



BepiColombo – Latest updates on ESA’s mission to explore Mercury

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BepiColombo is a joint project between ESA and the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). The Mission consists of two orbiters, the Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) and the Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO). The mission scenario foresees a launch of both spacecraft with an ARIANE V in July 2014 and an arrival at Mercury in the second half of 2020. From their dedicated orbits the two spacecrafts will be studying the planet and its environment. The MPO scientific payload comprises eleven instruments/instrument packages; the MMO scientific payload consists of five instruments/instrument packages. Together, the scientific payload of both spacecraft will perform measurements to find clues to the origin and evolution of a planet close to its parent star. Upon arrival at Mercury a period of approximately 1 month has been allocated for instrument and spacecraft commissioning. The Nominal Science Mission of BepiColombo will cover 1 terrestrial year and be divided into 2 six-month phases, tentatively called the global mapping and target mapping phases. The latest status of the BepiColombo mission will be given with special emphasis on the scientific return of its payload complement.