

PRESS RELEASE

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Sternula joins ESA co-funded study for a future Arctic satellite constellation supporting secure maritime communication

Sternula, GomSpace, LE Denmark and PIRC have been selected by the European Space Agency (ESA) to assess the foundation for a future satellite constellation based on VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) technologies that would provide secure and reliable digital communication for ships operating in the Arctic. The six-month study has a total value of DKK 3.8 million, with over DKK 1,5 million allocated to Sternula.

The project is funded under ESA's Safety and Security Systems from Space (4S) of the Agency's Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems (ARTES) programme and within ESA's Directorate of Resilience, Navigation and Connectivity.

Growing commercial activity and geopolitical attention in the Arctic are driving demand for resilient digital infrastructure. The study will gather and consolidate the needs of maritime authorities, users and other stakeholders, define system concepts, and assess development plans and service provisioning models, giving ESA and national authorities a clear basis for potential follow-on investment and a future demonstration mission.

"In times of great geopolitical uncertainty, critical infrastructure for resilience and security in the Arctic is no longer optional; it is a strategic necessity. This project, led by Denmark and backed by Canada, is an important strategic step towards a future Arctic-focused constellation, offering secure, spoof-resistant digital communication with ships in one of the most demanding maritime environments on Earth", says Lars Moltsen, founder and CEO at Sternula.

"I am pleased that PIRC will begin working as the Canadian user and service-requirements partner in this initiative. We share a direct interest in safer navigation, secure communications, resilient northern supply chains, and trusted systems across vast Arctic waters. The project brings Danish leadership in satellite-enabled maritime services together with Canadian experience in northern operations and community resupply", says Francis Schiller, owner of Public Interests Research and Communications Inc. (PIRC).

"As Arctic activity increases, the need for resilient, high-integrity communication becomes unavoidable. This study is an important step toward a viable future constellation, and we are pleased to contribute our technology and operational know-how to help shape a system that can deliver long-term value for Arctic stakeholders," says Oliver Schiewe, Vice President of Business Unit Satellite Systems at GomSpace.

“Maritime needs resilient connectivity and alternative and complementary PNT. The feasibility of delivering this depends on a solid business case. LE bring our financial and economic expertise as well as insights into user communities to this consortium to help build exactly that, assessing the implementation models and investment scenarios that will provide a clear, fundable path for a future VDE-SAT infrastructure for the benefit of Denmark, Greenland, Canada, and other Arctic stakeholders”, says Rasmus Flytkjær, Partner at LE Denmark, the Danish branch of London Economics.

“The Arctic is growing in strategic importance for Europe’s maritime routes and the need for reliable communications. By bringing together Danish and Canadian expertise, with ESA’s technical and programme capabilities, we are laying the groundwork for an infrastructure that will enable safer, more secure, maritime operations,” says Laurent Jaffart, Director of Resilience, Navigation and Connectivity at ESA.

The Danish government has earmarked a total of DKK 12.7 million for this strategic activity in the 2026-2028 ESA budget period, including DKK 9.5 million reserved for potential follow-on development and demonstration missions.

The study runs until February 2027.

Read more about the project here: [SAVIAN - ESA CSC: Connectivity & Secure Communications](#)

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 is working to make 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.

Learn more about Sternula by visiting www.sternula.com.

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

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About ESA's Space Systems for Safety & Security (4S) programme

The European Space Agency (ESA) is Europe's gateway to space, coordinating the financial and intellectual resources of its Member States to conduct space programmes and activities. Part of Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems (ARTES), the Space Systems for Safety & Security (4S) strategic programme line develops innovative secure satellite communication systems, integrating them with terrestrial networks where relevant. These systems aim to enhance the safety, resilience, and security of our critical infrastructures and applications, including transportation across land, air, and sea. Additionally, they support governmental operations such as border control and law enforcement.

The 4S initiative aims to support European and national institutions and public bodies in building satellite communications tailored to their needs, while also maintaining Europe's position at the forefront of the global secure communications market. By fostering growth in this domain, the initiative contributes to creating a safer and more resilient society in Europe and beyond.

Learn more at <https://resilience.esa.int/artes-4-0-programme-overview/safety-security>