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ESA and ispace-EUROPE Mark Official Signing of Europe's First Lunar Polar Ice Exploration Rover Mission

- Ceremony at ESA's Space for Inspiration 2026 brought together senior representatives from ESA and ispace-EUROPE
- Mission will investigate water ice, lunar volatiles, and regolith near the Moon's south pole
- MAGPIE will advance European capabilities in lunar science, surface mobility, and end-to-end mission operations

Copenhagen, Denmark / Luxembourg, 2 September 2026 – The European Space Agency ("ESA") and ispace-EUROPE S.A. ("ispace-EUROPE"), the Luxembourg-based European entity of ispace, inc. ("ispace"), yesterday marked the official signing of the Phase 2 agreement for MAGPIE, the Mission for Advanced Geophysics and Polar Ice Exploration.



The MAGPIE Mission agreement signing ceremony led by Daniel Neuenschwander, ESA Director of Human and Robotic Exploration (right), and Julien Lamamy, CEO of ispace-EUROPE (left).



Representatives from ispace-Europe and the European Space Agency at the official signing ceremony.

The ceremony took place on the main stage at ESA Space for Inspiration 2026 in Copenhagen, bringing together senior representatives from ESA and ispace-EUROPE. The agreement was marked with a ceremonial signing by Daniel Neuenschwander, Director of Human and Robotic Exploration at the European Space Agency, and Julien-Alexandre Lamamy, CEO of ispace-EUROPE. It follows ESA's July 2026 award of the €65 million Phase 2 contract to ispace-EUROPE. The contract funds the full remaining delivery of MAGPIE, including rover and payload development, manufacture, testing, transportation to the lunar surface, mission operations, and the provision of scientific data to ESA.

MAGPIE, Europe's first lunar surface exploration mission scheduled to launch in 2029 on board ispace inc.'s Mission 4 ULTRA lunar lander, will investigate the Moon's south polar region - focusing on the distribution and stability of water ice and other lunar volatiles, as well as the properties of the regolith. ispace, inc.'s Mission 4 lander will implement high precision landing under a grant awarded from Japan's Space Strategy Fund Program administered by the Japanese Aerospace Exploration (JAXA). MAGPIE's transport onboard Mission 4 is enabled through collaboration between ESA and JAXA.

Some areas near the lunar poles remain in permanent shadow and may preserve water ice over extremely long periods. Understanding how this ice is distributed, how it interacts with the surrounding terrain, and how it can be detected is an important scientific objective and foundational for future lunar exploration. Extracting water from the lunar surface will be key to enabling longer duration human exploration on the Moon and could provide the resource to fuel exploration further out into the solar system.

MAGPIE's mobile platform will carry its instruments across the lunar surface, enabling data to be collected from multiple locations and across different terrain and geological features. Comparing measurements between these locations will provide greater insight into the spatial variability of volatiles, regolith properties, and geological conditions within the lunar south polar region.

The resulting data is expected to improve scientific understanding of the lunar south pole while helping inform the technologies, operations, and mission architectures required for future resource prospecting and sustained activity on the Moon.

Led by ispace-EUROPE from Luxembourg, the MAGPIE consortium brings together scientific and engineering expertise from five European countries.

The consortium includes:

- Technische Universität München, Germany - providing an instrumented drill Volatiles Sampler, as a part of the Lunar Volatiles Scout
- ESR Technology, United Kingdom - providing a Drill Translation Unit, as a part of the Lunar Volatiles Scout
- The Open University, United Kingdom - providing an Ion Trap Mass Spectrometer Volatile Analyzer, as a part of the Lunar Volatiles Scout
- RAL Space, United Kingdom- leading the joint assembly and testing activities of the Volatile Analyzer with the support of Open University
- Centre for Space Sensors and Systems at the University of Oslo, Norway - providing the Lunar RiMFAX Ground Penetrating Radar
- Institute of Experimental and Applied Physics at the Czech Technical University in Prague, Czech Republic - providing a neutron spectrometer suite of Neutron HardPix and a Radiation HardPix

Together, the payloads are designed to examine the lunar surface and subsurface from complementary perspectives, connecting information about terrain structure, hydrogen-bearing material, and the composition of samples accessed by the drill.

The consortium model is central to MAGPIE's wider significance. It brings together European science, engineering, and industry within a complete lunar surface exploration mission, creating practical experience across rover development, payload integration, testing, mission control and lunar operations.

Rover mobility will be essential to the next phase of lunar exploration. Alongside gathering data on the lunar environment, mobile systems can scout terrain, carry instruments between science locations, compare measurements across wider areas, and reduce uncertainty before more complex robotic and human operations begin.

Through MAGPIE, Europe will not only develop individual technologies but integrate them into a rover designed to operate as part of a complete lunar mission.

ispace - EUROPE

As prime contractor to ESA, ispace-EUROPE is leading the MAGPIE mission from mission design through to the delivery of scientific data, building on the experience gained through the development and operation of ispace-EUROPE's TENACIOUS rover, launched onboard ispace Mission 2 in 2025 - the first European-designed, manufactured, and assembled lunar rover to launch into space.

"The Moon's south pole is a key destination for future exploration. By prospecting for water and other volatile resources, MAGPIE will provide critical knowledge for the next phase of sustainable lunar exploration," said **Daniel Neuenschwander, ESA Director of Human and Robotic Exploration**. "As ESA's first lunar rover, MAGPIE brings together European expertise and international cooperation through our partnership with JAXA. Our decision to work hand-in-hand with a company such as ispace, with strong roots in Europe and Luxembourg, also highlights our revamped, cost-effective and fast-tracked approach to development."

Julien-Alexandre Lamamy, CEO of ispace-EUROPE, said: "MAGPIE brings together the scientific depth, engineering capability, and commercial agility that Europe needs to build a sustained role in lunar exploration. By leading the mission from design and rover development through to operations and delivery of data, ispace-EUROPE and its partners are turning European expertise into real operational capability on the Moon."

The MAGPIE mission team are now working towards the rover Structural Thermal Model readiness review, and will then work towards the next major mission milestone of Locomotion testing, focusing on rover mobility performance.

As MAGPIE progresses, the consortium will continue working closely with ESA to develop the rover, mature the payload suite, and prepare for mission and science operations at one of the Moon's most scientifically important regions.

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About ispace-EUROPE

ispace-EUROPE, a lunar exploration company based in Luxembourg, focuses on the development of lunar rovers. It was responsible for the first-ever European designed, manufactured, and assembled lunar rover to launch into space; the TENACIOUS rover onboard ispace inc.'s Mission 2. With its world-class talent, robotics capabilities, and connections to the Luxembourg ecosystem, ispace-EUROPE is uniquely positioned to accelerate the creation of a lunar industry in Europe and serve the needs of the growing institutional and commercial customers.

About ispace, inc. (<https://ispace-inc.com>)

ispace, a global lunar exploration company with the vision, "Expand our planet. Expand our future.", specializes in designing and building lunar landers, orbital transfer vehicles and rovers. ispace aims to extend the sphere of human life into space and create a sustainable world by providing high-frequency, low-cost transportation services to the Moon. The company has business entities in Japan, Luxembourg, the United States and Saudi Arabia, with more than 300 employees worldwide. For more information, visit: www.ispace-inc.com and follow us on X: [@ispace_inc](https://twitter.com/ispace_inc).