



PRESS RELEASE

Aalborg

18 September 2026

Sternula selected as VDES operations partner for a new ESA project, ALCYON, on satellite-based maritime and aeronautical surveillance

Sternula, the Danish company specializing in VDES (VHF Data Exchange System) technology, announces its selection by French satellite operator, Kineis, and the European Space Agency (ESA) as VDES operations partner in ALCYON, a study on the future of satellite-based maritime (AIS/VDES) and aeronautical (ADS-B) surveillance. The project is part of the Low-LEO layer of the European IRIS² programme, the low-orbit segment of the future European sovereign constellation.

Backed by the European Union and ESA, IRIS² (Infrastructure for Resilience, Interconnectivity and Security by Satellite) aims to equip Europe with a constellation of satellites in low and medium orbit, delivering secure connectivity services to Member States, institutions and businesses. In this strategic context, ESA has entrusted the ALCYON project to a consortium led by Kinéis, as part of the IRIS² Low-LEO Pre-Operational and De-Risking Activities under ESA's Programme Related to EU Secure Connectivity.

ALCYON is an In-Orbit Validation (IOV) mission designed to test, under real conditions, two services made possible by the future IRIS² LEO constellation: maritime surveillance, to improve the tracking and identification of vessels worldwide, and aeronautical surveillance, to strengthen air traffic tracking. On the maritime side, the demonstrator relies on VDES, the technology that extends AIS by enabling genuine two-way data exchange with ships.

Sternula's role in the project is to lead VDES operations, drawing on our experience from operating the STERNULA-1 satellite and establishing an end-to-end VDES services platform. That expertise directly supports ALCYON's goal of demonstrating how a low-orbit constellation can strengthen maritime safety, the fight against illegal fishing, and environmental monitoring.

"We are proud of being selected to lead the VDES service operations activity for ALCYON and to contribute to the overall system architecture and mission plan. The project puts us at the center of the establishment of a new European sovereign satellite infrastructure for maritime digitalization", said Lars Moltsen, CEO & Co-Founder of Sternula. "VDES will be part of United Nations maritime regulation from 2028, and over the next few years, we will see a digital revolution in the maritime domain unlike anything seen before. The technology solves a number of security gaps in older systems, and it will be the main channel for the dissemination of critical information to ships, including navigational warnings, weather alerts, and recommended routes through challenging straits. For us, the project is a perfect match with our core competencies within VDES networking and service provisioning."

ALCYON now enters a four-month consolidation phase, during which Kinéis, Sternula, Thales Alenia Space, Satlab and ESSP will co-specify the future in-orbit demonstrator dedicated to maritime and aeronautical surveillance for the future low LEO layer of the IRIS² constellation.

The project runs until January 2027.



About Sternula

Sternula was founded in 2019, with the mission of providing trusted connectivity for ship operations using AIS 2.0 (VDES and related technologies). We want to establish the world's largest integrated satellite and coastal network for maritime digital services.

Sternula works on making global, real-time AIS 2.0 connectivity a reality, taking a lead in technology development and standardization, and supporting the maritime industry's transition to digital operations while contributing to enhanced safety, sustainability, and operational excellence.

The company plays an active role in the global development and standardization of VDES, collaborating closely with maritime stakeholders and international organizations such as IALA, IMO, and ITU.

Visit www.sternula.com to learn more about Sternula.

Connect with Sternula on [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

For more information, please contact:

Lars Moltsen
CEO, Sternula
Phone number: (+45) 25 21 46 35
Email: lars@sternula.com

About ESA Programme Related to EU Secure Connectivity

Under the overall responsibility of the European Commission, IRIS² is a bold endeavour to build a space-based secure and resilient connectivity network that elevates Europe's strategic autonomy and competitiveness, where and when it matters most. ESA acts on behalf of the European Commission as the qualification and validation authority for the governmental infrastructure of the Union Secure Connectivity Programme. It manages development and validation contracts supporting the initial space and ground segments, verifies end-to-end system, service, and security performance against EC requirements, and coordinates these activities with ESA's own programme.

Within this programme, the IRIS² Low-LEO Pre-Operational and De-Risk Activities components provide a rapid and recurrent mechanism for validating potential new governmental services and associated mission concepts in orbit up to a pre-operational level, subject to successful maturation and later programme-level decisions of integration into the operational EU IRIS² baseline.

Ultimately, these activities aim at contributing to the continued evolution and enhancement of IRIS² services and capabilities, supporting Europe's long-term leadership in space in an ever-changing world.

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