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Author: Mr. Arnault Monoyer Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland

Mr. Evandros Theodosiou Imperial College London, United Kingdom Ms. Léonie Gasteiner Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland Mrs. Florence Crozat France Ms. Julia Jakiela United Kingdom Ms. Katherine Mulry ISAE-Supaero University of Toulouse, United States Ms. Palak Patel Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), United States Mrs. Clara Nogué i Ansón Spain Ms. Madelyn Hoying Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), United States Mr. Loïc Lerville-Rouver Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland Ms. Elena López-Contreras Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya (UPC), Spain

## FROM ABSTRACT TO MISSION: SELECTING AND IMPLEMENTING EXTERNAL PROJECTS INTO THE SIMULATED LUNAR MISSION CONDITIONS OF ASCLEPIOS III

## Abstract

The Asclepios program was developed by a new generation of space experts during a time of increasing interest in space exploration. The program aims to simulate realistic lunar mission conditions through analogue missions, which serve as a testbed for space technologies and research aimed at solving current and future challenges in human spaceflight and space colonies. These missions offer a unique opportunity for individuals and institutions from both private and public sectors to develop and test critical instruments and techniques for spaceflight research.

Asclepios III is the current iteration of the program, following the successful completion of Asclepios I and II. Feedback from the previous missions was used to identify areas for improvement and refinement, leading to the development of Asclepios III. This year, six analogue astronauts will be isolated for 14 days in the Sasso San Gotthard Fortress in Switzerland, simulating the Lunar South Pole. The Asclepios program accepts projects from a spectrum of topics related to space exploration. This year, the main objective is Space Medicine, given the development of manned missions and advances in healthcare. Key research areas include identifying and evaluating medical risks in the lunar environment, space nutrition, life support systems, sleep quality, human behaviour in isolation, space physiology, microbiology, and

astronauts' mental health. Additionally, several experiments in the fields of engineering, environmental sciences, and space law were selected to create a diverse selection of projects.

The project selection is a two-phased approach where researchers submit an abstract and overview of the project, including its safety, ethics, cost, and schedule requirements. Once projects are selected, the Asclepios III Science Team interfaces with the Principal Investigators (PIs) throughout the mission to ensure experiment success. Each Science Officer supervises two projects and serves as a point of contact for the respective PIs, sharing the workload and ensuring each PI receives professional and adequate support. This collaboration has proven successful, demonstrating the Science Team's ability to implement the projects of external professionals into the analogue mission and ensure its success.