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POSTCARDS FROM SPACE

PROBA satellites still going strong

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On 22 October 2001, the PROBA-1 satellite was launched into space in a low Earth orbit. Intended as a one-year mission, PROBA-1 has provided data successfully ever since its launch and is still going strong.

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Manufactured by QinetiQ, it is among one of the smallest satellites launched by the European Space Agency (ESA) – each one less than a cubic metre in volume.

PROBA stands for PRoject for On-Board Autonomy, and is a series of micro-satellites which can fulfil a variety of requirements. PROBA-1 also hosts a couple of Earth Observation instruments, including a state-of-the-art hyperspectral imager.

PROBA's sister and brother, PROBA-2 and PROBA-V, came in 2009 and 2013, respectively. As of today, they are all in perfect condition orbiting around the Earth. They are tracked from our station in Redu, Belgium and every time they pass over the station, they receive their instructions and then they can work very autonomously. PROBA-V specifically maps the vegetation around the globe on a daily basis. For all of you who are curious to see how that looks, you can check it out here.

While the first two satellites in the 'PROBA' series were a combination of demonstration and application missions, the latest satellite, PROBA-V, has evolved the platform to be fully autonomous. After its successful commissioning, PROBA-V now serves as an operational mission satellite, supplying data to an existing user community.

What is remarkable about PROBA-V is that it was a gap filler back in the day. QinetiQ was able to build a very innovative, state-of-the-art satellite that nowadays is still used by a huge community: over 1500 users in universities, companies, institutions, and research organisation across the world.

PROBA-V has become part of the overall capacity for Earth Observation (EO). Thanks to EO, we can predict the weather; track biodiversity and wildlife; monitor and respond to natural disasters like the fires in the Amazon, but also floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis; manage natural resources; help agriculture, for example by checking the soil moisture; and of course, we can help predict and adapt to climate change. Space can help us take care of our spaceship Earth.

QinetiQ is always on your side, protecting, improving and advancing your vital interests

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