

Russia, Europe Postpone Joint Launch of Mars Rover for Two Years

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The second part of the Russian-European Mars mission ExoMars has been postponed from 2018 to 2020, Russia's space agency Roscosmos said in a statement Monday.

This decision was triggered by delays of both Russian and European contractors, the statement said.

On March 14, the first part of Roscosmos and the European Space Agency (ESA) mission was launched on a Proton-M rocket from the Baikonur Cosmodrome. An orbiter Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO) and landing demonstration module Schiaparelli, sent to Mars in search of life, are due to land on the planet in October 2016.

The second mission includes the Russian landing platform and a European rover, also from Baikonur.

According to Roscosmos, the successful implementation of all ExoMars missions will allow Russia and Europe to conduct "joint testing of advanced technologies of entering the atmosphere, landing on Mars, controlling space vehicles on Mars, development of new

technical solutions and creation of support systems that can be used in other projects on the study of the planets of the solar system and to carry out advanced research on Mars."

The possibility of postponing the second part of the Russian-European Mars mission had been already voiced earlier this year.

"If we fail to implement it in 2018, we will be able to postpone it until 2020, but it will not be as dramatic as it may seem," ESA's chief Jan Woerner was quoted as saying in January by the RIA Novosti news agency.

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