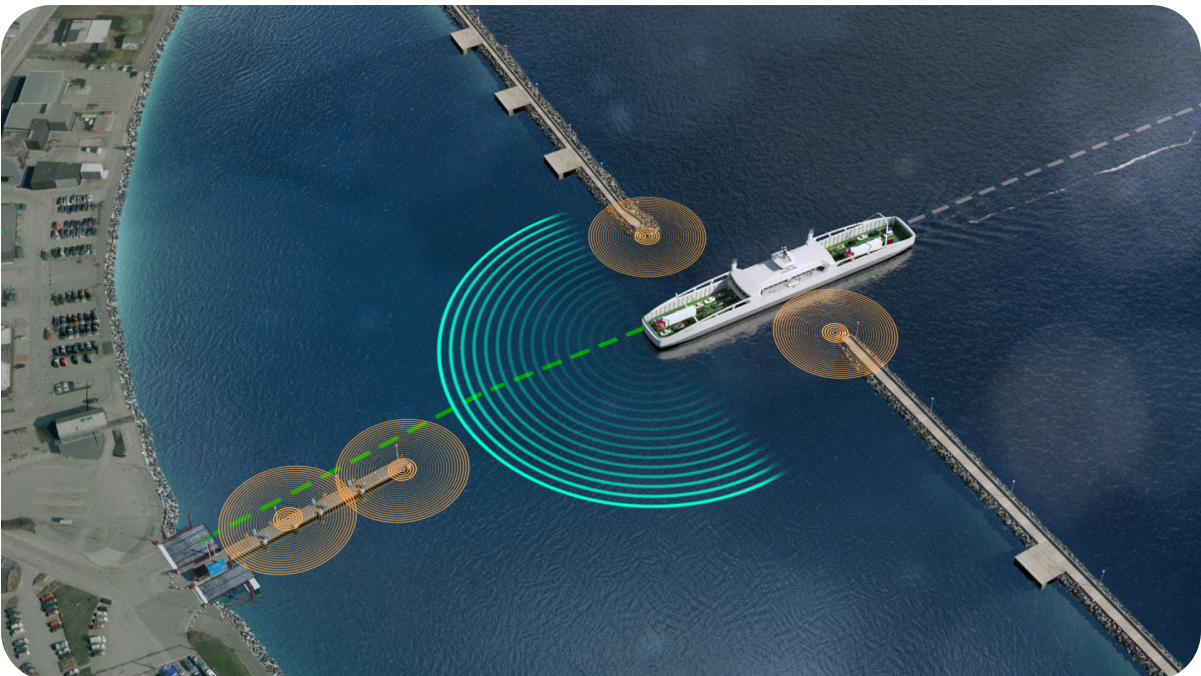


Self-driving ships ahoy!

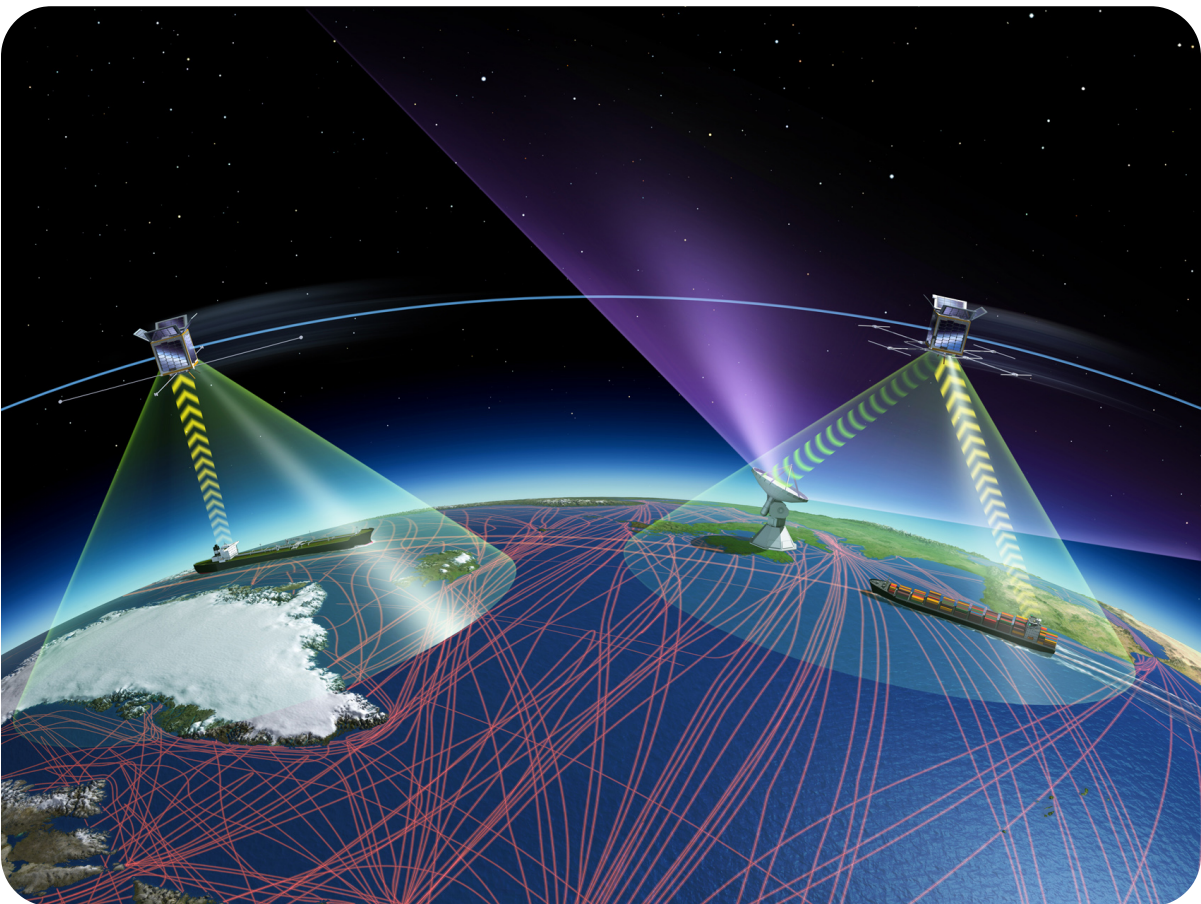


Autodocking systems could help ships come into port without using a human crew
[Access the image](#)

12 December 2017

You may have heard about self-driving cars, but what about self-driving ships? This may sound like a science fiction idea for how to cross an ocean, but today it is one step closer to happening. That is because ESA has teamed up with engineering company Rolls-Royce to investigate how space technology can be used to develop autonomous and remote-controlled ships.

Not having people piloting ships could make them safer, as humans often make mistakes. It could help free up human crew for tasks that cannot be computer-controlled, too. Safety always comes first though, and advanced software has to be made to ensure that automatic ships can be trusted.



ESA satellites orbiting Earth can help ships to navigate Earth's oceans
[Access the image](#)

ESA and Rolls-Royce plan to study space technology that will help with this goal. For example, satellites could be used to help a computer-controlled ship to know exactly where it is, and if any hazards are nearby. ESA is very happy to support new technologies that allow space knowledge to improve life for people on Earth. In the future we could even have smart ports for these ships to dock and unload cargo!

Thanks to this new partnership, future Rolls-Royce navigation and communication equipment could be tested at ESA sites in the Netherlands. This would make good use of the space agency's high-tech facilities, and could help speed up development.

Would you like to take a voyage on a self-driving ship?

Cool fact: ESA technology can be used to help transport not just on the sea, but on land and in the air too!