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SELEX Galileo signs 17M EUR contract for SIMBIO-SYS phase B2/C/D for the BepiColombo space mission

SELEX Galileo, a Finmeccanica Company, has signed a contract worth over 17 million Euros with the Italian Space Agency (Agenzia Spaziale Italiana, ASI) for the development and production of the SIMBIO-SYS instrument for the European Space Agency (ESA)'s BepiColombo mission. The total value of contracts awarded to SELEX Galileo for the SYMBIO-SYS exceeds 33 million Euros.

BepiColombo is an unmanned mission to Mercury to observe the planet and surrounding environment, and is one of the cornerstones of the ESA's long-term science programme. The mission comprises two satellites, one of which, the Mercury Platen Orbiter (MPO), is being built by ESA to study the surface and internal composition of the planet.

SELEX Galileo's SYMBIO-SYS has been designed for installation on board the MPO satellite. The name stands for 'Spectrometers and Imagers for MPO BepiColombo Integrated Observatory System'; SELEX Galileo began development of the system back in 2007 with preliminary design work and the purchase of critical components.

The instrument has three optical channels for the remote observation of Mercury including a spectrometer, a high resolution camera, and a stereo channel for the construction of 3D maps. The data gathered by the sensors will be managed by three INAF Institutes: INAF-IASF, INAF-OAC and INAF-OAPD.

Notes to the Editors

BepiColombo, an ESA mission in cooperation with Japan, will explore Mercury, the planet closest to the Sun. BepiColombo will set off in 2014 on a journey lasting approximately 6 years.

Europe's space scientists have identified the mission as one of the most challenging long-term planetary projects because Mercury's proximity to the Sun makes it difficult for a spacecraft to reach the planet and survive in the harsh environment there.

BepiColombo will offer a close-up view of the planet that will be crucial for scientists aiming to discover the secrets of Mercury as well as the formation of our Solar System.

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