

The troublesome trip from Mars back to Earth

310 days of isolation. After the expedition on the Martian surface, the Mars500 crew is already on their way back to Earth. 210 days of return trip are still in front of them. While the Mars is already starting to decrease within the rear mirror, the Earth is starting to increase in their front panel. This phase of the mission is not to be underestimated. The big target has been reached, the most exciting part of the mission is completed, the root of the study is already absolved and the long uniform return journey started. The danger for monotony, missing motivation and attention is higher than ever at this stage and thus the risk of failure, accidents and negative changes in health is also enhanced. Therefore, at this stage it even is more important that the crew is concentrating on their tasks, schedule and their self and it is even more important that there also is motivation from the outside.

Within the framework of a mid-term project meeting of all investigators a video message of the two European crew members Romain and Diego have been presented in regard to every single experiment. Within this videos the crewmembers spoke about the state of each experiment, whether there have been any problems and what is expected from the investigators. While the most projects are running out fine until now, beside some minor problems, it was addressed to the scientists to provide a feedback of the data they received or that have been recorded so far. In most cases it is not possible to send some preliminary results to the crew, as for instance the statement that social acceptance within the group is decreasing would probably lead to further decreases. But it certainly is understandable that they would like to know whether the data is as expected and usable and that not everything was been done for nothing!

In order to find a remedy for this uncertainty, on request of ESA a video message of each experimental group has been recorded on-site. Each team sent information about their present data (as far as possible, as not all experiments receive their data in between and were able to analyze parts already), about the state of their experiment and of course words of encouragement and motivation have been mentioned in order to support that the second half of the mission is completed successfully. But beside the video message there has been another product of the investigators mid-term meeting: Impatience- now, no one of the scientists can wait until the day, when the doors of the Mars500 facilities open again, when all data is completed for analysis and to see the crew in liberty again. But at least regarding the last wish, we are probably not the only ones...