



CryoSat: ESA's ice explorer mission. One year in operations: status and achievements

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CryoSat-2 was launched on the 8th April 2010 and it is the first European ice mission dedicated to monitoring precise changes in the thickness of polar ice sheets and floating sea ice over a 3-year period. Cryosat-2 carries an innovative radar altimeter called the Synthetic Aperture Interferometric Altimeter (SIRAL) with two antennas and with extended capabilities to meet the measurement requirements for ice-sheets elevation and sea-ice freeboard. Initial results have shown that data is of high quality thanks to an altimeter that is behaving exceptional well within its design specifications.

After an intensive but rewarding six months of commissioning, the CryoSat mission entered the science phase in November last year. Data was released to the scientific community in February 2011 and since then, products have been systematically distributed to more than 150 Principal Investigators and used by more than 400 scientists worldwide. This community is increasing every day.

Scope of this paper is to describe the current mission status and the main scientific achievements since the start of the science phase. Topics will also include programmatic highlights and information on accessing Cryosat products following the new ESA Earth Observation Data Policy.