Airbus Foundation joins explorer and scientist Jean-Louis Etienne's Polar POD expedition

Airbus observation and communication satellites will support Polar POD's scientific studies

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Toulouse, 27 February 2023 – The Airbus Foundation has signed an agreement with the Polar POD expedition to support both the scientific programme and the operational phase of the mission. The Airbus Foundation will provide access to products and services such as Earth observation satellite data, as well as offering additional capabilities for reliable high-speed telecommunications.

The maritime expedition, driven by renowned French explorer and scientist Jean-Louis Etienne's non-profit organisation "Océan Polaire", aims to better understand global environmental and climate dynamics. Running for several years, it will achieve this by monitoring the Southern Ocean using an innovative inhabited low-carbon vessel: the Polar POD. It has no engine and will be propelled by the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, sails and wind power.

The aim of the Polar POD initiative is to measure air-sea exchanges to improve climate studies, detect man-made impacts (such as microplastics, pesticides, etc.), and analyse the ocean's weather, waves, winds and colour to improve satellite calibration.

"We are honoured to support this major oceanographic initiative by providing access to Airbus' products and services. The research being undertaken by the Polar POD expedition aims to help mitigate the impact of climate change and to restore damaged ecosystems. This mission is well-matched with our priorities and perfectly complements other projects supported by the Airbus Foundation, which have until now focused on land-based activities, such as wildlife and ecosystem protection and reforestation monitoring," said Rachel Schroeder, Managing Director, Airbus Foundation. "The Foundation and Polar POD teams will work side-by-side to successfully implement this extraordinary mission and tackle the important scientific and technological challenge together."

"Polar POD will explore the Southern Ocean, which has the world's largest ocean data gap. Severely under-sampled by traditional methods, we have designed the Polar POD: a floating inhabited laboratory that can withstand the severe conditions of the 'Furious Fifties' all year round. This huge circumpolar ocean is the largest oceanic carbon sink on Earth; climate models have an urgent need for this uptake of CO2. The Southern Ocean, which links the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific waters, is an immense reservoir of marine biodiversity. Polar

POD, a silent platform, is a unique opportunity to make an acoustic census of marine life. The resulting data will be shared by scientific institutions worldwide, and available for collaborative educational projects. Thank you to the Airbus Foundation for contributing to this unprecedented and long-awaited maritime exploration," said Jean-Louis Etienne.

Airbus optical and radar satellite constellations will support the scientific studies of the Polar POD initiative, offering better resolution than public satellites. All images acquired by Airbus satellites will support the communication and educational impact of the initiative.

The Airbus Foundation will also provide access to additional Airbus services such as telecommunication services for high-speed data transmissions, in this remote part of the world, far from commercial maritime routes. These services will also enable live transmissions during television broadcasts with a higher resolution.

More information on the Polar POD initiative, the vessel and the mission can be found here.

More information on the Airbus Foundation can be found on our webpage.

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Contacts for the media

Daniel Werdung
Airbus
+49 40 743 59078
daniel.werdung@airbus.com