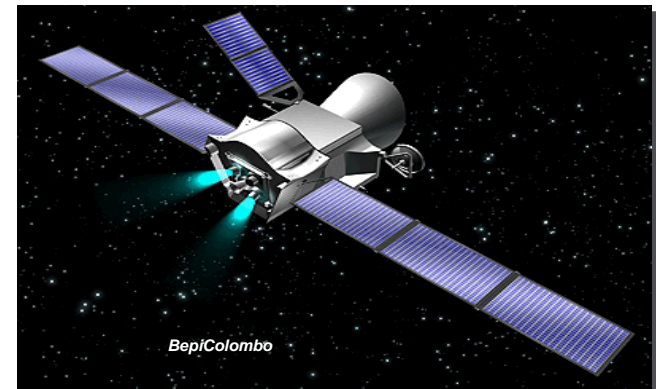
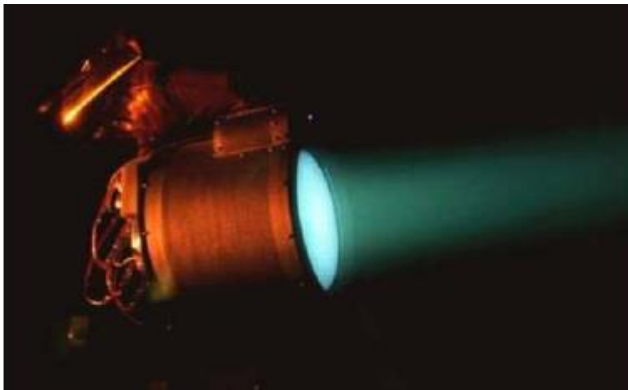
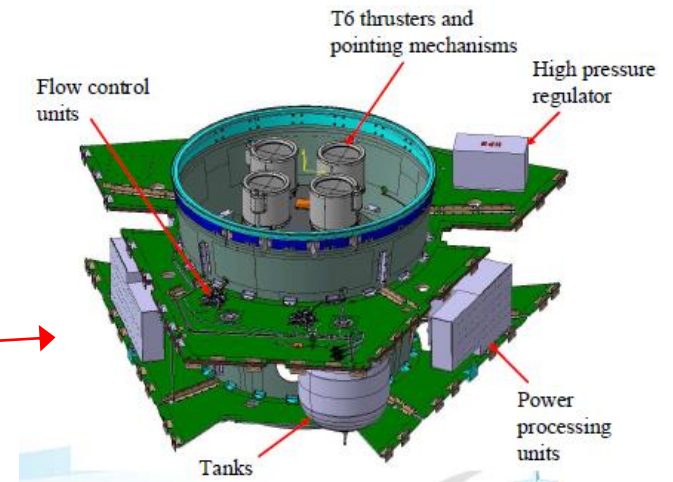
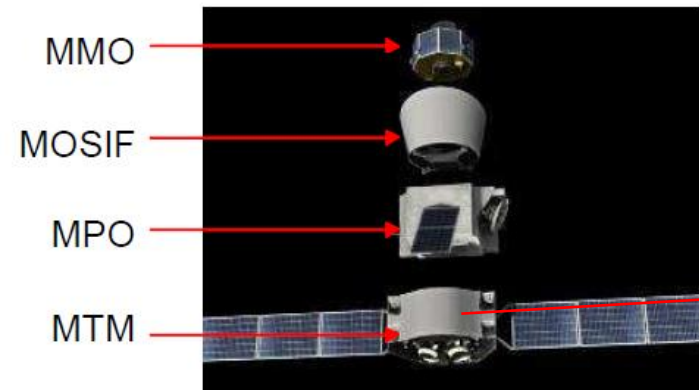




## Future Needs

- Next Generation Gravity Missions, NGGM, will require Mini-ion Engines and micro-field emission thrusters to provide drag compensation and formation control.
- LISA class missions will require micro thrusters for ultra-fine formation control. Mini-ion engines, cold gas and field emission engines are the main candidates.
- Future asteroid, rendezvous or planetary missions will require high ISP thrusters for cruise to the target object.
- Remote sensing and science missions using formation flying will need electric propulsion for formation control.

# Bepi Colombo mission to Mercury



# Science and Earth Observation

## Electrical Propulsion Developments and Challenges



### Where are we today?

- Electric propulsion has taken us to the Moon (**SMART-1**) and is allowing us to measure the Earth's gravitational field with unprecedented accuracy (**GOCE**).
- Electric propulsion is planned to take us to the planet Mercury (**BepiColombo**)
- Small constellations such as **ICEYE** are going to use the FOTEC-ENPULSION field emission thrusters (FEEP) IFM Nano to keep the constellation in orbit and de-orbit all the satellites when the life is finished. This thrusters are already flying since beginning of 2018.

### Required on-going & future developments

- Mini-ion engines system and micro-field emission thrusters are in development to satisfy the needs of future gravity missions and other science missions such as **NGGM and LISA**.
- Mini-hall thrusters system are in development to satisfy the needs of future mini/micro-satellites to perform SK and disposal maneuvers in **constellations**.
- Micropropulsion for **Nanosatellites** and microsatellites (**NEW MARKET**)
- **Large Electric Propulsion Systems** must be developed to meet the needs of future asteroid or planetary exploration missions. Cargo missions to Mars will also make a good use of these systems. **Space Tugs (NEW MARKET)**



Space Tugs are currently under discussion at all three European LSIs. Electric propulsion is considered as one of the key technologies for Space Tugs due to the relatively low propellant consumption compared to chemical propulsion. At the moment four different use cases are foreseen for Space Tugs:

- a. GEO Servicing
- b. LEO/MEO Debris Removal (Mega constellations, SSO debris removal)
- c. LEO/MEO to GEO tugging (for telecommunication satellites, 60 kW tug would be required)
- d. Moon cargo delivery (high Isp operation would be of interest)

A clear need has been identified for the development of high power ( $\sim 15$  kW-20kW), long lifetime Hall effect thrusters in the frame of discussions concerning future Space Tugs.

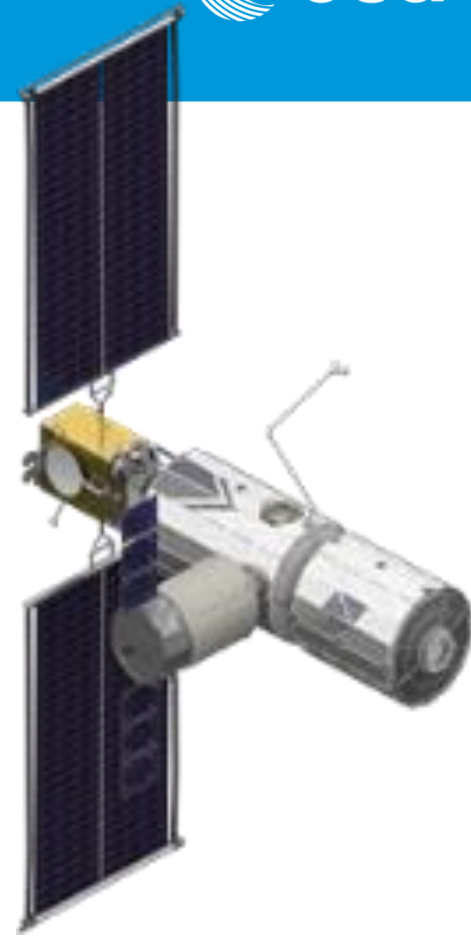
Several meetings have been performed to identify possible commonalities in terms of technology development between Space Tug applications and e.Deorbit.



# Perspective for Cislunar Infrastructure

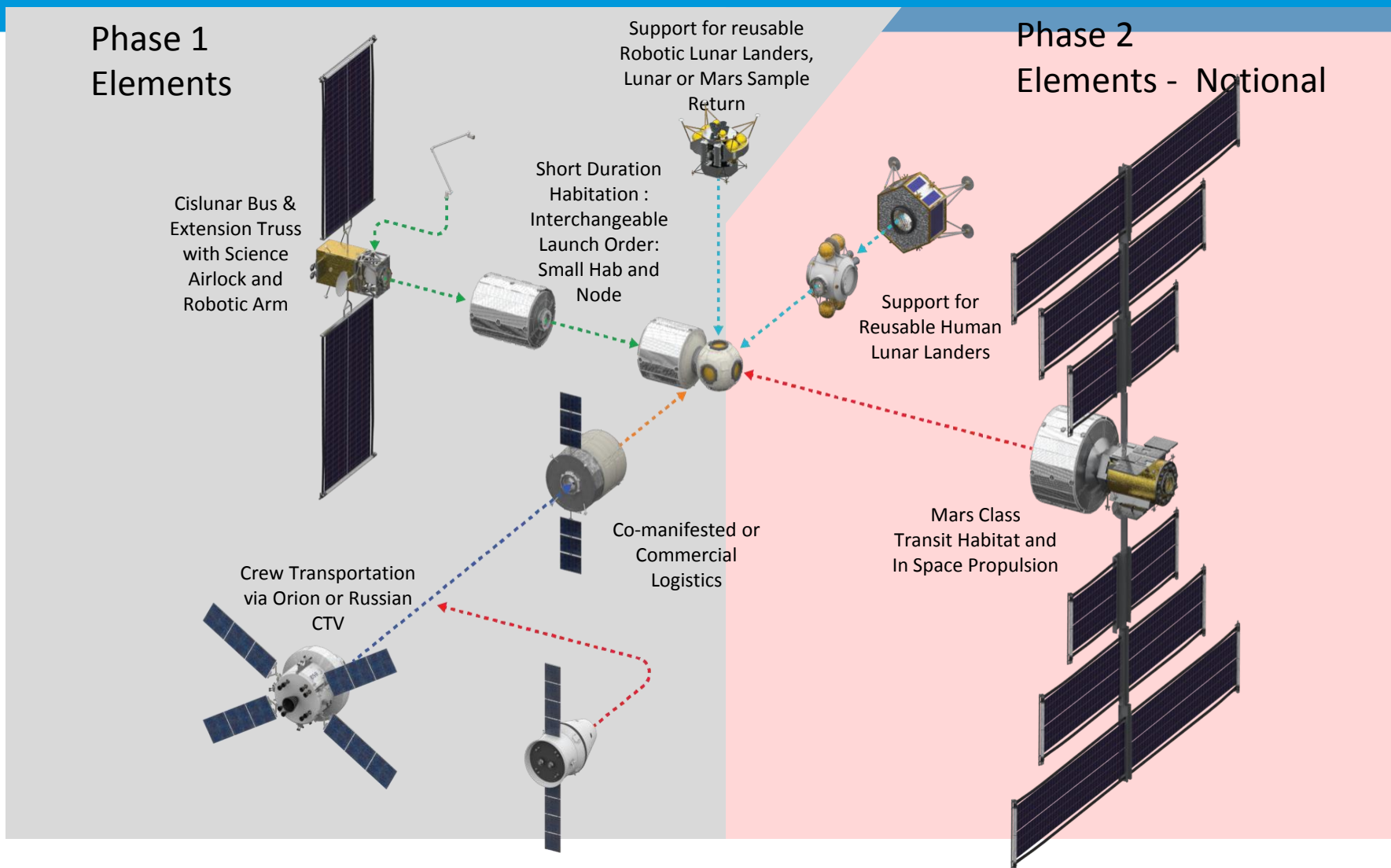


1. ESA and the ISS Partners are discussing plans for beyond LEO activities, considering a small man-tended infrastructure in Cis-Lunar orbit, known as evolvable Deep Space Habitat or Cis-Lunar Transfer Habitat (CTH).
2. This is the first enabling step to a sustainable access to the Moon surface and will be assembled and serviced using excess launch mass capability of NASA's SLS/Orion.
3. During Phase 1 (2023-2026) such an infrastructure shall support up to 90 days of crewed operations and robotics surface missions.
4. During Phase 2 (2026-2030) it shall support up to 300 days of crewed operations and Moon robotics and crewed surface missions. Then part of the CTH may go to a crewed trip to Mars.
5. Phase 2 will see the arrival of a larger habitation module and resource/propulsion service module





# Cislunar Phase 1 and 2



# Exploration:

**Application Area: Advanced Propulsion** *(Priority for Space Council)*

*Technology Subject: Electric Propulsion for High Capacity Cargo Transfer*



20-30kW Electric Propulsion System

## High Capacity Cargo Transfer

Orbit Transfer / Raising Vehicle

2020-2023

20-30kW Thruster Testing Facilities

## Orbit Insertion & Maintenance

Large GEO S/C & Long duration operations  
around other planets  
Orbit Insertion & Maintenance

2018-2019

20-30kW System Components

## Rendezvous & Docking

2013-2017

Alternative Propellants

High Current Cathode Technology

5KW Propulsion Systems

- **HALL EFFECT THRUSTER:** Extension of lifetime via magnetic confinement and double operation point (higher thrust during orbit raising and higher specific impulse during NSSK). TELECOMMUNICATION, Navigation and Science and Exploration missions will benefit from these developments. Power levels around 5 kW or higher. System activities, cost reduction and industrial production issues should be assessed.
- **ION ENGINE:** Reduction of the power to thrust ratio via the cusp design . TELECOMMUNICATION, Navigation and Science and Exploration missions will benefit from these developments. Power levels around 5 kW or higher. System activities, cost reduction and industrial production issues should be assessed.
- **HEMPT:** High power HEMPT with high lifetime and different operation points to adapt the thruster output to the power of the solar array of the spacecraft. TELECOMMUNICATION, Navigation and Science and Exploration missions will benefit from these developments. System activities, cost reduction and industrial production issues should be assessed.
- **Mini-ion engines, FEEPs and mini-Hall effect thrusters** will be used for science and Earth observation missions. Thrust levels from micro-Newtons to some milli-Newtons. Lifetime will be a special issue to be assessed.
- **Testing facilities:** The utilisation of High power engines will pose strong requirements in acceptance testing facilities. The standardisation of testing methods will also be required to reduce cost and risk of these developments.
- **New High Power Electric Propulsion** Concepts evaluation (Helicon Antenna Thruster, Electron Cyclotron Resonance thruster, MPD, E-Imapct thruster, etc.). **MICROPROPULSION and VERY HIGH POWER EP**

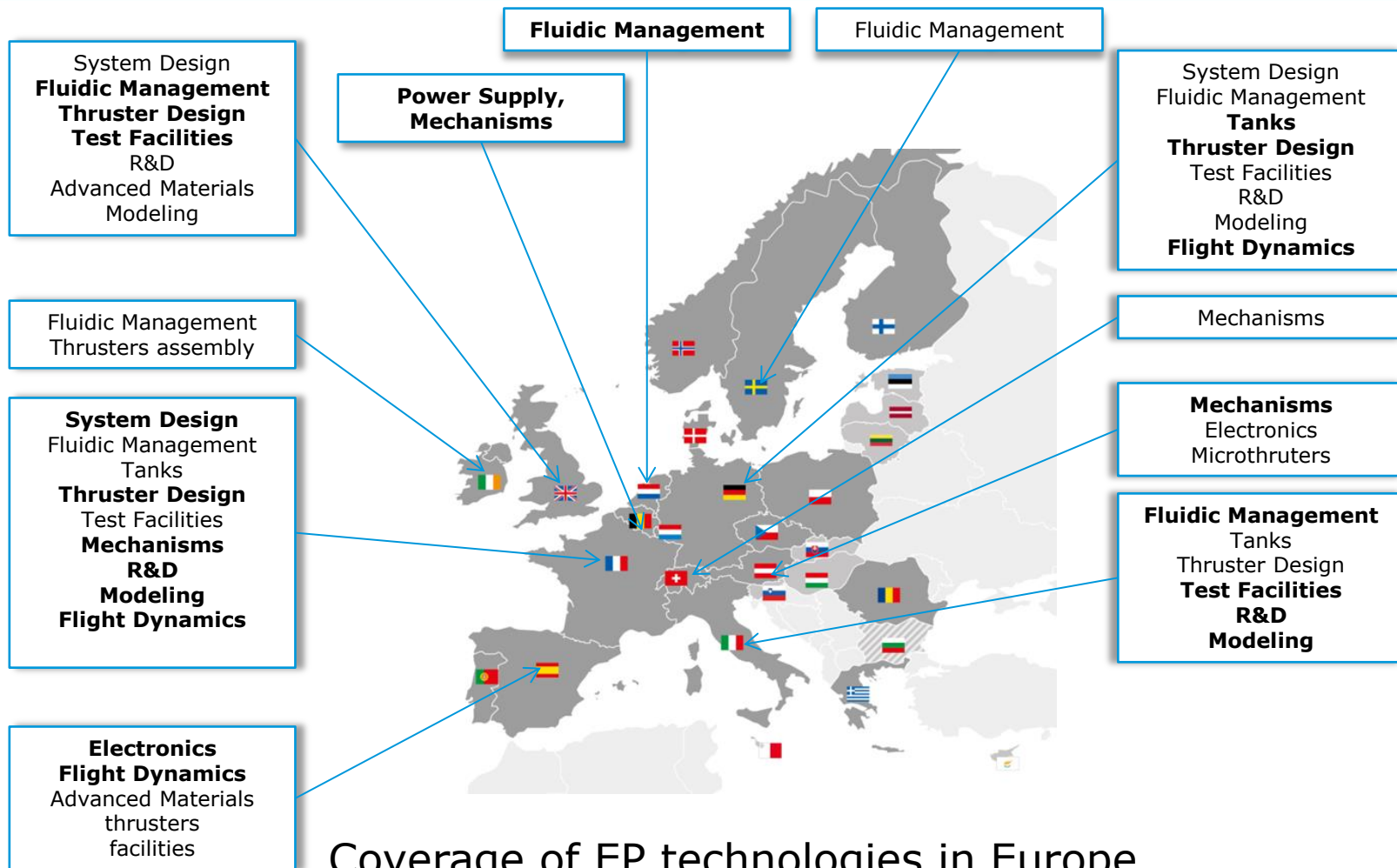
# EPIC: H2020 SRC for Electric Propulsion



- Electric propulsion has been identified by European actors as a Strategic Technology for improving the European competitiveness in different space areas.
- **The European Commission (EC)** has set up the “In-space Electrical Propulsion and Station-Keeping” Strategic Research Cluster (SRC) in Horizon 2020 with the goal of enabling major advances in Electric Propulsion for in-space operations and transportation, in order to contribute to guarantee the leadership of European capabilities in electric propulsion at world level within the 2020-2030 timeframe.
- The SRCs will be implemented through a system of grants connected among them and consisting of:
  - 1) “Programme Support Activity” (**PSA**): The main role of this PSA is to elaborate a roadmap and implementation plan for the whole SRC and provide advice to the EC on the calls for operational grants.
  - 2) Operational grants: In future work programmes (2016 and 2020), and on the basis of this **SRC** roadmap and the PSA advice for the calls, the Commission is expected to publish calls for “operational grants” as research and innovation grants (100%) and/or innovation grants (70%).



# Capabilities in Europe



Coverage of EP technologies in Europe



# Capabilities in ESA ESA Propulsion Laboratory



- ESA Propulsion Laboratory (EPL) located in ESTEC, The Netherlands.
- Provide test services to the Propulsion and Aerothermodynamics division of the European Space Agency, which is responsible for the technical support to ESA projects and the R&D activities in the areas of chemical propulsion, electric and advanced propulsion, and aerothermodynamics.



**CORONA**



**Micro Newton**



**Small Plasma Facility**



**FEEP**



**GIGANT**



**ELECTRON**



**GALILEO**

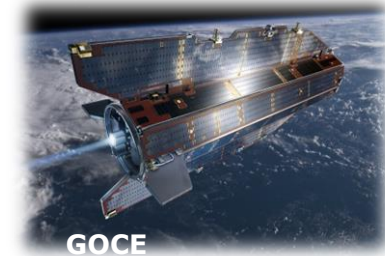
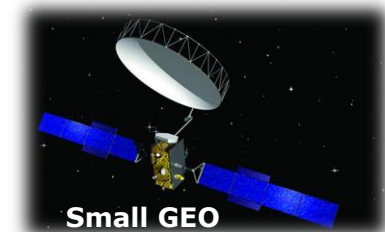
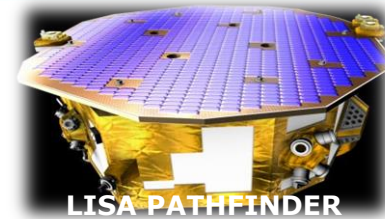
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# 3. EPL Activities



- Support to ESA projects
  - Independent performance assessments
  - Quick answers to specific questions
- Support to R&D Activities
  - Technology assessment for ESA R&D programs
  - Explorative internal R&D work on new technologies
  - International scientific/technical cooperation
  - Patent exploitation
- Support to European Aerospace Industry
  - Reference for standardization of testing methods and tools
  - Joint testing for cross verification of performance



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- **Consolidation of the current European products** (Hall effect thrusters, ion engines, field emission thrusters, HEMPT, MPD, etc.). In this process the qualification of the European products is one of the main activities together with the European autonomy in components. ESA aims to have full European systems where not only the thruster is European but also components such as pressure regulators, feeding systems, neutralizers, etc.
- **Utilization of the current flight data** (Artemis, Smart-1, GOCE, Inmarsat 4F, Intelsat 10, Astra 1K, Alphabus, Small GEO, Bepi Colombo, etc.) to validate the models that will be used by the spacecraft designers in the future.
- **Standardization of engineering processes and testing facilities** employed in the design, manufacturing and qualification of the current electric propulsion systems.
- **New electric propulsion systems:** higher and lower power (space tugs, nanosatellites ...). **MICROTHRUSTERS and VERY HIGH POWER EP**

1. **Microthruster** development and measurement of microthrust levels are very challenging. **Micropropulsion Systems for Nanosats.**
2. **High power thrusters** (5kW, 15-20kW) capable of operating at high specific impulse with a low power to thrust ratio (orbit raising and interplanetary transfer). Double operation mode for telecommunications and Space Tugs.
3. **Qualification through long lifetime** testing such as Bepi Colombo.
4. **EP Cost reduction and Mass Production** exercise at system level specially for Constellations, in particular for de-orbiting.
5. **Spacecraft thruster possible interactions.**
6. **Flight opportunities**, Bepi Colombo, Neosat, Electra, NGGM, ICEYE...

1. **Applications: De-orbiting of satellites (constellations) , orbit changing, AOCS, exploration.**
2. **Low Cost, Low complexity technology**
3. **Challenges: deployment, materials, reliability, performance.**
4. **Qualification through lifetime and endurance testing.**
5. **Cost reduction and Mass Production** exercise at system level specially for Constellations, in particular for de-orbiting.
6. **Spacecraft/tethers possible interactions.** Possible materials degradation in LEO.
7. **Flight opportunities:** IOD/IOV use of flight data and performance validation
8. **Standarisation of Engineering processes,** (constellations, mass production)

- **Telecommunication market** will be able to make an immediate use of these EP technologies for on orbit control and full or partial transfer. **5kW** engines with low power to thrust ratio and high specific impulse will be very important. Dual mode and long lifetimes will be important.
- **Navigation, Science** (interplanetary missions) and **Exploration** (the Moon, Asteroids and Mars) will require EP systems.
- **Mini- ion engines, FEEPs, mini-Halls, electrosprays** with capability to fulfil stringent Science and Earth Observation requirements (LISA, NGGM, Euclid, microsatellites etc.). **MICROPROPULSION FOR NANOSATELLITES will be a new market. Constellations such as ICEYE are flying mini-satellites with EP thrusters (FOTEC-ENPULSION).**
- **Very High Power** Electric Propulsion for Exploration and Space Tugs. **10-20 kW engines** will have to be developed.
- **Constellations of satellites** may make use of EP systems at very low prices due among several reasons to the large quantities. Low power engines for constellations.
- EC **EPIC** Programme in H2020, an effort for Europe.
- The **Tether Community** can benefit of the lessons learned from EP. Cost reduction and mass production for de-orbiting technologies for constellations.