

Persistent EarthCARE underflight studies of the ITCZ and organized convection (PERCUSION): Contribution to EarthCARE Validation

Silke Groß¹, Florian Ewald¹, Bjorn Stevens², Martin Wirth¹, Georgios Dekoutsidis¹, André Ehrlich³,
Dimitra Kouklaki⁴, Konstantin Krüger¹, Sophie Rosenberg³, Lea Volkmer⁵, Jonas v. Bismark⁶, Lutz
5 Hirsch², Anna E. Luebke³, Eleni Marinou⁴, Bernhard Mayer⁵, Montserrat Pinol Sole⁶, Manfred
Wendisch³, Julia Windmiller², Vassilis Amiridis⁴, Rob Koopman⁶, Takuji Kubota⁷, Markus Rapp¹

¹Institute of Atmospheric Physics, German Aerospace Center (DLR), Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany

²Max Planck Institute for Meteorology ([MPI-M](#)), Hamburg, Germany

10 ³Leipzig Institute for Meteorology ([LIM](#)), Leipzig University, Leipzig, Germany

⁴National Observatory of Athens ([NOA](#)), Athens, Greece

⁵Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München ([LMU](#)), Munich, Germany

⁶European Space Agency (ESA), Noordwijk, Netherlands

⁷Earth Observation Research Center, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Tsukuba-city, Japan

15

Correspondence to: Silke Groß (silke.gross@dlr.de)

Abstract.

In May 2024, the Earth Clouds, Aerosols and Radiation Explorer (EarthCARE) satellite was launched. For the first time a
20 satellite [payload](#) combines two active instruments, i.e., the Atmospheric Lidar and the Cloud Profiling Radar, together with
two passive instruments, a multi-spectral imager and a broad-band radiometer, on one single spacecraft platform. EarthCARE
is thus the most complex satellite mission to date to for collocated aerosol, cloud, radiation and precipitation measurements.
To utilize the data collected by the EarthCARE mission to its full extent and to support and quantify the data quality and
measurement uncertainty, careful and holistic validation activities are needed. For this purpose, we set up an airborne
25 instrument payload on the German High Altitude and Long-range research aircraft (HALO), which is similar to the
EarthCARE instrumentation. We used this payload during an extensive measurement campaign in summer and fall 2024 in
the tropic-~~sub-tropic~~ and mid- to high-latitudes targeting to validate the EarthCARE measurements and data products early in
its commissioning phase. [With this manuscript we aim to give a detailed overview of the PERCUSION mission, and to
advertise the use of its data in future more detailed validation studies. We give examples of how to use PERCUSION \(Persistent
30 EarthCARE underflight studies of the ITCZ and organized convection\) data to approach the validation of all four instruments
of EarthCARE as well as of higher level \(i.e. multi-sensor\) products, and give first confidence in the quality of EarthCARE](#)

~~data. With 33 passes under the EarthCARE satellite during 30 research flights we were able to address target scenes that have been identified by the EarthCARE algorithm developers to be of importance for the validation of the mission, and to assure the retrieval performance under different meteorological conditions and aerosol cloud situations.~~

35 1. Introduction

Despite major progress in understanding atmospheric aerosol and cloud processes ~~and to decrease uncertainties and enhance confidence in how they interact with the Earth's climate system, aerosol particles and clouds, their interaction~~ how they respond to changes in their environment are, given some scenario of forcing, still the ~~and feedback mechanisms on the radiative energy budget and on precipitation formation significantly contribute to the~~ largest source of uncertainties in climate change projections (IPCC, 2023). An important ~~significant~~ contribution to ~~improve our understanding~~ the global characterization of of aerosol particles and clouds ~~processes~~ has been made by two satellite missions ~~that~~ whose instruments focused on aerosol and cloud vertical profiling by lidar and radar, respectively; NASA's Cloud Aerosol Lidar Pathfinder Satellite Observation (CALIPSO) mission (Winker et al., 2010) and NASA's Cloudsat mission (Stephens et al., 2008). Launched jointly in 2006, they provided detailed information on the ~~global~~ vertical structure of aerosol ~~particles~~ and cloud properties globally.
Especially their synergistic use provided new insights ~~that stimulated~~ research on aerosol ~~and~~ and cloud ~~research~~ and to aerosol-cloud interactions ~~processes, and their interaction~~ (Stephens et al., 2018). The ~~significant~~ benefit of the satellite missions could ~~only~~ be ensured by ~~securing the quality and accuracy of their data through~~ extensive and repeatedly validation ~~efforts~~ activities using complementary measurements throughout the lifetime of the mission.

Following the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) nomenclature, validation is defined as the process of
assessing the quality of data products by independent means (ISO/TS 19159- 1:2014). This can include the assessment of the quality of the data products, the quality of the measurements ~~itself~~ themselves, and the representativeness of the data. The independent means are defined as data from instruments ~~external to~~ independent of those that provided the data products e ~~mission~~ mission but measuring the same geophysical quantity as the satellite sensor ~~that whose data is~~ is to be validated. A review and summary of the general approaches, challenges and limitations for the validation of satellite missions (Langsdale et al., 2025) and with a focus on profiling missions (Amiridis et al., 2025) highlight the importance of ~~reliable~~ trusted and comparable independent data.

Airborne measurements with the same or similar payload sensors as installed on the satellite ~~instruments~~ have been ~~shown to be~~ a valuable tool for satellite validation especially ~~of profiling instruments~~ in the case of active sensors such as, i.e. lidar (Gimmestad et al., 2017) and radar. For the validation of Cloud-Aerosol Lidar with Orthogonal Polarization (CALIOP) onboard of CALIPSO, a total of 147 underflights with an airborne high spectral resolution lidar (HSRL) were performed during the lifetime of the mission, which proved to have the most impact in measurement validation and algorithm improvement. These measurements were used to assess the quality of the CALIOP Level 1 products ~~early in the~~ the onset of the mission's ~~lifetime~~ lifetime (Rogers et al., 2011), and ~~served for~~ provided quality assessments of algorithm improvements ~~throughout CALIOP's lifetime~~ as the mission evolved (Getzewich et al., 2018; Kar et al., 2018). Airborne HSRL measurements were used to assess CALIOP Level 2 products, e.g., the aerosol particle backscatter and extinction coefficient, the optical depth, aerosol type classification, and the layer detection sensitivity (Burton et al., 2013; Kacenelenbogen et al., 2014; Rogers et al., 2014). To validate ~~both CALIOP and the Cloud Radare data~~ both instrument systems, the CALIPSO and Cloudsat Validation Experiment

(CC-VEX) took place immediately after the commissioning phase of both satellites (McGill, et al., 2007), deploying an elastic backscatter lidar and a W-band cloud radar on the ER-2 aircraft [and NASA's HSRL \(Hair et al., 2008\) system on the Beechcraft B-200 King Air](#). During the Canadian Cloudsat-CALIPSO Validation Project airborne Ku-band radar measurements were performed for validation purposes (Barker et al., 2008). [More recently, the lidar aboard ESA's Earth Explorer wind lidar mission AEOLUS highly likewise benefited from airborne validation campaigns. Doppler wind lidars were deployed to prepare for the mission \(e.g., Lemmerz et al., 2023\) and to validate the AEOLUS wind and aerosol product with independent technique \(Bedka et al., 2021; Witschas et al., 2020; Witschas et al., 2022\).](#) A large impact in the preparation (Lux et al., 2018) and the improvement of retrievals (Lux et al., 2022) was made by the development and deployment of an airborne demonstrator of the spaceborne system (Reitebuch et al., 2009; Paffrath et al., 2009). Beyond the validation of active sensors, airborne demonstrators [have been found to be also proved](#) a valuable tool for passive satellite missions (King et al., 1996). Motivated by the benefit of airborne demonstrators (Fix et al., 2016), [and in particular the above mentioned activities for active systems designed to profile aerosol and clouds,](#) we set up an EarthCARE ([Earth Clouds, Aerosols and Radiation Explorer](#))-like [airborne](#) payload ~~consisting of similar instruments like the ones on EarthCARE~~ (Stevens et al., 2019) on the German High Altitude and Long-range research aircraft (HALO) (Krautstrunk and Giez, 2012) ~~to prepare to contribute to for the EarthCARE (Earth Clouds, Aerosols and Radiation Explorer) mission and for post launch validation measurements activities.~~ [We Independently of EarthCARE we could used the measured data collected by HALO for the to development of independent](#) algorithms, e.g., its lidar-based aerosol type classification (Groß et al., 2013; Groß et al., 2015), aerosol type separation (Gutleben et al., 2022), lidar-radar target classification (Marinou et al., 2020). Furthermore, we developed and tested synergistic radar-lidar retrievals to derive ice and mixed-phase cloud microphysical properties (Cazenave et al., 2019; Aubry et al., 2024). We [set up improved devised methods to improve the](#) radiative transfer calculations for scenes including aerosol particles (Gutleben et al., 2019) and ice clouds (Ewald et al., 2021; Röttenbacher et al., 2024) ~~with the overall focus to achieve consistency of corresponding radiative transfer simulations and precise spaceborne radiative budget measurements that are consistent with corresponding radiative transfer simulations, which is~~ one main goal of the EarthCARE mission. Furthermore, we used these synergistic EarthCARE-like measurements to prepare for the use and the validation of data collected by EarthCARE by investigating the impact of measurement sensitivity, wavelength combination, attenuation and instrument characteristics on the derived data products (Delanoë et al., 2020; Groß and Ewald, 2018). For that, we conducted dedicated HALO underflights with this payload closely coordinated CALIPSO and Cloudsat (Schäfler et al., 2018, [Stevens et al., 2019](#)). Furthermore, we also used HALO together with the French SAFIRE Falcon and at a later stage ATR-42 as a Tandem Platform (Delanoë et al., 2014). Our experiences supported the formulation of recommendations in a document for the best practices of validation for aerosol, cloud, and precipitation profiles (Amiridis et al., 2025). These efforts ~~culminated in the concept for contributed to the design of the~~ PERCUSION (Persistent EarthCARE underflight studies of the ITCZ and organized convection) campaign (<https://orcestra-campaign.org/percusion.html>; last access 15 Jan. 2026), as a component of ~~the campaign network~~ a broader field study called ORCESTR (Organized Convection and EarthCARE Studies over the Tropical Atlantic) (Stevens et al., 2026), ~~combining different approaches for validation.~~ [Here](#)

~~In this work~~ we give an overview of the PERCUSION campaign ~~and the dataset's exploitation capability for the~~ **with a focus on the validation of EarthCARE measurements. This includes:**, addressing the requirements and needs for EarthCARE validation (Section 2), ~~and in Section 3 a~~ **The detailed** description of the **instrumentation and measurement strategy deployed for EarthCARE validation activities** PERCUSION campaign with focus on validation includes information on instrumentation and measurement strategy (Section 3). In Section 4 we ~~give an overview of the~~ **show some examples to better** illustrate the potential of PERCUSION ~~for validation of the different~~ EarthCARE **daaa-product validation** instruments and different level **products**. Finally, we will conclude (Section 5) the work with a discussion of our findings and the potential for the use of the measured dataset, not only for EarthCARE but also for other satellite missions ~~(e.g. the NASA PACE mission)~~.

2. Requirements for EarthCARE Validation

With the launch of the ~~Earth Clouds, Aerosols and Radiation Explorer~~ (EarthCARE) satellite in May 2024, the most complex Earth Explorer Missions to date started to **investigate measure** aerosol particles and clouds, and their interactions and impacts on precipitation and the radiative energy budget (Wehr et al., 2023). EarthCARE, ~~is~~ a joint mission of the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). ~~It is equipped with a suite of~~ **combines** four instruments ~~together on one~~ single **platform polar orbiting platform**. These include three instruments developed by ESA, ~~The Atmospheric LIDar (ATLID), the Multi-Spectral Imager (MSI), and a BroadBand Radiometer (BBR), are developed by ESA,~~ and the Cloud Profiling Radar (CPR) **is jointly** developed by JAXA and ~~the~~ National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT). The two active remote sensing instruments, the ATLID and the CPR, provide measurements of the vertical profiles of ~~aerosol particle~~ and cloud properties along the satellite track. The two passive remote sensing instruments, the MSI **(which scans)** and the BBR, ~~deliver provide~~ the scene context information and ~~radiation measurements~~ **measurements of the broad-band radiance radiation to estimate the net effect of the scene on Earth's radiant energy budget**. To quantify the measurement uncertainties and data product quality, a thoughtful and holistic validation is needed. A general approach for EarthCARE validation is given in the EarthCARE Scientific Validation Implementation Plan (VIP) of ESA (Koopmann, 2024), which is adapted and refined in the validation strategy of the EarthCARE Data Innovation and Science Cluster (DISC; ESA, 2024). This strategy includes also the outcome of a joint activity of the ESA EarthCARE Mission Advisory Group and instrument developers, which defines validation needs and target scenes of importance for EarthCARE validation (Hall, 2025). The aim is to provide information about the performance of EarthCARE data and retrievals in different synoptic regimes and for typical cloud and aerosol conditions.

4.1.2.1. Properties and Products

~~The~~ EarthCARE data are categorized **in level products according to data processing level** (Table 1). The calibrated instrument data (Level 1b) for the three European instruments are provided by ESA, and for the CPR by JAXA. For higher level products, each Agency has its own processing chain. In this study we focus on the ESA processing chain. The data of the specific

instruments are first processed individually (Level 1b and Level2a), and in a next step two or more instruments are processed in a synergistic way (Eisinger et al., 2024) ~~to form~~ derive Level 2b data.

135 Table 1: EarthCARE Product Levels adopted from (Koopmann, 2024).

Level 0 Product	Raw instrument data, with duplicates removed and quality flags. For expert users only.
Level 1b Product	Instrument data processed to physical units, with error bars, quality flags and geolocations.
Level 1c Product	MSI only: Level 1b data re-sampled onto the grid of one selected MSI reference channel.
Level 1d Product	Auxiliary products.
Level 2 Product	Derived geophysical variables, with error bars, quality flags and geolocations.
Level 2a Product	Level 2 product derived from one single EarthCARE instrument
Level 2b Product	Level 2 product synergistically derived from two or more EarthCARE instruments

140 The ESA product chain generates 44 EarthCARE data products. ~~They are~~ introduced ~~in detail~~ by Eisinger et al. (2024) and the references therein. JAXA's Level 2 algorithms for EarthCARE from single instrument to four sensor synergistic retrievals are described by [Okamoto et al. \(2024\)](#) and ~~the~~ references therein. Besides the validation of the measurements (Level 1b) and the instrument data in geophysical unites (Level 2), specific needs for validation have been defined addressing the macro-physical properties as well as higher level products (ESA, 2023). They are ~~briefly~~ summarized in ~~the following~~ [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Needs for EarthCARE validation adapted from the EarthCARE Mission Advisory Group and developers (ESA, 2023) to be addressed by PERCUSION measurements.

Uncertainty	Location/scene regimes	Instrument/Products
Macrophysical properties		
Aerosol layer detection and type classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-layer aerosol scenes • Strong internal layering 	ATLID and ATLID-MSI Target Classification
Aerosol/cloud discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloud embedded in aerosol layers 	ATLID and ATLID-MSI Target classification and layer product
Cloud layer detection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-layer aerosol/cloud scenes • Cirrus cloud over liquid cloud • Non-precipitating liquid clouds 	MSI, ATLID, CPR layer detection and target classification
Cloud phase discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-layer cloud scenes • Mixed-phase cloud scenes • Liquid clouds above ice clouds 	MSI, ATLID, CPR target classification and feature mask
CPR surface clutter removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurements over different surface types 	CPR Feature Mask
Ice cloud and snow		
Snow microphysics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratiform and convective systems 	CPR cloud product and synergistic cloud retrieval
Ice microphysical properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different cloud types with a variety of temperatures, locations 	ATLID ice cloud product and synergistic cloud retrieval
Rain		
Melting layer structure and attenuation of CPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy precipitation events • Convective and stratiform systems 	CPR cloud products and synergistic cloud retrieval
Aerosol		
AOT over land and sensitivity to aerosol classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different land surfaces • Different aerosol types 	MSI aerosol optical thickness

145

1.2.2.2. Target Scenes

The aim of the target scene is to include validation activities which ~~can~~ provide information about the performance of EarthCARE data and retrievals ~~in different synoptic regimes and~~ for different cloud and aerosol conditions. ~~They can be shortly summarized in the followin~~ as summarized below:

150

- **Mixed aerosol types (MAT):** To investigate the performance of ATLID ~~under~~ across different aerosol conditions, types and concentrations, including mixed and multi-layer scenes, and ~~under~~ for different noise conditions (e.g. performance at daytime conditions compared to night-time conditions). ~~This also includes multi layer aerosol scenes.~~
- 155 • **Cumulus and marine aerosol (CMA):** ~~Small scale~~ hallow, drizzle-free and often optically thin cumulus clouds are challenging to ~~be~~ characterized from satellite observations (Mieslinger et al, 2022). They are ~~hardly detectable~~ by difficult to detect by the CPR, ~~and~~ but it is important to accurately mask them for ATLID aerosol retrievals, especially of marine aerosol particles.
- 160 • **Marine stratocumulus (MSC):** The detection of marine stratocumulus ~~is~~ can be challenging for satellite retrievals, ~~Because they are very near the surface, for active sensors they can be difficult to disambiguate from the surface, and like for shallow cumulus, they often fall below the CPR detection threshold.~~ the synergy of different EarthCARE instruments is thus key for their characterization Often uses a multi-sensor approach for their detection is applied. ~~Drizzle free clouds are barely detectable by CPR, and ATLID will be rapidly attenuated within the cloud.~~ Measurements of the solar radiance ~~in addition~~ provide optical constrains during the day (descending orbit). The evaluation of EarthCARE's performance to infer the location of marine stratocumulus, its cloud base and vertical extent and the profile of the liquid water path is ~~thus~~ important.
- 165 • **Large-scale rain (LSR):** To evaluate how accurate rain rates can be retrieved from CPR, large scale rain conditions have to be addressed in the comparisons. It affects the CPR measurements e.g. by attenuation due to rain.
- **Snow, including snow above the melting layer (SML):** Snow and snow over ice are common features in mid-latitude weather systems and thus important for validation. Their multi-layer structure (e.g. also including embedded supercooled liquid layers) makes it challenging to properly ~~detect~~ identify and retrieve.
- 170 • **Cirrus (CC):** ~~As compared to other cloud types, the impact of c~~ Cirrus clouds are a main cloud type over large areas of the globe. They on the radiant radiative energy budget depends strongly ~~have a strong impact on the energy budget of the Earth with changing impact depending on~~ their optical and geometrical thickness. It is thus of importance to properly determine layer boundaries as well as optical and microphysical properties.
- 175 • **Complex multi-layer scenes (CLS):** Multi-layer scenes are common in almost all synoptic regimes. A valid determination, separation and classification of the different layers are crucial to determine the overall radiative effect of the scenes. Combined ~~edation of~~ radar and lidar measurements are often needed to determine different cloud types and to distinguish aerosols and clouds.
- 180 • **Deep convection (DC):** Deep convection is challenging to properly investigate from satellite measurements. ~~It, because it consists of different cloud parts usually is accompanied by all cloud types and thus compounds many of the issues discussed above.~~ cirrus outflow which is difficult to detect with radar, mixed phase part which causes attenuation of the lidar and a precipitation part which might lead to attenuation even in the radar.

3. ~~The HALO-PERCUSION mission~~

185 PERCUSION (~~Persistent EarthCARE underflight studies of the ITCZ and organized convection~~) is an initiative of ~~the~~ German research institutes and universities research community, ~~which is led by the German Aerospace Centre DLR and by the Max-Planck Institute for Meteorology.~~ PERCUSION had two main objectives:

- (1) To test factors hypothesized to influence the organization of deep maritime convection in the tropics and the influence of organized convection on the large-scale environment, and
- 190 (2) ~~To establish confidence in EarthCARE by validating the~~ Provide measurement for the validation of EarthCARE measurements and data products.

Measurements ~~with HALO with EarthCARE like instrument payload~~ were performed ~~in coordination~~ close collocation with EarthCARE ~~from during the period from~~ August to November 2024. ~~The EarthCARE readiness for correlative measurements was achieved just in time for PERCUSION, among others by adjusting initial calibration planning/sequencing, due to the expected importance of the campaign for EarthCARE validation during the commissioning phase and beyond. This manuscript mostly describes activities related to point (2). The motivation for and activities related to the first point are discussed in a complementary manuscript by Windmiller et al. (2026).~~

195

1.1.3.1. HALO aircraft and instrumentation

HALO is a modified Gulfstream ~~business jet~~ G550. With a maximum cruising altitude of up to 15 km and a range of up to 200 10,000 km (~10 flight hours) it provides the capability for long and high flights, ~~enabling extensive and~~ measurements over remote regions, which makes HALO ~~ideally well~~ suited for satellite validation. During PERCUSION, ~~the~~ HALO aircraft was equipped as a flying cloud observatory (Stevens, et al., 2019) combining active and passive remote sensing instrumentations, i.e., a high spectral resolution and depolarization sensitive lidar system, and a cloud radar with doppler capability, together with imager and radiation measurements (Table 3). In this configuration, HALO carries the most complete payload to mimic 205 EarthCARE measurements. A large number of dropsondes (Stevens, et al., 2025; [Gloeckner et al., 2025](#)) provided profiles of the meteorological context, ~~and~~ ~~And~~ measurements taken by instrumentation installed in the nose boom setup of HALO complemented crucial information on high-resolution thermodynamic and dynamic (wind) parameters at flight altitude. Table 3 provides a detailed summary of the HALO instrumentation and available products ~~during from~~ the PERCUSION campaign.

Table 3: Detailed information on HALO instrumentation during PERCUSION. Adapted from (Stevens et al., 2019).

Instrument	Institution	Observable	Derived products
HAMP (HALO Microwave Package) Radiometers (Mech et al., 2014)	MPI-M, University Hamburg, University of Cologne, DLR-PA	Brightness temperature at 26 selected microwave frequencies between 22 and 183 GHz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Water vapor • Temperature + humidity
HAMP Doppler Cloud radar MIRA (Ewald et al., 2019)	DLR-PA, MPI-M, University Hamburg	Profiles of radar reflectivity, depolarization ratio & Doppler velocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloud, snow • Target classification • Cloud geometry
WALES (Water vapor lidar experiment in space) (Wirth et al., 2009)	DLR-PA	Profiles of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric backscatter ratio at 532 nm, 935 nm and 1064 nm • Particle linear depolarization ratio at 532 nm • Particle extinction coefficient at 532 nm 	Profiles of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water vapor mixing ratio • Cloud mask • Aerosol classification • Extinction-to-backscatter ratio
specMACS (spectrometer of the Munich Aerosol Cloud Scanner) (Ewald et al., 2016; Weber et al., 2024)	LMU München	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upward spectral radiance (400 – 2500 nm) with across-track field-of-view of 35° at a sampling rate of 30 Hz • Polarized radiance at RGB color channels, 2D fields (91° x 220°) at 5Hz sampling rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloud mask • Cloud phase • Cloud optical thickness • Effective particle size • Particle size distribution
BACARDI (Broadband AirCrAft RaDiometer Instrumentation) (Ehrlich et al., 2023)	Leipzig University	Upward and downward broadband irradiances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S_{solar} (0.3 -3 μm) • $T_{\text{thermal-infrared}}$ (3-100 μm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radiative energy budget • Cloud radiative effect • Heating and cooling rates
SMART (Spectral Modular Airborne Radiation Measurement System) (Wendisch et al., 2001; Wolf et al., 2020)	Leipzig University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spectral upward and downward irradiance (300-2200 nm) • Spectral upward radiance (300-2200 nm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spectral solar radiative energy budget • Cloud optical thickness • Liquid water path, effective particle size • Cloud thermodynamic phase
VELOX (Video airborne Longwave Observations within siX channels) (Schäfer et al., 2022)	Leipzig University	Two dimensional fields of brightness temperature in 6 channels between 7.7 μm and 12.0 μm with 100 Hz temporal and 640 x 512 pixel resolution (field-of-view of 35.5° x 28.7°)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloud mask, phase • Cloud top temperature • Cloud top altitude • Surface temperature
Dropsondes	MPI-M, DLR-PA, University Hamburg	Profiles of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative humidity • Temperature • Horizontal wind 	

BAHAMAS (Basic Halo Measurement and Sensor System) (Giez et al., 2023)	DLR Flight experiment facility-FX	In-situ observations of T, q, u, v, w, 100 Hz data navigational data, GPS, flight attitude	
--	--	--	--

210

1.2.3.2. Data analysis

~~In addition to setting up an airborne EarthCARE-like payload on HALO to prepare for validation, we developed~~ Here we describe independent retrievals developed to derive similar data products from HALO as those from EarthCARE. This includes a lidar based aerosol classification (Groß et al., 2013; Groß et al., 2015) that was extended to include cloud radar measurements for a full target classification (Marinou, et al., 2020), as well as a method to derive cloud and aerosol layer heights and area (Groß et al., 2014; Dekoutsidis et al., 2024; Gutleben et al., 2019a). The airborne radar is calibrated (Ewald et al., 2019) and the measurements are analysedanalyzed. Subsequent of the basic analysis of both active remote sensing measurements, the data are used in a variational retrieval (Delanoë and Hogan, 2008; Cazenave et al., 2019) to derive higher level products; e.g., ice water content and ice effective radius. This retrieval was further developed to consider mixed-phase clouds and layers of super-cooled water (Aubry et al., 2024). Aerosol and cloud optical and microphysical properties are used to calculate their radiative properties, e.g., heating rate profiles, top of the atmosphere radiances, and spectral radiance of clouds using the library for radiative transfer – libRadtran (Mayer and Kylling, 2005; Emde et al., 2016; Gutleben et al., 2020; Ewald et al., 2021), which can be directly compared to spectral radiance measured onboard HALO (Ewald et al., 2021) or to radiation measurements provided by EarthCAREEarthCARE. The specMACS data are used to determine cloud top height and geometry using a stereographic algorithm (Kölling, et al., 2019; Volkmer, et al., 2024). Cloud phase (Ehrlich et al., 2008; Weber, et al., 2025) and cloud droplet radius (Pörtge, et al., 2023) are determined with high accuracy and high spatial resolution from the polarimetric angular observations. specMACS data are used to determine cloud top height and geometry using a stereographic algorithm Next to the general analysis of the specMACS system (Weber et al., 2024) cloud top height can be derived from a stereographic algorithm to determine cloud geometry (Kölling et al., 2019, Volkmer et al., 2024). Cloud phase (Ehrlich et al., 2008; Weber et al., 2025) and cloud droplet radius (Pörtge et al., 2023) are determined with high accuracy and high spatial resolution from the polarimetric angular observations. The thermal-infrared imager VELOX and the broadband radiometer BACARDI are radiometrically and geometrically calibrated as described in-detail by Ehrlich et al. (2023) and Schäfer et al. (2022). Atmospheric corrections based on radiative transfer simulations using the radiosonde measurements and the EarthCARE auxiliary data products are applied to the VELOX and BACARDI measurements. These corrections adjust the measurements in-at HALO flight level to top-of-atmosphere (TOA) brightness temperatures and broadband radiative fluxes comparable to MSI and BBR observations.

235

~~Using the HALO measurements, we can address many of the validation needs for EarthCARE measurements and data products.~~ Table 4 gives an overview of the EarthCARE in-orbit data products that can be validated with the PERCUSION

measurements.

240 Table 4: EarthCARE in-orbit data products addressed for validation by PERCUSION

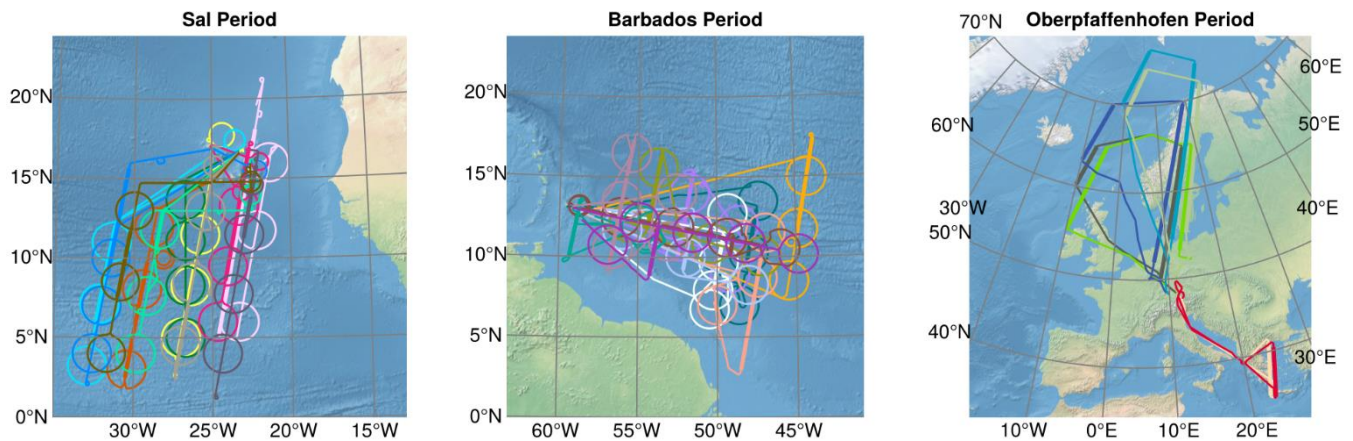
Earth CARE Products	
Level 1	MSI*
	ATLID
	CPR
Target classification	Cloud-top height
	Cloud-top phase
	Aerosol layer height/depth
	Aerosol layer classification
	Cloud detection, Cloud aerosol discrimination
	Cloud/precipitation fraction
	Cloud/precipitation phase
	Aerosol fraction
	Aerosol species
Ice cloud & snow	Optical thickness
	Effective radius
	Ice water path
	Extinction
	Extinction-to-backscatter ratio
Aerosol (per species)	Aerosol optical thickness
	Aerosol extinction
	Extinction-to-backscatter ratio
	Particle linear depolarization ratio
Radiation	BBR-SW unfiltered radiances
	Solar top-of-atmosphere flux
	Terrestrial top-of-atmosphere flux

245 ~~*Despite the fact that both MSI on EarthCARE and specMACS and VELOX on HALO provide across-track coverage, only the exact nadir views can be compared since off-nadir observations from the EarthCARE orbit and the HALO flight altitude don't coincide spatially. The Across Track Radiances could be provided by specMACS as Push Broom Scanner. However, only the NADIR FOV of the BBR but not the AFT/FRONT FOVs can be compared. VELOX images can be merged along the flight track to create push broom like images. Therefore, across track radiances can be provided as well in the thermal infrared.~~

1.3.3.3. Measurement strategy

To achieve the objectives of PERCUSION, measurements were performed out of three ~~different~~ locations to span the latitudes range of what could broadly be called the Atlantic sector north of the Equator (Figure 1):

- 250 • ~~Sub-tropical and tropical Atlantic East~~ Eastern tropical Atlantic (**Sal, Cape Verde**): From 8 August to 5 September 2024 HALO flights were carried out of Sal (Cape Verde). This period provided the possibility for coordination with the French EarthCARE airborne validation activity within the MAESTRO (Mesoscale organisation of tropical convection) campaign and with validation activities of the Norwegian-Romanian validation activities (CELLO; Cloud and EarthCARE caL/vaL Observations), as well as with ground-based ACTRIS (The Aerosol, Clouds and Trace Gases Research Infrastructure) validation measurements from TROPOS at Minedlo (CLARINET; CLOUD and Aerosol Remote sensing for EarThcare), ~~—~~and with shipborne measurements onboard the German Research Vessel (RV) Meteor (BOWTIE; Beobachtung von Ozean und Wolken – Das Trans ITCZ Experiment (Klocke et al., 2025)).
- 255 • ~~Sub-tropical and tropical Atlantic West~~ Western tropical Atlantic (**Barbados**): Following the measurements from Cape Verde, HALO was transferred to Barbados to perform measurement flights over the western (sub-)tropical Atlantic until End of September 2024. During this part of the mission, the measurements were linked to ground-based measurements from the Barbados Cloud Observatory (BCO; Stevens, et al., 2016) on Barbados and to measurements onboard RV Meteor as part of BOW-TIE. It also provided contrast in the convective and aerosol environment as compared to the Cape-Verde based measurements.
- 260 • ~~Mid- and high latitudes~~ Extra-tropics (**Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany**): After a small break, additional validation flights were performed out of Oberpfaffenhofen, the homebase of HALO, from 4 to 19 November 2024. ~~During this~~ This part of the ~~validation~~ campaign, ~~it was~~ aimed-organized to coordinate with ground-based stations in Germany and Greece taking part in EarthCARE validation activities.
- 265



270 **Figure 1: Flight tracks of the HALO research aircraft during the PERCUSION campaign out of Sal (left), Barbados (middle) and Oberpfaffenhofen (right). The straight thick lines indicate direct underpasses under the EarthCARE satellite. The circles in the flights out of Sal and Barbados were performed to investigate quantify meso-scale vertical motion in the Tropics.**

275 The tropical flights constituted PERCUSION's contribution to ORCESTR. Flights were planned in a way that at least one anchored to EarthCARE underpass. This aided was included in every flight; for direct comparisons, but also to put EarthCARE measurements in the center of the scientific studies. During the southern part of For the tropical components of PERCUSION with flights out of Sal and Barbados, the EarthCARE track guided the position of the HALO flights, and thus helped avoid biasing the sampling of convection. The HALO flight plan, usually aligned with a descending (daytime) orbit of followed the EarthCARE, but did not necessarily itself fly toward lower latitudes, track either in northern or southern direction to capture once the whole atmospheric condition. The direct underpass was included in these straight flight legs varying from day to day in time and location to capture captured different aerosol and cloud conditions and facilitated coordination with to coordinate with other measurements platforms (see e.g., Stevens et al. 2026 for coordination during ORCESTR). For comparability of the EarthCARE and HALO measurements, we anticipated to be at least about generally measured along the EarthCARE track for 10 minutes before and after coincided direct overpass on the EarthCARE track. In addition to the straight flight legs on the EarthCARE tracks we included circles in the flight plan to investigate vertical motions (Bony and Stevens, 2019). Flights out of Cape Verde and Barbados during ORCESTR were conducted during daytime. Considering an EarthCARE equator crossing time around 14:00 local time, this results in an underpass time around 14:30-16:30 UTC local time (see Table 5). Information on flight plans, measurement situation and performance of each flight can be found at <https://orcestra-campaign.org/operation/halo.html>. During the third part of PERCUSION, out of Oberpfaffenhofen, we solely aimed for was decoupled from ORCESTR and focused solely on EarthCARE validation. Flights were either planned in northern direction capturing at higher latitudes to capture continental conditions, cirrus clouds, and frontal cloud systems, and high latitude regions with measurements in night-time conditions, or they were planned to measure in Mediterranean conditions with flights over the Greek ground-stations in Antikythera and Thessaloniki. During the northern flights we caught were sometimes able to flew underly EarthCARE twice on one flight, one in northern direction and once in

295 ~~southern in the northbound and southbound direction of HALO.~~ The time of the ~~meeting point~~ closest coincidence with
EarthCARE was at around 15:00 and 17:00 ~~UTC~~ local time. ~~Underpasses in the northern parts of the flight track were thus~~
~~performed already in nighttime conditions.~~ In all the flights we included overpasses over ground-stations whenever possible.
In addition to our primary goal of validating EarthCARE, our efforts also address the validation of measurements and
300 algorithms from NASA's PACE (Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, Ocean Ecosystem) mission. To this end, we conducted four
dedicated flights in the PACE swath during the campaign phase over the tropical western Atlantic. Furthermore, in preparation
for EarthCARE, we performed a series of underflights with the same payload under NASA's mission constellations CALIPSO
and Cloudsat. Together with the measurements for EarthCARE validation, these underflights offer the opportunity to bridge
some of the gaps arising from the two missions, such as those concerning wavelength dependences and sensitivities. Both
topics will be addressed in the appendices of this manuscript.

305 1.4.3.4. Meeting EarthCARE

~~Essential for t~~The validation of satellite data by airborne measurements ~~is a benefits from precise local and time match of the~~
~~coincidence of the airborne and the spaceborne sensor footprint~~ measurements to, as this is the easiest way to ensure that the
airborne systems and the satellite systems are sampling the same airmasses. Table 5 summarizes information on co-location
of HALO with EarthCARE during PERCUSION. Because PERCUSION took place very early after the launch of EarthCARE,
310 ~~This is why the satellite was still in a drifting phase, with periodic maneuvers, hence the prediction of the EarthCARE track~~
~~was not as precise and thus which made planning underflights were more challenging. We adapted~~ To account for this the flight
path of HALO was adapted just before or partly even during the flight to ~~the benefit from the latest predictions. This worked~~
well and we and therefore managed to capture EarthCARE with a cross-track distance of less than 500 m except for the two
first flights, where we had a distance of about 1000 m, ~~which is still sufficient for validation and most of the time within the~~.
315 ~~The ground footprint of the CPR footprint on ground is of 750 m, while that of . However, care is to be taken when comparing~~
~~small scale structures, e.g. boundary layer clouds, in those cases. The ATLID is has a footprint of 15 m, so that even with very~~
good coincidence small scale differences from spatial sampling at the point of temporal collocation are to be expected. on the
ground. Differences will of course grow with growing increasing temporal dislocation, even as HALO flies along EarthCARE's
320 track, something that needs to be considered as part of the validation. Another aspect is, that due to the slower flight speed of
HALO, a perfect temporal collocation is only achieved at the rendezvous location. Depending on the across track winds, cloud
fields may move out of the satellite swath while HALO is sampling the scene. Similar convective clouds may develop in short
time. The alignment of HALO along the EarthCARE track was maintained mostly 15 min before and 15 min after the overpass
of Earth CARE to minimize this effect, still, these potential shifts need be taken into account during the validation.
In addition to the detailed information on the meeting coincident point with EarthCARE, Table 3 also includes information on
325 the scene that was targeted for comparison on the individual days. The table shows that all target scenes that have been
identified as important (Section 2.2) for a full validation ~~could be were~~ captured during PERCUSION. Even a snow case ~~could~~
~~be was captured covered~~ during one of the extra-tropical northern, homebased flights.

Table 5: Detailed information about EarthCARE underpasses including date of the flight, HALO base, underflown EarthCARE orbit, start time and end time on EarthCARE track (UTC), best match time (UTC), distance and location (lon/lat), and scene targeted for comparison.

Date	Base	Orbit	Time on EC track	Best match	Match dist.	Lon. °E	Lat. °N	Target Scenes
11 Aug.	Sal	01162E	15:22:37 – 16:09:11	15:52:02.743	996 m	-26.5562	17.1985	CC, CMA
13 Aug.	Sal	01193E	15:32:50 – 17:13:34	15:40:00.326	1090 m	-22.3079	17.1985	MAT
16 Aug.	Sal	01240E	16:03:18 – 16:51:28	16:14:04.527	441 m	-32.1054	7.3831	CLS, CC
18 Aug.	Sal	01271E	15:30:00 – 16:28:00	16:04:07.527	336 m	-29.7063	6.7818	CLS, CC
22 Aug.	Sal	01333E	14:57:00 – 16:04:00	15:41:22.111	131 m	-23.1087	14.1737	DC, LSR
25 Aug.	Sal	01380E	15:40:00 – 16:35:00	16:11:49.766	84 m	-30.9127	12.8612	MAT
27 Aug.	Sal	01411E	15:57:00 – 16:17:00	16:01:17.237	249 m	-26.9773	4.8126	MAT, CLS
29 Aug.	Sal	01442E	15:34:00 – 16:12:00	15:51:57.580	185 m	-22.6153	13.2611	DC, LSR
31 Aug.	Sal	01473E	15:24:00 – 16:00:00	15:38:41.850	253 m	-22.6153	13.2611	MAT
3 Sept.	Sal	01520E	16:00:00 – 16:34:00	16:09:04.874	22 m	-30.8138	8.6363	DC, LSR
7 Sept.	Barbados	01583E	17:10:00 – 17:39:00	17:18:30.109	192 m	-47.9594	10.4881	CLS
9 Sept.	Barbados	01614E	16:28:00 – 17:19:00	17:05:43.005	419 m	-44.1018	15.7095	MLS, CMA
12 Sept.	Barbados		17:10:00 – 17:53:00	17:35:33.811	30 m	-52.0739	12.1760	CMA
14 Sept.	Barbados	01692E	17:13:24 – 17:38:21	17:25:38.715	427 m	-49.8648	9.8595	CMA
16 Sept.	Barbados	01723E	16:52:00 – 17:51:00	17:16:06.878	384 m	-47.9917	5.8568	CMA, MSC
19 Sept.	Barbados	01770E	17:28:50 – 18:04:40	17:43:56.788	31 m	-53.8761	14.5050	CC, CMA
21 Sept.	Barbados	01801E	17:19:20 – 17:47:00	17:33:48.109	340 m	-51.7980	11.0166	CMA
23 Sept.	Barbados	01832E	17:14:00 – 17:24:00	17:22:33.535	330 m	-48.9818	11.1494	CC
24 Sept.	Barbados	01848E	17:48:00 – 18:17:40	18:03:00.027	298 m	-59.0219	11.7467	CC
26 Sept.	Barbados	01879E	17:20:40 – 18:21:00	17:51:55.041	291 m	-56.0327	13.5465	CLS, CMA
28 Sept.	Barbados	01910E	17:31:06 – 17:54:38	17:42:05.368	345 m	-53.9846	10.4329	CC, CMA
5 Nov.	Oberpf.	02499D	11:57:23 – 13:59:4	13:55:33.786	446 m	15.9275	64.3926	CC

		02500 D	15:26:03 – 16:07:26	15:28:00.709	475 m	-6.9707	64.7040	MSC, MAT
7 Nov.	Oberpf.	02530D	12:02:00 – 13:46:22	13:44:34.029	302 m	18.8376	64.6444	CLS, MSC
		02531D	15:16:19 – 16:48:19	15:17:02.613	309 m	-4.0945	64.9118	CC, MSC
10 Nov.	Oberpf.	02576D	12:15:04 13:02:30	12:48:48.217	226 m	23.0967	36.9121	CMA, CC
12 Nov.	Oberpf.	02608C/D	11:10:00 14:04:50	14:01:15.588	246 m	18.6452	69.3839	CC
		02609C/D	15:17:43 16:21:25	15:34:07.741	397 m	-5.7937	68.1341	CLS, SML
14 Nov.	Oberpf.	02639C/D	11:04:09 14:01:47	13:49:39.396	242 m	25.1685	72.3513	MLS, MSC
		02640C/D	14:47:13 15:38:00	15:22:16.125	296 m	1.7593	72.1700	CC
16 Nov	Oberpf.	02670C/D	11:47:09 13:58:49	13:39:50.884	329 m	23.8375	69.2438	DC, LSC
		02671C/D	14:52:16 15:36:22	15:11:40.927	426 m	3.9543	71.8482	CC, CMA
19 Nov.	Oberpf.	02716D	12:10:12 12:52:47	12:46:04.513	27 m	23.5290	35.8059	MAT, CMA

330

4. PERCUSION's potential for EarthCARE Validation

In the following we ~~will~~ give examples an overview, of how ~~the HALO's~~ measurements ~~with an EarthCARE like payload can~~ bear being used for the validation of the EarthCARE ~~measurements and~~ data products. The ~~validation~~ examples ~~presented~~ here are limited to individual EarthCARE overpasses to illustrate the direct comparability of the measurements. Future studies will present the results of the actual validation studies, including cross validation and statistical validation. ~~Depending on the specific focus of the validation, flights over the tropics or high latitude observations were chosen. A statistical comparison of all PERCUSION flights quantifying EarthCARE performance in a more general way will be done in future studies. A more detailed information on the validation findings of the different products will be given in specific validation studies. In this paper we focus on the demonstration of the direct comparability of the measurements. Cross validation is also of importance and will be done in dedicated studies, but is not in the scope of this work.~~

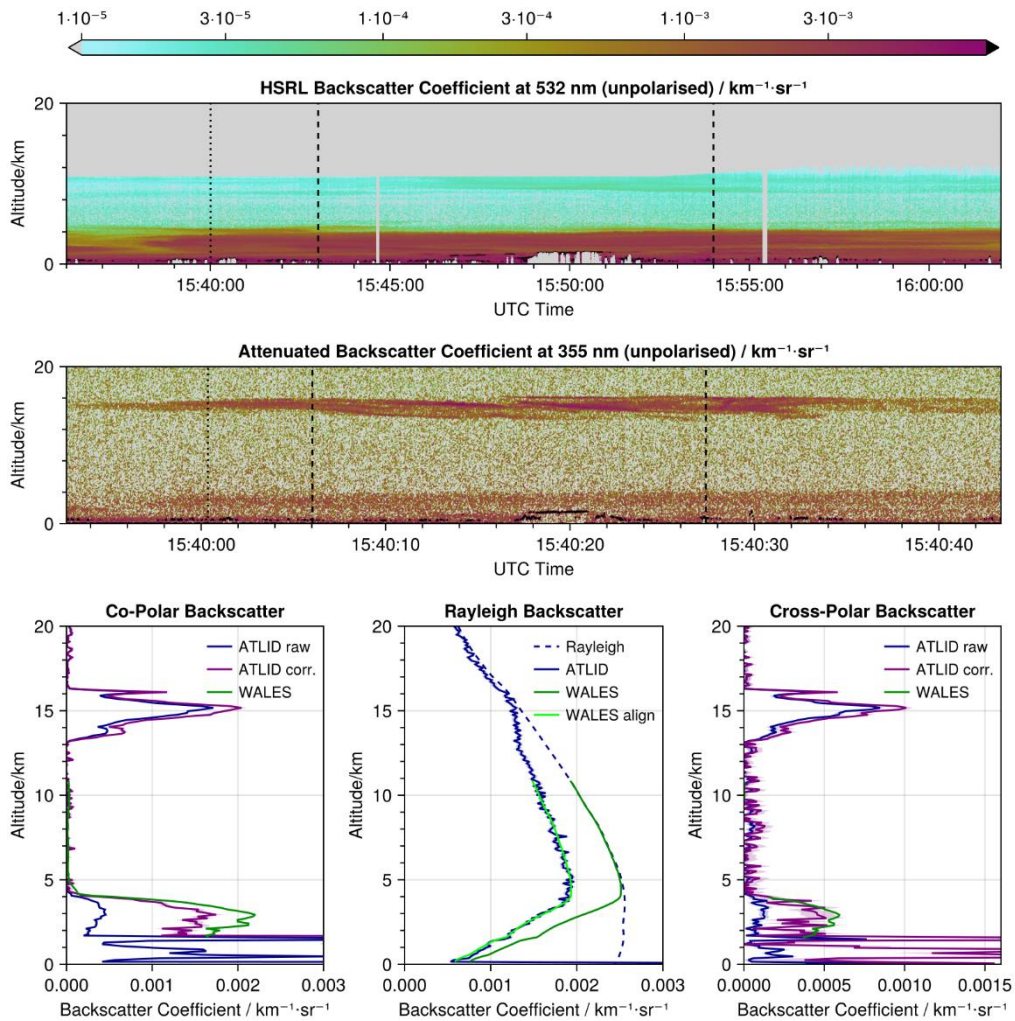
335

340

4.1.3.1. Atmospheric Lidar (ATLID)

WALES-ATLID comparison for Level 1 (L1) and L2 optical properties data

345 The lidar system WALES is an airborne water vapor differential absorption and high spectral resolution lidar (HSRL) developed and built at DLR (Wirth et al., 2009). It measures the water vapor field along the flight track from cruise altitude to ground with four wavelengths around 935 nm, and the extinction using the HSRL technique at 532 nm deploying an iodine filter. In addition, it is equipped with polarization sensitive measurements. The raw data resolution is 0.2 s, corresponding to about 44 m horizontal sampling for a typical aircraft speed of 220 m/s and 15 m in height. The processed data is typically
350 provided horizontally integrated over 1 s (≈ 220 m) for the aerosol and cloud measurements and over 25 s for the water vapor data. To demonstrate the potential of WALES to validate ATLID-L1b (EarthCARE ATLID NOM Level 1B) and L2 (EarthCARE ATLID EBD Level 2A) optical properties (~~baseline BA~~) derived ~~from by the~~ A-PRO algorithm (Donovan et al., 2024), we focus on a research flight out of Sal on 13 August 2024, to compare ATLID aerosol measurements and products for orbit 01162E. In this case a of Saharan dust plume was mapped by both lidars which had been transported to the open ocean.
355 Looking at the time-height cross section of the unpolarized backscatter coefficient (WALES) and unpolarized attenuated backscatter coefficient (ATLID) in of both lidar instruments (Figure 2) we can identify an aerosol layer up to about 4 to 5 km altitude. ~~In the ATLID measurements we see enhanced backscattering at around 15 km altitude missed by the WALES measurements due to the lower flight altitude of HALO of about 11 km. Besides this aerosol layer, In addition to the aerosol layer that is visible well in the measurements of both systems, we can identify~~ signatures of low clouds from about
360 0.5 km to about 2 km altitude are visible in the measurements of both systems (marked by the black out-of-scale color). ~~In addition, enhanced backscattering at around 15 km altitude can be seen in the ATLID measurements we see enhanced backscattering at around 15 km altitude.~~ this layer is missed by the WALES measurements due to the lower flight altitude of HALO of about 11 km.



365 Figure 2: Comparison of the WALES HSRL Backscatter Coefficient at 532 nm (upper panel) and ATLID Attenuated Backscatter
 370 Coefficient at 355 nm (lower panel) for an underflight performed on 13 August 2024 out of Cape Verde. The dotted line shows the
 position of closest match. The dashed vertical lines mark the 1520 km length region for the comparison of the co-polar backscatter
 375 profile, Rayleigh backscatter profile and cross-polar backscatter profile. The left lower panel shows the mean profiles of the
 backscatter coefficient for co-polar polarization for WALES (green) and for ATLID without extinction correction (blue) and in with
 extinction correction (purple). The middle lower panel shows the Rayleigh backscatter from ATLID (solid blue line), the expected
 pure Rayleigh backscatter signal calculated from an atmospheric density profile (dashed blue line) and the pure Rayleigh signal at
 355 nm with additional aerosol extinction derived from the WALES measurements (dark green line). The light green line is aligned
 to the ATLID profile at the uppermost point of the WALES profile. The right lower panel shows the mean profiles of the backscatter
 coefficient for cross-polar polarization for WALES (green) and for ATLID without extinction correction (blue) and with extinction
 correction (purple). Semi-transparent bands around each profile indicate the one sigma statistical error as provided with the data
 products.

To validate ATLID L1 (A-NOM) products, we ~~directly~~ compare the profiles of the measured Mie backscatter coefficient,
 Rayleigh backscatter coefficient, and Cross-polar backscatter coefficient as contained in the ESA ATL NOM 1B product.
We here use baseline BA, where baseline means product version in ESA's nomenclature. As the measurement situation is
 380 stable (see Figure 2) for comparisons of the co-polar ~~profile~~ backscatter ~~coefficient~~, Rayleigh backscatter ~~profile~~ ~~coefficient~~

and cross-polar backscatter ~~profile-coefficient~~ a region of 1520 km length with homogenous backscatter close to the overpass point is selected to increase the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of ATLID data for the comparison. [Directly around the overpass point the aerosol distribution is very structured which could lead to larger representativeness errors when averaged-over.](#) For the ~~direct~~ comparison of L1 data we have to take into account, that ATLID and WALES are operated at different wavelengths, i.e. 355 nm and 532 nm, respectively. The backscatter coefficient for co-polar polarization for WALES and for ATLID is ~~compared-shown~~ without extinction correction [as contained in the L1 product](#) and with ~~extinction~~ correction [for aerosol and molecular extinction by dividing the co-polar signal by the Rayleigh signal \(HSRL method, purple line\).](#) The WALES profile [shown is fully corrected for extinction-as is the case for the WALES profile.](#) For evaluating ~~of~~ the ATLID Rayleigh backscatter ~~coefficient~~, we take into account the expected pure Rayleigh backscatter signal calculated from an atmospheric density profile [contained within the L1 data](#) and ~~the~~is pure Rayleigh signal at 355 nm with additional aerosol extinction derived from the WALES measurements. We aligned [this to](#) the ATLID profile at the uppermost point of the WALES profile-, [because there is considerable extinction from an above cirrus cloud not represented in the WALES measurements. If the aerosol extinction derived from WALES at 532 nm is the same as at 355 nm this light green profile should follow the signal from the ATLID Rayleigh channel closely, which is actually the case here.](#) The benefit of the general same measurement technique allows to address issues like cross-talk and background corrections. For the current baseline version (BA) of ATLID L1 data we can confirm a general good quality of the ATLID Mie and Rayleigh backscatter coefficient.

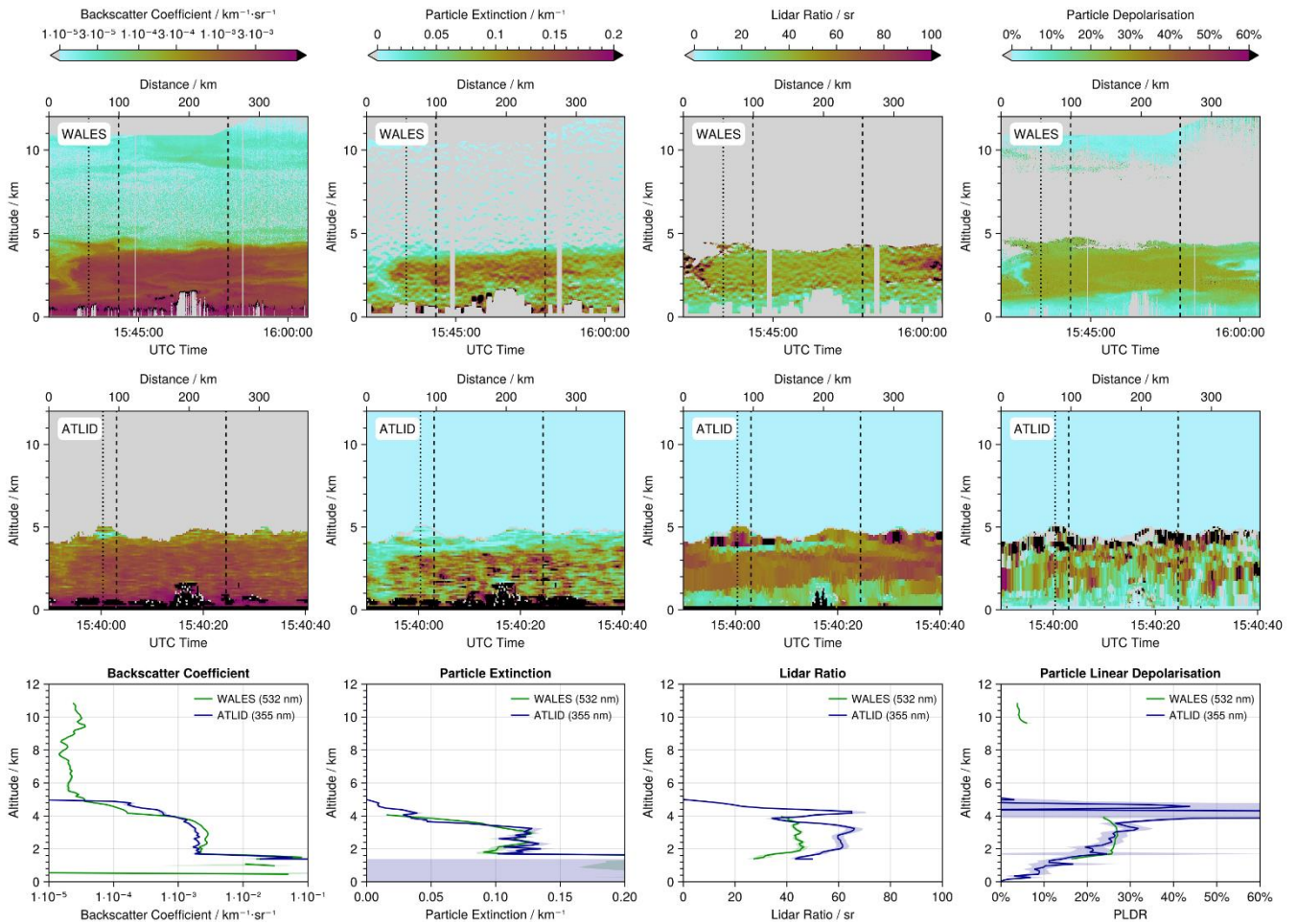


Figure 3: Time-height cross-section of the WALES optical properties (upper panel), and the ATLID optical properties (mid panel), and the profile comparisons (lower panel) of the backscatter coefficient (left), extinction coefficient (middle left), the lidar ratio (middle right), and the particle linear depolarization ratio (right) during the EarthCARE underpass on the 13 August 2013. The profiles are averaged within ± 50 km around the EarthCARE overpass, indicated by the left and right vertical lines in the time-height cross-sections. [Semi-transparent bands around each profile indicate the one sigma statistical error as provided with the data products.](#)

WALES-ATLID comparison for Level 2 (L2) optical properties

After confirming the good performance of the Level 1b data [for this day](#), we investigate the quality of the ATLID L2a products of the cloud and aerosol profile processor (A-PRO (Donovan et al., 2024), including the A-AER aerosol product, and the A-EBD extinction, backscatter, and depolarization product (A-EBD), the A-TC target classification product, and the A-ICE ice microphysical estimation product. For the ~~given~~ example shown in Figure 2 we present ~~as an example~~ the comparisons of WALES optical properties and A-EBD products, i.e., the extinction coefficient, the backscatter coefficient, the lidar ratio and

the particle linear depolarization ratio (Figure 3). For the validation analysis we use the latest available baseline version BA. Again, we have to consider a possible wavelength dependence, ~~but f~~Former studies (e.g. Groß et al., 2011) confirm, that Saharan dust and marine aerosol layers do not show a wavelength dependence between 355 nm and 532 nm for the backscatter coefficient, extinction coefficient, and for the lidar ratio. For the particle linear depolarization ratio of Saharan dust, a small wavelength dependence between 355 nm and 532 nm is expected but well characterized (Freudenthaler et al., 2009; Groß et al., 2011; Groß et al., 2015; Groß et al., 2025; Burton et al., 2016; Haarig et al., 2022). Early comparisons between HALO measurements and ATLID L2 optical properties have identified ~~issues-an error in the layer specification for EarthCARE A-EBD algorithms, resulting in overly coarse layering. in the layering of the A-EBD properties that~~This problem could be solved ~~before data have been made publicly available and are no issue anymore~~ in the current baseline. ~~From comparisons with the HALO measurements, we could clearly identify the problems that could be solved in the updated baseline BA of the products.~~ Our comparisons confirm the good quality of the A-PRO products in the current baseline version in general. However, some differences between the WALES and ATLID data of the different products are visible. While the particle extinction coefficient shows agreement within the uncertainty range, significant differences occur for the values of the lidar ratio in the height range between about 1-4 km. The lidar ratio retrieved from ATLID data is about 60 sr while the corresponding derived from WALES measurements is about 45 sr. This difference might result from the differences in the derived backscatter coefficient. The discrepancies might result from a wrong target classification and thus a wrong a priori information in the optimal estimate retrieval to derive A-EBD products, or a too strong weight on the a priori information. Investigations about this issue are ongoing. In addition, for~~in~~ the example shown ~~above~~, significant noise on the depolarization values is observed ~~in the top of the dust layer~~. Furthermore, especially the depolarization ratio shows a strange behavior at the upper edge of the aerosol layer leading to high, unphysical values.

WALES-ATLID-~~L2~~ comparison for L2 layer properties

Besides the L2 optical properties we use the WALES measurements for a comparison with the ATLID Target Classification (EarthCARE ATLID TC Level 2A) and the ATLID cloud top height (EarthCARE ATLID CTH Level 2A) (Wandinger et al., 2023) (baseline BA). An example comparison is shown for the HALO underflight on the 16 August 2024 southwest of Cabo Verde (orbit 01240E). This flight was selected as it captures a wide range of cloud and aerosol conditions typical of the tropical atmosphere. The flight objective aimed at a south-north transect across the ITCZ, including a flight leg of about 700 km (50 minutes) flown along the predicted EarthCARE ground track, extending from the ITCZ centre toward its northern edge. Figure 4a shows a time-altitude cross section of the backscatter ratio (BSR), which is the ratio of the total (aerosol + molecule) to the molecular backscatter signal, measured with the WALES instrument with the EarthCARE underpass at 16:14 UTC. The BSR measurements reveals several cloud and aerosol features that are captured in this flight section. At the highest altitudes (10-13 km) frequently large BSR values indicate a widespread field of ice clouds. This ice cloud field has the largest vertical extent near the underpass and is more patchy and thinner toward the northern part of the transect. At lower altitudes (1-3 km), smaller-scale regions of large BSR values are detected which are associated with stratocumulus and cumulus clouds. Additionally in

the lowermost 6 km, an extended layer characterized by moderate BSR values (BSR between 2-6) is observed which indicates an aerosol layer. Notably, this aerosol layer appears thicker and more continuous in the northern segment (distance > 400 km) of the flight leg. In the southern part, it appears as two separated layers: an elevated layer around 5 km altitude and another layer within the lowest 2 km of the atmosphere. Besides the L2 optical properties we compare the WALES measurements to the ATLID Target Classification (EarthCARE ATLID TC Level 2A) and Feature Mask (EarthCARE ATLID FM Level 2A) (Donovan, et al., 2024) and layer properties. In this example, the ATLID cloud top height (EarthCARE ATLID CTH Level 2A) (Wandinger et al., 2023) (baseline BA) is compared to WALES measurement for the underflight on 16 August 2024 southwest of Cabo Verde (orbit 01240E). This flight was selected as it exhibits a wide range of cloud features and aerosol conditions representative of the tropical atmosphere. The flight objective aimed at a north-south-north transect across the ITCZ, including a flight leg of about 700 km (50 minutes) flown along the predicted EarthCARE ground track, extending from the ITCZ centre toward its northern edge. Figure 4a shows a time-altitude cross section of the backscatter ratio (BSR) measured with the WALES instrument along the EarthCARE leg (with the satellite underpass at 16:14 UTC). The vertical distribution of BSR illustrates the occurrence of various cloud types and aerosol layers encountered throughout this flight section: At the highest altitudes (10-13 km) the frequently high BSR values indicate a widespread field of ice clouds which has the largest vertical extent near the underpass and is more patchy and vertically thin in the northern part. At lower altitudes (1-3 km), isolated and smaller scale patches of elevated BSR values (> 20) are detected, associated with stratocumulus and cumulus (liquid) cloud formations. Furthermore, within the lowest 6 km of the atmosphere, a vertically extended layer characterized by moderate BSR values (BSR between 2-6) indicative of a marked aerosol layer. Notably, this aerosol layer appears thicker and more continuous in the northern segment (track distance > 400 km) of the flight leg, whereas in the southern segment it is fragmented into two distinct layers — an elevated layer near 5 km altitude and another covering the lowermost 2 km of the atmosphere. Threshold-based detection algorithms are commonly applied to determine atmospheric targets from lidar observations such as clouds and aerosols (Groß et al., 2013; Marinou et al., 2019). In this example, however, the focus is exclusively on the validation of EarthCARE cloud products. In particular, we focus on cloud macro-physical properties from the target classification product (A-TC), providing information on the vertical distribution of clouds and the cloud top height product (A-CTH). The A-TC classification itself applies height-dependent thresholds to ATLID backscatter and depolarization together with information on the tropopause height to distinguish between atmospheric target (Irbah et al., 2023). For the validation, cloud pixels and the altitude of the uppermost cloud layer are independently determined from the WALES backscatter ratio (BSR) data using a height-dependent threshold-based algorithm similar to approaches used in previous studies (e.g., Groß et al., 2014; Urbanek et al., 2017; Gutleben et al., 2019; Dekoutsidis et al., 2024). The specific implementation of this algorithm is described in detail in Krüger et al. (2026, in preparation) and is applied exclusively to the WALES observations. Threshold-based detection algorithms are applied for determining a target classification (Groß et al., 2013; Marinou et al., 2019). In this example, however, the focus is exclusively on the validation of EarthCARE cloud products. In particular, we focus on cloud macro-physical properties from the target classification product (A-TC) providing information on the vertical distribution of clouds and the cloud top height product (A-CTH). To validate both products, cloud pixels and

the altitude of the uppermost cloud are determined from the WALES BSR data set based on a height-dependent threshold-based algorithm as used in previous studies (e.g. Groß et al., 2014; Gutleben et al., 2019; Dekoutsidis et al., 2023; Urbanek et al., 2017).

480

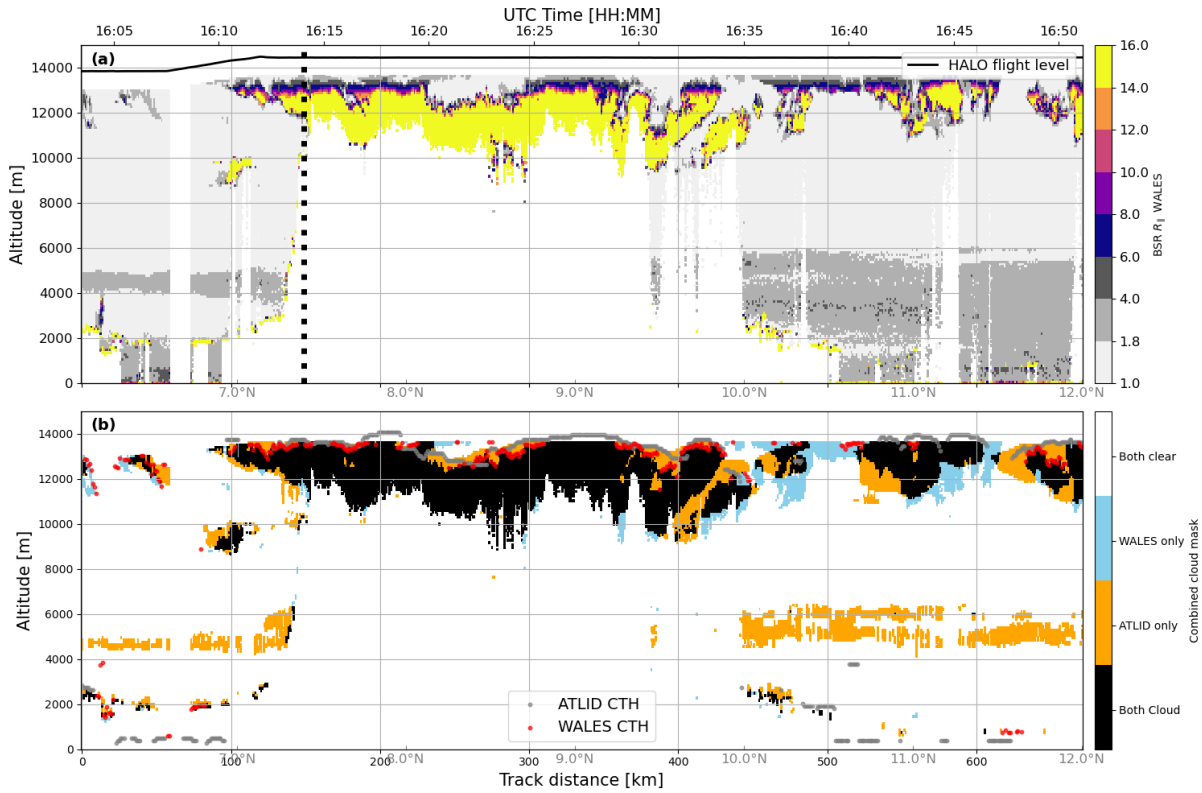


Figure 4: Distance–altitude cross sections for the HALO flight on 16 August 2024 showing (a) the backscatter ratio measured with the WALES HSRL, along with the flight altitude of the HALO aircraft (black solid line) and the EarthCARE underpass track (thick black dashed line). Panel (b) shows the combined cloud mask derived from the WALES BSR data and the collocated EarthCARE Level-2 target classification product (A-TC). Black shading indicates cloud pixels detected by both WALES and A-TC, while blue and orange colors represent cloud pixels identified exclusively by WALES or A-TC, respectively. White denotes regions with no cloud detection by either product. The red markers indicate the cloud top height derived from the WALES backscatter ratio, while the gray markers represent the cloud top height from the A-CTH product. Note that cloud tops from WALES are displayed only when they could be unambiguously identified (e.g., when the cloud top was sufficiently far from the HALO aircraft), while A-CTH reports a cloud top for these cases. Distance–altitude cross sections for the HALO flight on 16 August 2024 showing (a) the backscatter ratio measured with the WALES HSRL (contours), along with the flight altitude of the HALO aircraft (black solid line) and the EarthCARE underpass track (thick black dashed line). Panel (b) displays the combined cloud mask derived from the WALES BSR data and the collocated EarthCARE L2 target classification product (A-TC). Black contours indicate cloud pixels detected by both WALES and A-TC, while blue and orange colors represent cloud pixels identified exclusively by WALES or A-TC, respectively. White denotes regions with no cloud detection by either product. The dotted lines in panel (b) correspond to the top altitude of the highest cloud layer detected from the WALES backscatter ratio and the cloud top height provided by the A-CTH product.

485

490

495

Figure 4b shows the cross section of the combined cloud mask from WALES BSR and A-TC to directly compare both products along the coordinated EarthCARE underflight. The black shaded areas indicate a strong agreement in the vertical distribution

500 of cloud pixels in both cloud masks, especially for high-altitude cirrus clouds and for the cumulus cloud formations at altitudes between 1 and 3 km. Interestingly, A-TC-only pixels (orange), associated with both cirrus and cumulus clouds, indicate comparatively thicker vertical clouds. Cirrus clouds in particular are more horizontally spread, and thus less patchy in the A-TC cloud mask. ~~This might lead to~~The tendentially vertically thicker cirrus clouds in the A-TC, corresponding to the elevated cloud tops (red line) of the A-CTH product. Furthermore, it is noted that the A-TC-only mask shows a coherent cloud structure at an altitude between 4 and 6 km, which corresponds exactly to the upper part of the aerosol layer (Figure 4a) suggesting a misclassification of cloud and aerosols in this scene. The BSR measurements illustrate that the WALES-BSR dataset can be reliably used to determine macro-physical cloud properties (e.g., vertical distribution, horizontal and vertical extent, and cloud top information), and to validate the ATLID level 2 relevant products. The case study presented indicates that the A-TC product reliably represents all cloud features observed by WALES (extended high-altitude clouds and low-altitude clouds). There are indications that the cloud pixels in A-TC, especially ice clouds, are too large horizontally and vertically, which could be due to “bad layering” in the product algorithms. There are also indications that the cloud tops of the independent A-CTH product are higher than those derived from WALES and, in some cases, inconsistent with the cloud mask of A-TC.

1.2.3.2. Cloud Profiling Radar (CPR)

515 The ~~CPR-radar~~ onboard HALO is a high-power (30 kW peak) magnetron-based MIRA35 cloud radar at 35.2 GHz manufactured from METEK. It has been thoroughly characterized and calibrated (Ewald et al., 2019). With a repetition rate of 7.5 kHz, the minimum detectable signal at 10 km (1s avg) is around -42 dBZ and thus at least 6 dB higher compared to CPR. Including effects of platform motion and natural spectral width, the effective sensitivity is around -34 dBZ. The vertical resolution of the MIRA~~35~~ measurements is significantly finer (30 m vs 500 m), and the horizontal resolution is twice as high (200 m vs 500 m) compared to CPR. Due to the lower frequency (35 vs 94 GHz), the gaseous and hydrometeor attenuation is also considerably lower for MIRA~~35~~ observations.

520 Figure 5 shows the comparisons between space- and airborne measurements of the radar reflectivity (Figure 5a, b) and Doppler velocity (Figure 5c, d) performed on the 18 August 2024 (orbit 01271E). The ~~measurements-observations~~ were ~~performed-carried out~~ in the Tropical Atlantic roughly 1500 km south-east from Cape Verde above a convective region within

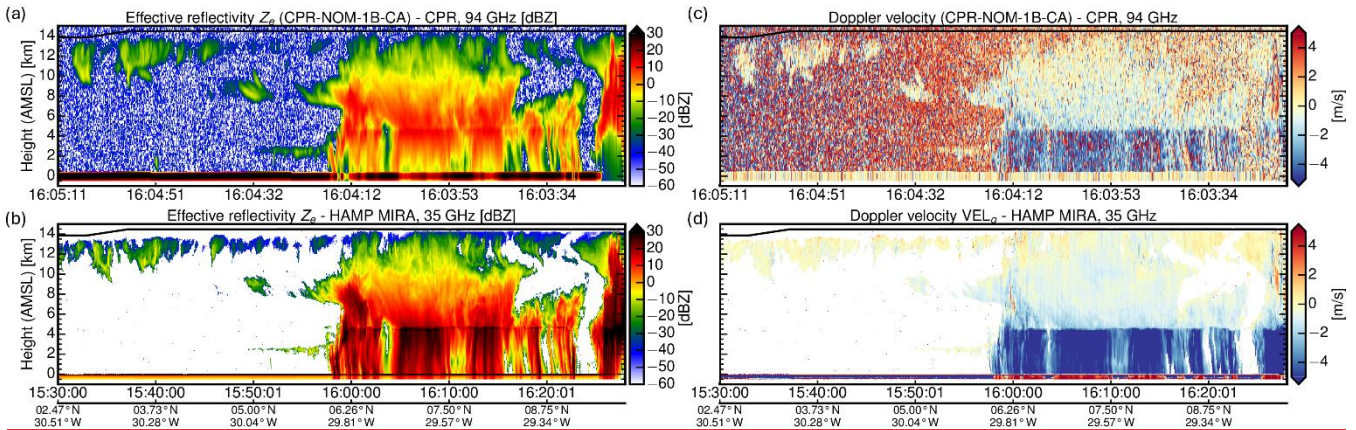


Figure 5: Comparison of (a) CPR and (b) MIRA radar reflectivity and of the \underline{D} oppler velocity from (c) CPR and (d) MIRA for a HALO underpass of Earth-CARE performed on 18 August 2024.

530 Between the measured radar reflectivity from CPR (Figure 5a) and MIRA (Figure 5b) ~~and CPR (Figure 5a)~~, the coarser resolution and slightly lower sensitivity of CPR is most apparent for the thin cirrus at cloud top. Moreover, the different Mie scattering regime and the different absorption by hydrometeors stands out in the rain region below the melting layer. As this measurement was acquired during the commissioning phase of EarthCARE, the redundant signal processing unit (SPU-A) of CPR was used which exhibited an IQ offset and a reduced signal sensitivity ~~a drift in the Doppler velocity background signal -~~

535 (see clear-sky regions in Figure 5c), biasing low echo cloud regions which disappeared after switch to the operational signal processing unit (SPU-B) on 4 December 2024. This increased the noise in doppler-Doppler measurements (Figure 5c) and caused the rainbow-like pattern in the clear-sky region. Figure 6 compares the mean profiles of radar reflectivity (Figure 6a, NOM-1B-CA) and doppler-Doppler velocity (Figure 6b, CD-2A-AC) in absolute numbers. In the cloud top region between 6-10 km with negligible gaseous and hydrometeor attenuation and predominant Rayleigh scattering, the radar reflectivity bias was initially quite negative (-3.8 dB) for the early processing baseline BA. The bias improved to -1.6 dB for baseline CA until

540 it was resolved for baseline CB. For the level 2 doppler-Doppler velocity product CD-2A, the antenna miss-pointing correction by Puigdomènech Treserras et al. (2025) successful removed any velocity biases. Below an altitude of 6 km, the radar reflectivity mainly differs due to the differential hydrometeor attenuation between 35 GHz and 94 GHz. The difference in the mean doppler-Doppler velocity can be explained by Mie scattering at 94 GHz of larger and faster falling rain droplets,

545 underrepresenting their faster velocity component in the mean doppler-Doppler velocity.

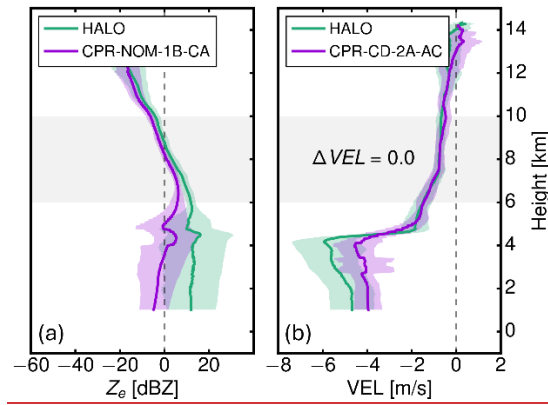
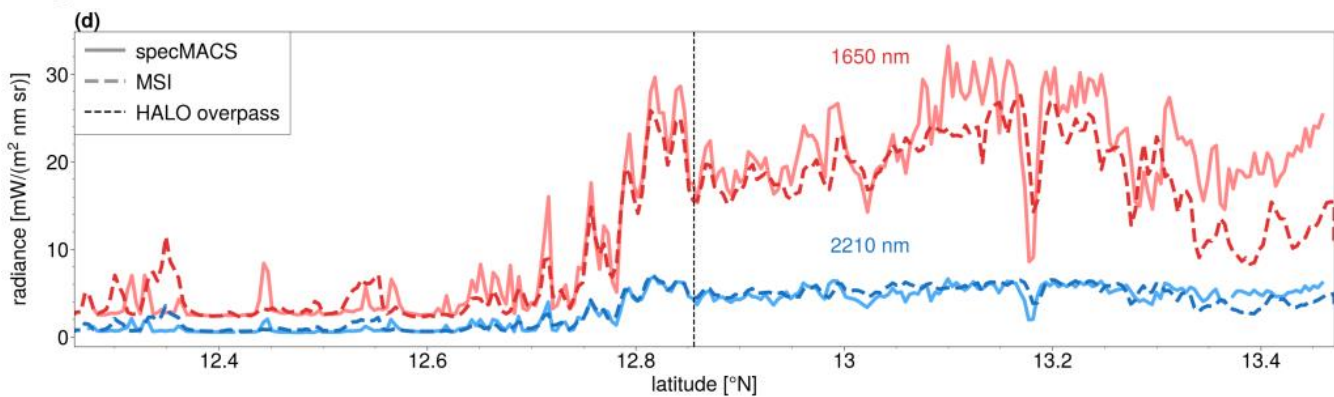
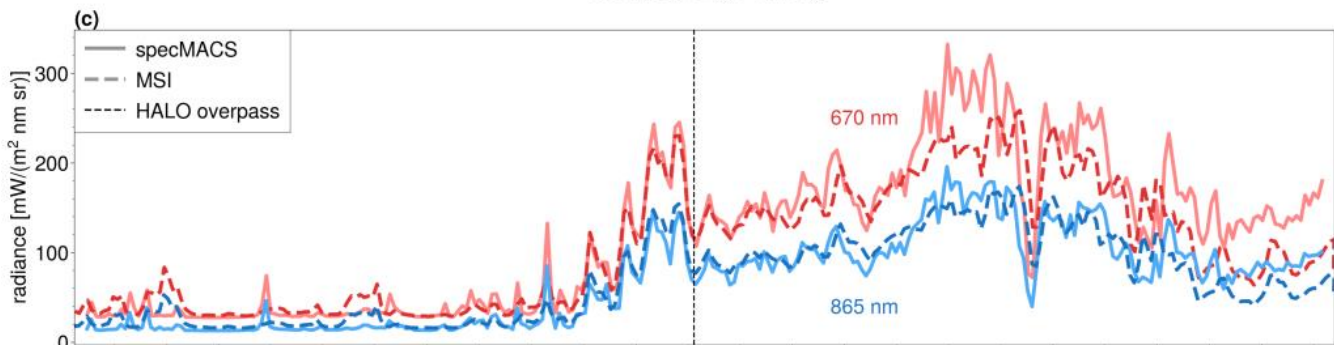
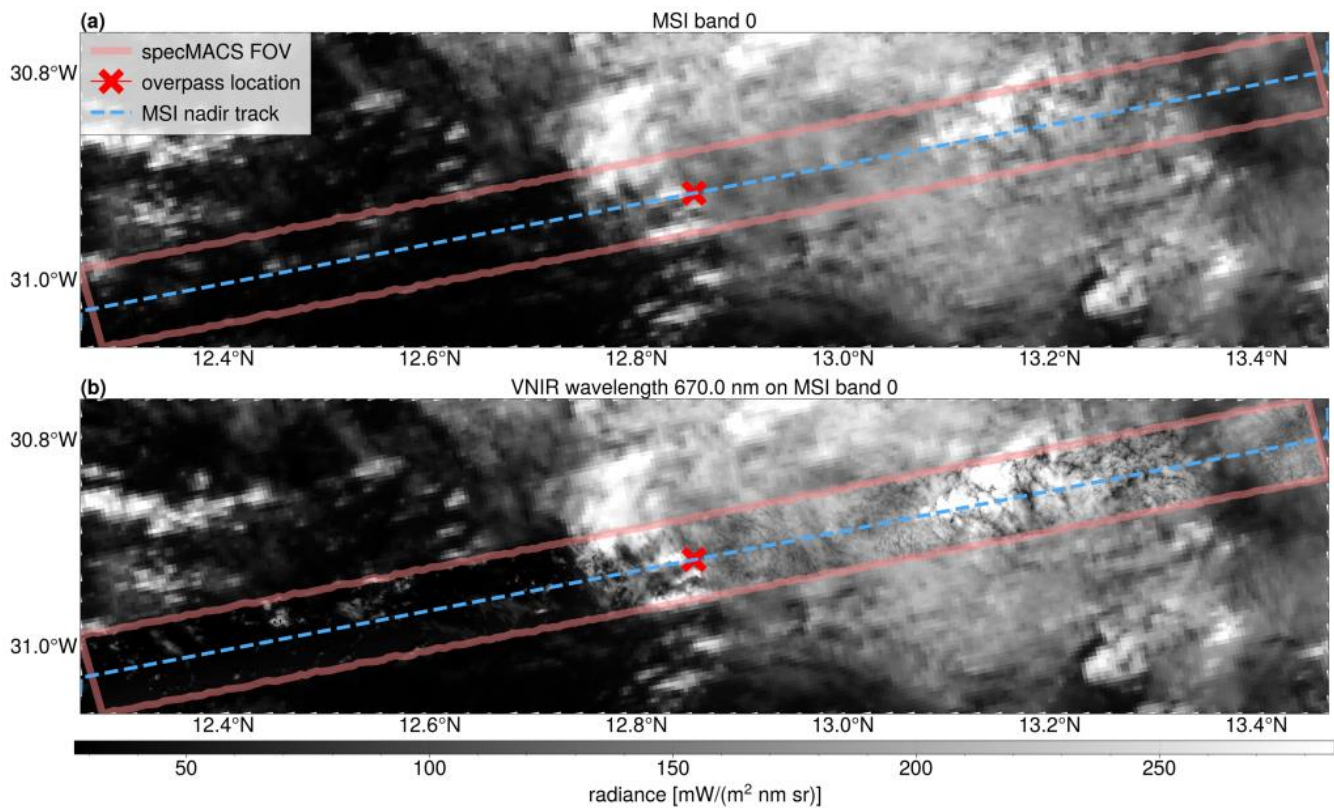


Figure 6 Comparison of mean observed profiles between HALO and EarthCARE (a) Radar reflectivity L1 product CPR-NOM-1B-CA and (b) L2 product CPR-CD-2A-AC for the underflight shown in Figure 5.

4.3.3.3. Multi Spectral Imager (MSI)

550 4.3.1 Comparison specMACS-MSI

The specMACS consists of two hyperspectral line cameras (Ewald et al., 2016) covering the visible and near-infrared (VNIR, 400 - 1000 nm) and the short-wave infrared (SWIR, 1000 - 2500 nm), as well as four 2D-two-dimensional polarization resolving RGB cameras (Weber et al., 2024), providing an across-track field of view of about 220°. The VNIR and SWIR measurements during the 33 EarthCARE underflights of the PERCUSION campaign allow a direct comparison of the measured reflected radiances to the ones measured by the four MSI channels with center wavelengths at 670 nm and 865 nm in the VNIR and 1650 nm and 2210 nm in the SWIR, respectively. An exact-appropriate validation can only be performed for the nadir pixel of the two cameras at the exact time of the overflight, since all other pixels are observed under different viewing angles.



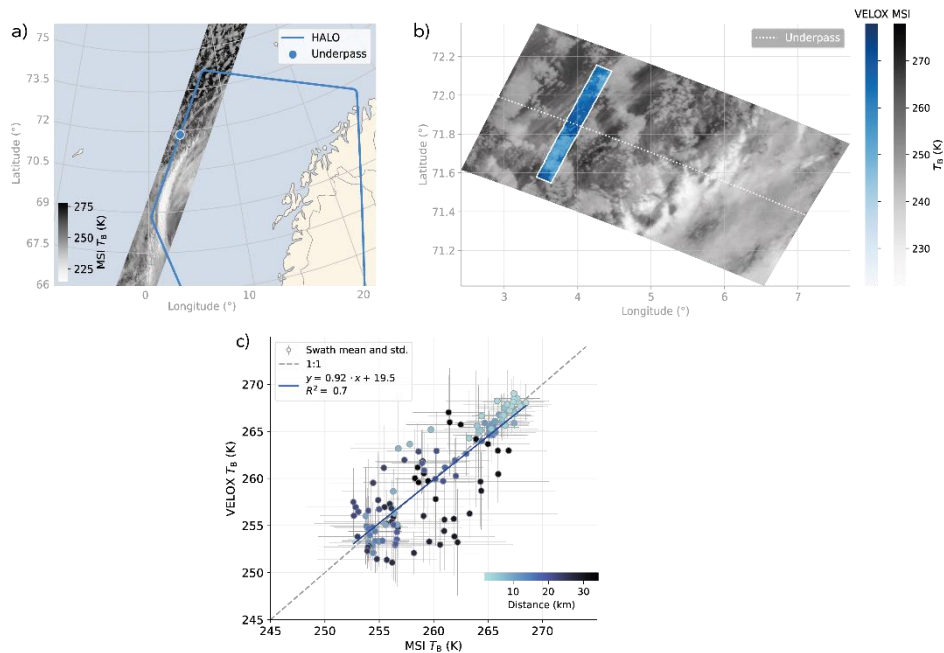
560 **Figure 7: Comparison of specMACS to MSI on 25 August 2024. In a, the measurement of the MSI band 0 is shown for the considered measurement region. In panel b, the corresponding specMACS measurement at a wavelength of 670 nm is overlaid. Panels c and d show comparisons of the measured nadir pixel radiances of the two VNIR bands (panel c) and SWIR bands (panel d) with respect to the latitude. The dotted line is the overpass best match.**

In the following, we consider the overflight on 25 August 2025 (01380E) with a horizontal distance of about 84 m over the ~~tropical North Atlantic~~northern tropical Atlantic. In Figure 7, we show the 10 minutes around the overflight time for specMACS, corresponding to approximately 19 s for MSI to cover the same field of view (FOV). Figure 7a shows the radiances as seen by the visible channel of MSI. In red, the specMACS field of view is shown, while the blue dashed line depicts the nadir pixel track of the MSI band 0. The cross denotes the location of the overpass. The corresponding measurements of the 670 nm channel of the VNIR are overlaid on the MSI measurements in Figure 7b. Clearly, one can see the same cloud field, with a significantly higher spatial resolution of specMACS (typically around 15 m for the VNIR and less than 40 m for the SWIR at a distance of 10 km to the cloud compared to about 500 m of MSI). In Figure 7c, we show a quantitative comparison of the nadir pixels of the MSI bands 0 and 1 to the nadir pixels of the corresponding center wavelength channels of the VNIR averaged to the spatial extent of the individual MSI nadir pixels. Figure 7d shows the same for the two SWIR channels. The black dashed line depicts the time of the overpass with good agreement between specMACS and MSI around it. For the 670nm channel, we find a mean bias and standard deviation of $-1.28 \pm 6.93\%$, and hence slightly smaller radiances of MSI compared to specMACS, and a correlation coefficient of 0.93 for the entire segment. For the 865 nm band, we get $1.95 \pm 7.64\%$ for the mean bias and 0.93 for the correlation coefficient. For the SWIR channels, we find similar biases of $-2.20 \pm 8.51\%$ for 1650 nm and $1.94 \pm 8.63\%$ for the 2210 nm channel, however, they show slightly larger standard deviations. For the correlation coefficients we derive 0.92 for both channels underscoring the good agreement between the two instruments taking into account that we include time differences of around 10 minutes between the specMACS and MSI measurements. Good agreement between the two instruments is particularly also observed for clear-sky pixels over the ocean.~~In general, good agreement between the two instruments is also observed for ocean pixels~~ where time shifts between MSI and specMACS are less important. For clouds further away from the overpass time, shifts in extrema and systematic differences can be identified which are possibly due to cloud movement and development over time. Despite those smaller differences, there is a clear potential for the validation of MSI radiances with the airborne measurements of the two hyperspectral cameras of specMACS. Furthermore, L2 products, such as cloud top height, cloud phase and cloud effective radius, could be compared in the future. In particular, one could also take into account the products of the polarization resolving cameras, which use a stereographic algorithm to determine cloud geometry (Kölling et al., 2019; Volkmer et al., 2024), a new approach to derive the cloud phase (Weber et al., 2025) and measurements of the cloud bow to derive the effective radius without being subject to 3-D effects which strongly affect classical bi-spectral methods (Pörtge et al., 2023).

4.3.2 Comparison VELOX-MSI

The thermal-infrared (TIR) imager VELOX (Video airborne Longwave Observations within siX channels; (Schäfer, et al., 2022) onboard HALO measured two-dimensional fields of brightness temperature in two broadband and four narrow-band

spectral channels with a horizontal resolution of 10 m for a HALO flight altitude of 10 km. The three VELOX channels ~~centred~~centered at 8.7 μm , 10.7 μm and 12.0 μm were selected to match the MSI channels TIR-1 (8.8 μm), TIR-2 (10.8 μm) and TIR-3 (12.0 μm). Thus, VELOX measurements ~~also~~ allow nighttime validation of MSI. During the PERCUSION campaign, several flights were performed at high latitudes during twilight and night illumination conditions. On 16 November 2024, the HALO-EarthCARE underpass took place over the Norwegian Sea, where an air mass of Arctic origin was sampled. A variety of cloud structures was captured by MSI channel TIR-2 (Figure 8a). For a ± 2.5 -minute sequence around the underpass, a pushbroom-like image was constructed based on ~~the~~10.7 μm VELOX images and mapped on top of the MSI image (Figure 8b). In general, MSI and VELOX show similar features in the cloud structure. However, due to the dynamics of the scene a point-by-point validation is ~~still~~challenging and limited to the underpass location. To allow for a fair comparison, the high spatial resolution of the VELOX measurement (12.5 m) was scaled to the MSI resolution (500 m) and spatially matched. To compensate for the dynamics of the scene, swath averages were calculated for both measurements (Figure 8c). A linear fit was applied yielding a coefficient of determination R^2 of 0.7. The mean bias for the swath averages of MSI and VELOX brightness temperatures was found to be about 0.15 K. Reflecting the variation of clouds in the scene, the swath standard deviations are equally large for both instruments. While both platforms are moving on different time scales, the spatial distance from the underpass is a common metric for quantifying the comparability. This metric ranges between 0 km and 35 km for the ± 2.5 -minute VELOX sequence and is used as a color-code in Figure 8c. Directly at the underpass the swath averages show a very good agreement (white-light blue markers). ~~while, w~~With increasing distance, there are mostly distinct brightness temperature differences (~~darker blue and green-dark blue~~ markers) of up to 9 K. However, the cloud movement depends on the local wind pattern, which was ~~analysed~~analyzed based on the auxiliary meteorological database (X-MET products, baseline AA) and the ATLID feature mask (baseline BA) to identify high and low cloud layers. In this case, higher (~ 9 km) and lower clouds (~ 2 km) experienced a southward shift caused by northerly winds and wind speeds of about 8 m s^{-1} and 17 m s^{-1} , respectively. For a 2.5-minute distance to the underpass this translates to a spatial displacement of about 1.2 km (~ 2 -3 MSI pixels) for higher clouds and 2.6 km (~ 5 -6 MSI pixels) for lower clouds. Nevertheless, based on the swath averages a comparison of MSI and VELOX shows a reasonable agreement. Further cases in other temperature regimes and during daytime need to be ~~analysed~~analyzed to extend the potential of the MSI-VELOX validation.



620

Figure 8: MSI-VELOX brightness temperature T_B comparison for the research flight on 16 November 2024. a) Map showing the HALO flight track and MSI T_B at $10.8 \mu\text{m}$ (TIR-2) for orbit 02671 frame C of baseline BA, the underpass location is marked. b) VELOX ($10.7 \mu\text{m}$) ± 2.5 -minute pushbroom image around the underpass mapped on top of the MSI T_B section close to the underpass. c) Comparison of MSI and VELOX swath T_B averages and standard deviations with a linear fit. Data points are colored by their spatial distance to the underpass location. Histograms of the swath T_B averages are shown at the top and right for MSI and VELOX, respectively.

625

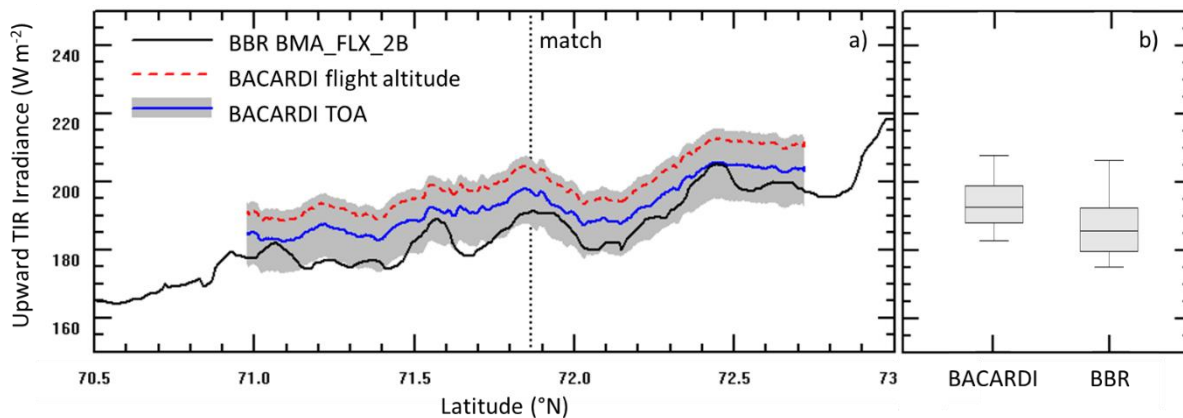
1.4.3.4. BroadBand Radiometer (BBR)

For the same flight section analyzed for the VELOX-MSI comparison in Section 4.3 the BBR ~~level 2L2~~ product BMA_FLX_2B (baseline AB) was evaluated by measurements on HALO. Due to the absence of solar radiation at these high latitudes the focus is on the thermal-infrared irradiance derived from BBR measured radiances. On HALO, broadband upward thermal-infrared irradiance was measured with the Broadband AirCrAft RaDiometer Instrumentation system (BACARDI; Ehrlich et al., 2023). The uncertainties are mostly linked to the sensitivity calibration and are in the range of 45% (2 times the standard deviation confidence level). Thermal offset effects can be neglected for this case study, because HALO did not change altitude during the flight sections. Uncertainty estimates of BBR BMA_FLX_2B irradiances (baseline BA) are ~~released~~ with reported in the public release of the product, available by the end of 2025. However, for the section analyzed here, the BBR data status is of high to very high confidence. The comparisons of BBR and BACARDI for the 15 min flight section of the EarthCARE overpass are shown in Figure 9. The BACARDI raw data range significantly higher than BBR irradiances. This is due to the emission/absorption of thermal infrared-IR radiation by the atmosphere above the flight altitude of HALO (here about 12.5 km). As BBR measures broadband irradiance covering significant water vapor and ozone emission/absorption

630

635

640 lines, this needs to be considered in the comparison to BACARDI. A correction based on radiative transfer simulations using the atmospheric properties from the AUX_MET_1D product was applied to the BACARDI data. The quality of the simulations was confirmed by comparing the downward thermal ~~infrared-IR~~ irradiance that has additionally been derived from the simulations and was also measured by BACARDI. The flight section averages amount to ~~18.9619~~ W m^{-2} (simulations) and ~~19.1919~~ W m^{-2} (BACARDI) and show negligible differences. As shown in Figure 9 (blue line), the flight altitude correction of the BACARDI measurement shifts the airborne observations close to the BBR data. The mean upward irradiance of BACARDI was corrected from 199.3 Wm^{-2} to 192.8 Wm^{-2} matching the BBR product of 186.4 Wm^{-2} within the uncertainty range of BACARDI. While the average irradiances agree, some deviations of the variations in the time series are obvious. This likely results from the increasing time shift between EarthCARE and HALO observations and the different footprints of the BBR and BACARDI sensors. Depending on the reference altitude of the observed scene (e.g., cloud top altitude), the hemispheric integrating optical inlet of BACARDI covers a larger area and less variability than BBR. Further studies and different cloudy and cloud-free scenes are needed to explore these effects in detail.

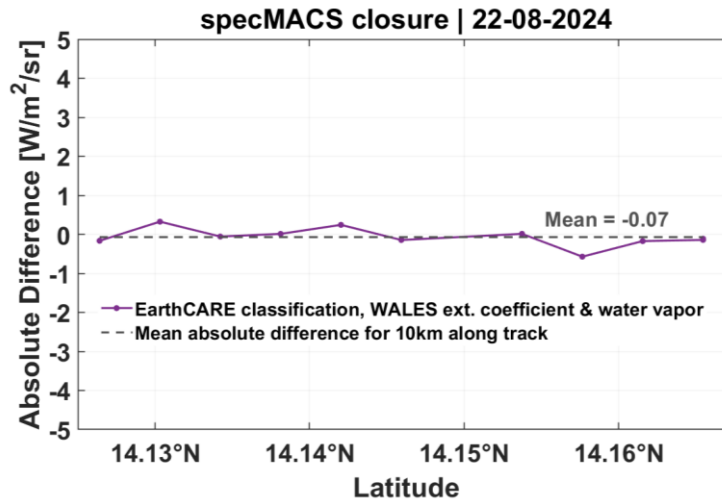


655 **Figure 9: a) Time series (displayed as latitude) of upward thermal-IR irradiance measured by BACARDI and retrieved by BBR for 16 November 2024 (orbit 02671, frame C). Raw data and data corrected for flight altitude are displayed for BACARDI measurements. The box-wisker plot in b) show only corrected BACARDI data.**

1.5.3.5. Synergy and radiative consistency

To evaluate the performance of the synergistic EarthCARE products (first data have been made publicly available Dec. 2025), we further developed independent synergistic lidar-radar retrievals (Delanoë and Hogan, 2008) to derive height-resolved information of ice (Cazenave et al., 2019), and mixed-phase and supercooled liquid (Aubry et al., 2024) cloud microphysical properties. ~~The retrieval is applied to lidar and radar measurements onboard HALO (Ewald et al., 2021; Aubry et al., 2024). However, although these data provide complimentary measurements and are sensitive to different moments of the particle size distribution and, thus, appear ideal for synergistic retrievals to derive particle effective size, particle number concentration, and ice/liquid water content, even using their synergy is sometimes not sufficient to constrain ice and mixed phase cloud~~

665 ~~microphysical properties. The result of the retrieval depends strongly on the assumed particle habit and size distribution~~
(~~Sourdeval et al., 2018~~). Measurements of the infrared (IR) emissivity (Delanoë and Hogan, 2008) or of the reflected solar
radiation (Ewald et al., 2021) help to constrain the retrieved microphysical properties. Additionally, one can also use the
measured radiative quantities to check the retrieved microphysical properties for consistency or to control the assumptions.
The microphysical properties are retrieved using ~~the an~~ optimal estimation framework. Next, the reflected solar radiation is
670 simulated using the radiative transfer code (libRadtran; Mayer and Kylling, 2005) and compared with the measured solar
radiation measured onboard the HALO aircraft. The same can be done using measurements onboard the EarthCARE satellite.
Similarly, we can perform radiative closure for aerosol scenes, using information on microphysical properties from data bases
(e.g. (Gasteiger et al., 2011; Gasteiger and Wiegner, 2018)) or from in-situ measurements (e.g. Weinzierl et al., 2011). To
validate the EarthCARE products, we leverage a combination of airborne and satellite-based observations collected during
675 PERCUSION. As an example, we performed simulations for the EarthCARE underpass on 22 August 2024, focusing on cloud
free aerosol conditions. High-resolution lidar measurements of aerosol and water vapor profiles and aerosol optical properties
derived from the hybrid end-to-end aerosol classification model for EarthCARE (HETEAC; Wandinger et al., 2023) were used
as input for radiative transfer simulations. The calculated radiances were compared to measured radiances from specMACS.
More precisely, broadband solar radiances were computed in the wavelength range 500–900 nm, matching the visible-near
680 infrared (VNIR) spectral coverage of specMACS (Ewald et al., 2016). The simulations were carried out for the flight altitude
and for each ~1 km nadir point along a 10 km track centred around the EarthCARE and the HALO meeting point for cloud-
free (in terms of cloud) conditions. The closure revealed a good agreement with measured radiances, with a mean absolute
10 km along track difference between simulated and measured radiances of $-0.07 \text{ Wm}^{-2}\text{sr}^{-1}$ (Figure 10) which corresponds to
a relative difference of -0.9%. For a demonstration of how radiative consistency serves for validation and to advances the
685 understanding of the radiative impact of the atmospheric constituents, the closure was performed with airborne observations.
Once the full EarthCARE dataset will be released, this study ~~will be is~~ extended using EarthCARE top-of-atmosphere (TOA)
radiances and fluxes from the ~~_Broadband Radiometer_ (BBR)~~, and including EarthCARE aerosol profiles and other
atmospheric input parameters. The study ~~will does~~ also account for new and more realistic optical properties for non-spherical
dust particles.



690

Figure 10: Differences between simulated and observed broadband SW radiances along the 10 km along track on the 22nd of August. The dashed lines denote the mean 10 km along track differences.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Airborne measurements with an EarthCARE-like payload on the German research aircraft HALO were performed during the PERCUSION campaign. In addition to its scientific objectives (Windmiller et al., 2026) PERCUSION was designed to contribute to the for scientific studies but also with the aim to validation of the EarthCARE measurements data products and products. During Validation is defined as the process of assessing the quality of data products by independent means, i.e., by data from instruments external to the mission but measuring the same geophysical quantity as the satellite sensor. We set up such an independent payload for PERCUSION and HALO performed measurements using similar instruments deployed in a similar fashion, i.e., with respect to viewing angle, as for EarthCARE with similar methods and. The HALO measurements viewing angles, well are better well characterized and calibrated and with have larger finer sensitivity and resolution than those made by EarthCARE (Stevens et al., 2019; Groß and Ewald, 2018), thus making them well suited for validation studies. Already during preparation studies for EarthCARE (Delanoë et al., 2020) this instrumentation proved its capability and its suitability for validation. In addition to an independent instrumentation, validate assess higher level EarthCARE data products, we developed independent algorithms and analysis tools to better take advantage of the full suite of HALO measurements to validate also higher level products.

During PERCUSION, 33 EarthCARE underpasses within 30 research flights have been performed for direct comparisons of the measurements and the derived data products from one or multi sensor retrievals. The campaign PERCUSION took place during the EarthCARE commissioning phase and started with the first flight on the day EarthCARE instruments were set to operational mode. Thirty flights, with 33 direct underpasses were flown out of three locations — Cape Verde, Barbados, and Southern Germany — in summer and fall 2024 to sample a wide variety of different aerosol and cloud situations and

710

~~meteorological conditions. The flights were done out of three locations, Cape Verde, Barbados, and Germany in summer and fall 2024 and addressed a variety of different aerosol and cloud situations and meteorological conditions in the Sub Tropics, Tropics, Mid and High Latitudes. With this intense measurement period and a sophisticated flight planning, we were able to~~
715 ~~captured~~ all of the target scenes that have been defined as important for EarthCARE ~~validation from a combined effort of retrieval developers and the EarthCARE Mission Advisory Group (Hall, 2025) to provide data that allows a comprehensive validation on EarthCARE data products.~~

~~This study gives first~~ We highlight the applicability of the PERCUSION measurements for EarthCARE validation through ~~intercomparison results and examples of the potential of airborne validation measurements with similar payload, highlighting~~
720 ~~different cases and data products of the EarthCARE retrieval chains~~ selected examples. These show the applicability of PERCUSION's measurements to the validation of each of the four sensors aboard EarthCARE, and highlight some early issues for more detailed studies.

~~With the measurements we address a large number of the EarthCARE products either by direct validation (with similar instrumentation) or by cross validation (e.g., using variables derived from one instrument or instrument combination to validate the derived product of another instrument). The~~ A ~~definitive~~ ~~conclusive~~ statement about the validation is difficult ~~because the processing of the EarthCARE and HALO data is updated as we gain a better understanding of the measurements. Hence validation is a moving target. For instance,~~
725 ~~PERCUSION measurements showed their importance at especially in the very beginning of the EarthCARE mission, PERCUSION measurements helped identify~~ by quickly identifying issues like cross-talk effects, background suppression or calibration uncertainties ~~that improved the first release of EarthCARE data products (not shown) before the data have been made publicly available. E.g. While comparisons of airborne lidar measurements on HALO with ATLID could~~ ~~confirm the good quality~~ of ATLID L1b data. ~~It also~~ The HALO lidar data ~~furthermore~~ helped to identify artefacts resulting from bugs in the layer assignment in the algorithm for the ATLID L2a optical products. ~~Airborne radar data from PECUSION measurements helped to identify an offset of the CPR compared to MIRA~~
730 ~~measurements, and motivated a new calibration of the radar, which led to a much-improved data quality.~~ With the help of the airborne data these problems could be solved quickly and the products publicly available ~~are not affected form this issue anymore~~ ~~have been updated.~~

~~Some~~ ~~Several~~ issues remain. For instance a ~~Direct comparisons of lidar data with similar measurement technique and viewing geometry are used for the validation of the ATLID target classification. Without the uncertainties resulting from horizontal variability of the scene, the airborne measurements could identify~~ misclassification of aerosol and cloud scenes ~~that arises from horizontal variability that might have a significant impact on follow-on studies and data exploitation.~~ ~~Though these problems could not be completely solved, the airborne data are very valuable for algorithm improvement. Airborne radar data from PECUSION measurements helped to identify an offset of the CPR compared to MIRA measurements. A new calibration~~
740 ~~of the radar led to a much improved data quality.~~ The passive sensors onboard HALO ~~furthermore confirm the general~~ ~~while~~
745

~~suggesting a generally good performance of agreement with the MSI, appear biased relative to the -and BBR. Detailed studies are still ongoing and will be intensified with the recent release of all being updated as data products are preprocessed based on findings from PERCUSION's and other validation studies.~~

~~The outcome of specific validation activities will be published in individual publications following in the next months and years.~~

~~Beside In addition to the validation of EarthCARE measurements data products, -and products and the scientific exploitation,~~

~~The PERCUSION measurements are also useful for being used for the validation of the measurements and algorithms of NASA's PACE (Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem) mission. We performed four dedicated flights within the swath of the PACE mission, three of them along the satellite track (Appendix A). Furthermore, with the EarthCARE-like payload on HALO, and especially with the combination of the lidar and the radar, we performed a large number of underflights under the CALIPSO and Cloudsat mission during past campaigns, as well as under the EarthCARE mission, and thus provide underflights under both satellite constellation and mission with combined lidar and radar payload to bridge the gap from CALIPSO/Cloudsat to EarthCARE (Appendix B).~~

760 **Data availability**

The EarthCARE Level-1 products and Level-2 products used in this study are publicly accessible from the ESA Earth Online gateway. The WALES measurements are available from Zenodo with DOI [10.5281/zenodo.15527242](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15527242) for the Cape Verde period (Wirth 2025a), DOI [10.5281/zenodo.17153149](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17153149) for the Barbados period (Wirth and Groß, 2025a), [10.5281/zenodo.17153625](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17153625) for the Germany period (Wirth and Groß, 2025b). specMACS data are made available under request. HALO Radar data are available from Zenodo with DOI [10.5281/zenodo.17910007](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17910007) (Ewald and Groß, 2025), [BACARDI data are available from Zenodo with DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18999496](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18999496) (Luebke et al., 2026), the SMART measurements are available via the HALO-Database and the VELOX data will be made available via the IPFS ORCESTR data browser. In addition, MIRA cloud radar data and the WALES lidar data for the A-Train underflights with HALO listed in Table B1 are available via Zenodo with DOI [10.5281/zenodo.19317830](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19317830) (Ewald, 2026) and DOI [10.5281/zenodo.19318124](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19318124) (Ewald and Wirth, 2026), respectively and the VELOX, SMART and BACARDI data will be uploaded to the HALO Database.

Author contribution

SG developed the outline of the paper and wrote the first draft with contributions of FE, BS, MW, GD, AE, DK, KK, SR, LV. SG developed the strategy for EarthCARE validation within PERCUSION together with BS, JW, FE, and MR. JvB, LH, RK, MPS provided the essential coordination of PERCUSION and EarthCARE. AL, BM, MW helped with the overall design of the validation campaign activities and flight planning, and are responsible for validation sub-activities within PERCUSION. All authors read the paper and discussed the findings.

Acknowledgements

780 We thank the flight Experiment Facility of DLR for preparing and performing the measurement flights and providing the HALO meteorological measurements. We acknowledge the contribution of Kevin Wolf, Michael Schäfer and Patrizia Schoch for operating SMART and VELOX during the flights and processing the data, of Anna Weber, Tobias Zinner, Veronika Pörtge, [Zekican Demiralay](#) and Anja Stallmach for the operation of specMACS and the data processing, of Sabrina Zechlau for performing flights with the WALES system, and Tanja Bodenbach for operating the WALES during flights and providing technical support, of Christian Heske, Felix Ament, and Janina Boemeke for operating the MIRA during specific flights.

Financial support

The PERCUSION campaign was partly funded by the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) within the Priority Program (Schwerpunktprogramm) SPP 1294 ‘Atmospheric and Earth System Research with HALO’ (project grant no. 316646266), and by internal funding of the Max-Planck Institute for Meteorology in Hamburg, and the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the German Aerospace Center (DLR). This study was supported by ESA under the campaign activity ‘EarthCARE: Give Airborne with Radar, Lidar –HALO EC- TOOC and Home-Base’ under ESA Contract No. 4000145500/24/NL/SC, by the Obs3RvE (Optimising 3D RT Earthcare product using geostationary observations and AI) project under Contract No. 4000147848/25/I/AG, and by the EarthCARE Data Innovation and Science Cluster (DISC) under Contract No. 4000144997/24/I-NS. The analysis of this project has further received funding from Horizon Europe programme under Grant Agreement No 101137680 via project CERTAINTY (Cloud-aERosol inTeractions & their impActs IN The earth sYstem), and by the PANGEA4CalVal project (Grant Agreement 101079201) funded by the European Union. Furthermore, the traveling to the field campaign has been supported by the DLR internal project MABAK (Innovative Methoden zur Analyse und Bewertung von Veränderungen der Atmosphäre und des Klimasystems). This research has furthermore been supported by the DFG under Grant Nos 502197012, 502188551.

Competing interests

At least one of the (co-)authors is a member of the editorial board of Atmospheric Measurement Techniques.

References

- 805 Amiridis, V., Marinou, E., Hostetler, C., Koopman, R., Cecil, D. J., Moisseev, D., . . . co-authors.: Best practices for the validation of Aerosol, Cloud, and Precipitation Profiles (ACPPV). (Zenodo, Hrsg.) doi:<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15025627>, 2025.
- Aubry, C., Delanoe, J., Groß, S., Ewald, F., Tridon, F., Jourdan, O., and Mioche, G.: Lidar-radar synergistic method to retrieve ice, supercooled water and mixed-phase cloud properties. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *17*, 3863–3881. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-17-3863-2024>, 2024.

- Barker, H. W., Korolev, A. V., Hudak, D. R., Strapp, J. W., Strawbridge, K. B., and Wolde, M.: A comparison between CloudSat and aircraft data for a multilayer, mixed phase cloud system during the Canadian CloudSat-CALIPSO Validation Project. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 113(D00A16). doi:doi:10.1029/2008JD009971, 2008.
- 815 Bedka, K. M., Nehrir, A. R., Kavaya, M., Barton-Grimley, R., Beaubien, M., Carroll, B., . . . Skofronick-Jackson, G.: Airborne lidar observations of wind, water vapor, and aerosol profiles during the NASA Aeolus calibration and validation (Cal/Val) test flight campaign. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 14, 4305--4334. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-14-4305-2021, 2021.
- Bony, S., and Stevens, B.: Measuring Area-Averaged Vertical Motions with Dropsondes. *Journal of Atmospheric Science*, 820 76(3), 767--783. doi:https://doi.org/10.1175/JAS-D-18-0141.1, 2019.
- Burton, S. P., Ferrare, R. A., Vaughan, M. A., Omar, A. H., Rogers, R. R., Hostetler, C. A., and Hair, J. W.: Aerosol classification from airborne HSRL and comparisons with the CALIPSO vertical feature mask. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 6, 1397--1412. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-6-1397-2013, 2013.
- Burton, S. P., Hair, J. W., Kahnert, M., Ferrare, R. A., Hostetler, C. A., Cook, A. L., . . . Rogers, R. R.: Observations of the 825 spectral dependence of linear particle depolarization ratio of aerosols using NASA Langley airborne High Spectral Resolution Lidar. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, 15, 13453--13473. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-15-13453-2015, 2016.
- Cazenave, Q., Ceccaldi, M., Delanoë, J., Pelon, J., Groß, S., and Heymsfield, A.: Evolution of DARDAR-CLOUD ice cloud retrievals: new parameters and impacts on the retrieved microphysical properties. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 12, 2819--2835. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-12-2819-2019, 2019.
- 830 [Dekoutsidis, G., Wirth, M., and Groß, S.: The effects of warm-air intrusions in the high Arctic on cirrus clouds, Atmos. Chem. Phys., 24, 5971–5987, https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-24-5971-2024, 2024.](https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-24-5971-2024)
~~[Dekoutsidis, G., Wirth, M., and Groß, S.: The effects of warm air intrusions in the high arctic on cirrus clouds. *EGUsphere*, 2023.](#)~~
- Delanoë, J., and Hogan, R.: A variational scheme for retrieving ice cloud properties from combined radar, lidar, and infrared 835 radiometer. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 113(7). doi:10.1029/2007JD009000, 2008.
- Delanoë, J., Ament, F., Ceccaldi, M., Groß, S., Hagen, M., Hirsch, L., . . . Vinson, J.-P.: Airborne EarthCare Preparation, Calibration and Validation Tandem System. *EarthCARE Workshop*. Tokyo. doi:https://elib.dlr.de/90952/, 2014.
- Delanoë, J., Groß, S., Ewald, F., Cazenave, Q., Pelon, J., Marinou, E., and Ibrah, A.: *EPATAN project*. ESA. doi:https://doi.org/10.5270/ESA-a346352, 2020.
- 840 Donovan, D. P., Zadelhoff, G.-J. v., and Wang, P.: The EarthCARE lidar cloud and aerosol profile processor (A-PRO): the A-AER, A-EBD, A-TC, and A-ICE products. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 17, 5301--5340. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-17-5301-2024, 2024.
- Ehrlich, A., Zöger, M., Giez, A., Nenakhov, V., Mallaun, C., Maser, R., . . . Wendisch, M.: A new airborne broadband radiometer system and an efficient method to correct dynamic thermal offsets. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 16, 1563--1581. 845 doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-16-1563-2023, 2023.

- Eisinger, M., Marnas, F., Wallace, K., Kubota, T., Tomiyama, N., Ohno, Y., . . . Bernaerts, D.: The EarthCARE mission: science data processing chain overview. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 17(2), 839--862. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-17-839-2024>, 2024.
- 850 Emde, C., Buras-Schnell, R., Kylling, A., Mayer, B., Gasteiger, J., Hamann, U., . . . Bugliaro, L.: The libRadtran software package for radiative transfer calculations (version 2.0.1). *Geoscientific Model Development*, 9, 1647-1672. doi:10.5194/gmd-9-1647-2016, 2016.
- ESA: *Validation Needs*. Von <https://earth.esa.int/eogateway/missions/earthcare/data/calibration-validation/validation-needs>, 2024.
- 855 ESA: *Introducing EarthCARE's Data, Innovation and Science Cluster*. Von <https://earth.esa.int/eogateway/news/introducing-earthcare-s-data-innovation-and-science-cluster>, 2024.
- [Ewald, F.: MIRA cloud radar data from A-Train underflights with HALO \(Radar reflectivity\) \[Data set\]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19317830>, 2026.](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19317830)
- [Ewald, F., and Wirth, M.: WALES lidar data from A-Train underflights with HALO \(Backscatter coefficient\) \[Data set\]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19318124>, 2026.](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19318124)
- 860 Ewald, F., Groß, S., Hagen, M., Hirsch, L., Delanoe, J., and Bauer-Pfundstein, M.: Calibration of a 35 GHz airborne cloud radar: lessons learned and intercomparisons with 94 GHz cloud radars. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 12, 1815-1839. doi:10.5194/amt-12-1815-2019, 2019.
- Ewald, F., Groß, S., Wirth, M., Delanoe, J., Fox, S., and M. B.: Why we need radar, lidar, and solar radiance observations to constrain ice cloud microphysics. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 14(7). doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-14-5029-2021>, 2021.
- 865 Ewald, F., Kölling, T., Baumgartner, A., Zinner, T., and Mayer, B.: Design and characterization of specMACS, a multipurpose hyperspectral cloud and sky imager. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 9(5), 2015-2042. doi:10.5194/amt-9-2015-2016, 2016.
- Fix, A., Amediek, A., Ehret, G., Groß, S., Kiemle, C., Reitebuch, O., and Wirth, M.: On the Benefit of airborne demonstrators or space borne lidar missions. (I. -I. Optics, Hrsg.) *Proc. of SPIE, Vol. 10562*. doi:10.1117/12.2296197, 2016.
- 870 Floutsi, A. A., Rizos, K., Trapon, D., Engelmann, R., Althausen, D., Marinou, E., . . . Baars, H.: On the representativeness of the ground-based lidar observations for satellite calibration/validation – the example of the archipelago of Cabo Verde. *EGU sphere*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-2025-4742>, 2025.
- Freudenthaler, V., Esselborn, M., Wiegner, M., Heese, B., Tesche, M., Ansmann, A., . . . Seefeldner, M.: Depolarization ratio profiling at several wavelengths in pure Saharan dust during SAMUM 2006. *Tellus B: Chemical and Physical Meteorology*, 61(1), 165--179. doi:DOI: 10.1111/j.1600-0889.2008.00396.x, 2009.
- 875 Gasteiger, J., and Wiegner, M.: MOPSMAP v1.0: a versatile tool for the modeling of aerosol optical properties. *Geoscientific Model Development*, 11(7), 2739--2018. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/gmd-11-2739-2018>, 2018.
- Gasteiger, J., Wiegner, M., Groß, S., Freudenthaler, V., Toledano, C., Tesche, M., and Kandler, K.: Modelling lidar-relevant optical properties of complex mineral dust aerosols. *Tellus B: Chemical and Physical Meteorology*, 63(4), 725--741. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0889.2011.00559.x>, 2011, 2011.

- 880 Getzewich, B. J., Vaughan, M. A., Hunt, W. H., Avery, M. A., Powell, K. A., Tackett, J. L., . . . Toth, T. D.: CALIPSO lidar calibration at 532 nm: version 4 daytime algorithm. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *11*, 6309–6326. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-11-6309-2018>, 2018.
- Giez, A. Z., Mallaun, C., Nenakhov, V., Schimpf, M., Grad, C., Numberger, A., and Raynor, K.: Determination of the Measurement Errors for the HALO Basic Data System BAHAMAS by Means of Error Propagation. (D. Z.-u. Raumfahrt, Hrsg.) *DLR-Forschungsbericht*. doi:10.57676/5rdc-q708, 2023.
- 885 [Gimmestad, G., Forrister, H., Grigas, T., and O'Dowd C.: Comparisons of aerosol backscatter using satellite and ground lidars: implications for calibrating and validating spaceborne lidar. *Sci Rep* 7, 42337, <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep42337>, 2017.](#)
- [Gloeckner, H. M., Mieslinger, T., Robbins-Blanch, N., George, G., Kluft, L., Kölling, T., Bony, S., Windmiller, J., and Stevens, B.: BEACH: Barbados and Eastern Atlantic Combined High-altitude dropsonde datasets, *Earth Syst. Sci. Data Discuss.* \[preprint\], <https://doi.org/10.5194/essd-2025-647>, in review, 2025](#)
- 890 [Gloeckner, H. M., Mieslinger, T., Robbins-Blanch, N., George, G., Kluft, L., Kölling, T., Bony, S., Windmiller, J., and Stevens, B.: BEACH: Barbados and Eastern Atlantic Combined High-altitude dropsonde datasets, *Earth Syst. Sci. Data Discuss.* \[preprint\], <https://doi.org/10.5194/essd-2025-647>, in review, 2025](#)
- Groß, S., and Ewald, F.: NARPEX project - Final Report. DLR. Von <https://elib.dlr.de/216858/>, 2018.
- Groß, S., Esselborn, M., Weinzierl, B., Wirth, M., Fix, A., and Petzold, A.: Aerosol classification by airborne high spectral resolution lidar observations. *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*, *13*, 2487–2505. doi:10.5194/acp-13-2487-2013,
- 895 2013.
- Groß, S., Freudenthaler, V., Haarig, M., Ansmann, A., Toledano, C., Mateos, D., . . . Weinzierl, B.: Characterization of aerosol over the eastern Mediterranean by polarization-sensitive Raman lidar measurements during A-LIFE – aerosol type classification and type separation. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, *25*, 3191–3211. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-25-3191-2025>, 2025.
- 900 Groß, S., Freudenthaler, V., Schepanski, K., Toledano, C., Schäfler, A., Ansmann, A., and Weinzierl, B.: Optical properties of long-range transported Saharan dust over Barbados as measured by dual-wavelength depolarization Raman lidar measurements. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, *15*, 11067–11080. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-15-11067-2015>, 2015.
- Groß, S., Freudenthaler, V., Wirth, M., and Weinzierl, B.: Towards an aerosol classification scheme for future EarthCARE lidar observations and implications for research needs. *Atmospheric Science Letter*, *16*, 77–82. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/asl2.524>, 2015.
- 905 Groß, S., Tesche, M., Freudenthaler, V., Toledano, C., Wiegner, M., Ansmann, A., . . . Seefeldner, M.: Characterization of Saharan dust, marine aerosols and mixtures of biomass-burning aerosols and dust by means of multi-wavelength depolarization and Raman lidar measurements during SAMUM 2. *Tellus B: Chemical and Physical Meteorology*, *63*(4), 706–724. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0889.2011.00556.x>, 2011.
- 910 [Groß, S., Wirth, M., Schäfler, A., Fix, A., Kaufmann, S., and Voigt, C.: Potential of airborne lidar measurements for cirrus cloud studies, *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *7*, 2745–2755, <https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-7-2745-2014>, 2014.](#)
[Groß, S., Wirth, M., Schäfler, A., Fix, A., Kaufmann, S., and Voigt, C.: Potential of airborne lidar measurements for cirrus cloud studies. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *7*, 2745–2755., 2014.](#)

- 915 Gutleben, M., Groß, S., and Wirth, M.: Cloud macro-physical properties in Saharan-dust-laden and dust-free North Atlantic trade wind regimes: a lidar case study. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, *19*, 10659–10673. doi:10.5194/acp-19-10659-2019, 2019
- Gutleben, M., Groß, S., Heske, C., and Wirth, M.: Wintertime Saharan dust transport towards the Caribbean: an airborne lidar case study during EUREC4A. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, *22*, 7319–7330. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-22-7319-2022, 2022
- 920 Gutleben, M., Groß, S., Wirth, M., and Mayer, B.: Radiative effects of long-range-transported Saharan air layers as determined from airborne lidar measurements, *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, *20*, 12313–12327, <https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-20-12313-2020>, 2020.
- Gutleben, M., Groß, S., Wirth, M., Emde, C., and Mayer, B.: Impacts of water vapor on Saharan air layer radiative heating. *Geophysical Research Letters*, *46*, 14854–14862. doi:https://doi.org/10.1029/2019GL085344, 2019.
- 925 Haarig, M., Ansmann, A., Engelmann, R., Baars, H., Toledano, C., Torres, B., . . . Wandinger, U.: First triple-wavelength lidar observations of depolarization and extinction-to-backscatter ratios of Saharan dust. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, *22*, 355–369. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-22-355-2022, 2022.
- Hair, J. W., Hostetler, C. A., Ferrare, R. A., Cook, A. L., and Harper, D. B.: The NASA Langley airborne high spectral resolution lidar for measurements of aerosols and clouds. *Reviewed and Revised Papers Presented at the 23rd International Laser Radar Conference* (S. 411–414). Tokyo: Tokyo Metropolitan University. https://laser-sensing.jp/ilrc23_CD1a2b3c/ILRC23/3P-5.pdf, 2006.
- 930 [Hair, J. W., Hostetler, C. A., Cook, A. L., Harper, D. B., Ferrare, R. A., Mack, T. L., Welch, W., Izquierdo, L. R. and Hovis, F. E.: Airborne High Spectral Resolution Lidar for profiling aerosol optical properties, *Appl. Opt.* *47*, 6734–6752 2008.](#)
- Hall, A.: *EarthCARE Validation – Level 2 Algorithm Developer Needs*, <https://earth.esa.int/eogateway/documents/d/earth-online/earthcare-validation-l2-algorithm-developer-needs-table>, 2005
- 935 [Irbah, A., Delanoë, J., van Zadelhoff, G.-J., Donovan, D. P., Kollias, P., Puigdomènech Treserras, B., Mason, S., Hogan, R. J., and Tatarevic, A.: The classification of atmospheric hydrometeors and aerosols from the EarthCARE radar and lidar: the A-TC, C-TC and AC-TC products, *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *16*, 2795–2820, <https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-16-2795-2023> , 2023.](#)
- 940 IPCC: *Climate Change 2021 – The Physical Science Basis*. (I. P. (IPCC), Hrsg.) Cambridge University Press. doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157896, 2023.
- Kacenenbogen, M., Redemann, J., Vaughan, M. A., Omar, A. H., Russell, P. B., Burton, S., . . . Hostetler, C. A.: An evaluation of CALIOP/CALIPSO's aerosol-above-cloud detection and retrieval capability over North America. *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmosphere*, *119*, 230–244. doi:doi:10.1002/2013JD020178, 2014.
- 945 Kar, J., Vaughan, M. A., Lee, K.-P., Tackett, J. L., Avery, M. A., Garnier, A., . . . Winker, D. M.: CALIPSO lidar calibration at 532 nm: version 4 nighttime algorithm. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *11*, 1459–1479. doi:https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-11-1459-2018, 2018.

- King, M. D., Menzel, W. P., Granz, P. S., Myers, J. S., Arnold, G. T., Gumley, L. E., . . . Osterwisch, F. G.: Airborne Scanning Spectrometer for Remote Sensing of Cloud, Aerosol, Water Vapor, and Surface Properties. *Journal of Atmospheric and Oceanic Technology*, 13(4), 777--794. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1175/1520-0426\(1996\)013<0777:ASSFRS>2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1175/1520-0426(1996)013<0777:ASSFRS>2.0.CO;2), 1996.
- 950 Kölling, T., Zinner, T., and Mayer, B.: Aircraft-based stereographic reconstruction of 3-D cloud geometry. *Atmospheric Measurements Techniques*, 12, 1155--1166. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-12-1155-2019>, 2019.
- Koopmann, R.: *Scientific Validation Implementation Plan*, <https://earth.esa.int/eogateway/documents/d/earth-online/earthcare-scientific-validation-implementation-plan>, 2024
- 955 Krautstrunk, M., and Giez, A.: The Transition From FALCON to HALO Era Airborne Atmospheric Research. *Atmospheric Physics: Background-Methods-Trends*, 609--624, doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-30183-4_37, 2012.
- [Krüger, K., Groß, S., and Wirth, M.: Validation of cloud macrophysical properties from the ATLID L2a products A-TC, A-FM, A-CTH using airborne lidar observations during the HALO missions PERCUSION, ASCCI and NAWDIC. \(to be submitted to AMT, 2026\).](#)
- [Langsdale, M., Verhoelst, T., Povey, A. et al.: The Challenges and Limitations of Validating Satellite-Derived Datasets Using Independent Measurements: Lessons Learned from Essential Climate Variables. *Surv Geophys.* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10712-025-09898-4>, 2025.](#)
- 965 Lemmerz, C., Lux, O., Witschas, B., Rahm, S., Marksteiner, U., Geiß, A., . . . Reitebuch, O.: Airborne Doppler wind LIDAR technology demonstration for Aeolus: from pre-launch campaigns to mission performance validation. *Proc. SPIE 12777, International Conference on Space Optics — ICSO 2022, 1277707*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1117/12.2688591>, 2023.
- [Luebke, A. E., Ehrlich, A., Wolf, K., Giez, A., Zöger, M., Mallaun, C., Nenakhov, V., Eirenschmalz, L., Pasternak, D., Rosenburg, S., Schäfer, M., Schoch, P., & Wendisch, M.: Broadband solar and thermal-infrared, upward and downward irradiance measured by BACARDI during the PERCUSION field campaign \[Data set\]. \[Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18999496\]\(https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18999496\), 2026.](#)
- 970 Lux, O., Lemmerz, C., Weiler, F., Marksteiner, U., Witschas, B., Rahm, S., . . . Reitebuch, O.: Airborne wind lidar observations over the North Atlantic in 2016 for the pre-launch validation of the satellite mission Aeolus. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 11, 3297--3322. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-11-3297-2018>, 2018.
- 975 Lux, O., Lemmerz, C., Weiler, F., Marksteiner, U., Witschas, B., Rahm, S., . . . Reitebuch, O.: Retrieval improvements for the ALADIN Airborne Demonstrator in support of the Aeolus wind product validation. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 15, 1303--1331. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-15-1303-2022>, 2022.
- 980 Marinou, E., Amiridis, V., Paschou, P., Tsekeri, A., Tsikoudi, I., and Voudouri, K.-A.: Across Mediterranean Experiment for the Cal/Val of the Earthcare Mission. *IGARSS 2024 - 2024 IEEE International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium*. doi:10.1109/IGARSS53475.2024.10642456, 2024.

- Marinou, E., Ewald, F., Gross, S., Wirth, M. S., Cazenave, Q., and Delanoe, J.: Aerosol-Cloud Target Classification in HALO Lidar/Radar Collocated Measurements. *EPJ Web of Conferences*, 237, 08002. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1051/epjconf/202023708002>, 2020.
- 985 Mayer, B., and Kylling, A.: Technical note: The libRadtran software package for radiative transfer calculations - description and examples of use. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, 5, 1855--1877. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-5-1855-2005>, 2005.
- McGill, M. J., Vaughan, M. A., Trepte, C. R., Hart, W. D., Hlavka, D. L., Winker, D. M., and Kuehn, R.: Airborne validation of spatial properties measured by the CALIPSO lidar. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 112(D20201). doi:[doi:10.1029/2007JD008768](https://doi.org/10.1029/2007JD008768), 2007.
- 990 Mech, M., Orlandi, E., Crewell, S., Ament, F., L., H., Hagen, M., . . . Stevens, B.: HAMP – the microwave package on the High Altitude and Long range research aircraft (HALO). *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 7(12), 4539-4553. doi:[10.5194/amt-7-4539-2014](https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-7-4539-2014), 2014.
- [Mieslinger, T., Stevens, B., Kölling, T., Brath, M., Wirth, M., and Buehler, S. A.: Optically thin clouds in the trades. Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics, 22\(10\), 6879–6898. https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-22-6879-2022, 2022.](https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-22-6879-2022)
- 995 [Okamoto, H., Sato, K., Nishizawa, T., Jin, Y., Nakajima, T., Wang, M., Satoh, M., Suzuki, K., Roh, W., Yamauchi, A., Horie, H., Ohno, Y., Hagihara, Y., Ishimoto, H., Kudo, R., Kubota, T., and Tanaka, T.: JAXA Level2 algorithms for EarthCARE mission from single to four sensors: new perspective of cloud, aerosol, radiation and dynamics. Atmos. Meas. Tech. Discuss. \[preprint\], https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-2024-101, 2024.](https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-2024-101)
- Paffrath, U., Lemmerz, C., Reitebuch, O., Witschas, B., Nikolaus, I., and Freudenthaler, V.: The Airborne Demonstrator for the Direct-Detection Doppler Wind Lidar ALADIN on ADM-Aeolus. Part II: Simulations and Rayleigh Receiver Radiometric Performance. *Journal of Atmospheric and Ocean Technology*, 26, 2516--2530. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/2009JTECHA1314.1>, 2009.
- 1000
- Pörtge, V., Kölling, T., Weber, A., Volkmer, L., Emde, C., Zinner, T., . . . Mayer, B.: High-spatial-resolution retrieval of cloud droplet size distribution from polarized observations of the cloudbow. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 6, 645--667. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-16-645-2023>, 2023.
- 1005
- Puigdomènech Treserras, B., Kollias, P., Battaglia, A., Tanelli, S., and Nakatsuka, H.: EarthCARE's cloud profiling radar antenna pointing correction using surface Doppler measurements, *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 18, 5607--5618, <https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-18-5607-2025>, 2025.
- Reitebuch, O., Lemmerz, C., Nagel, E., Paffrath, U., Durand, Y., Endemann, M., . . . Chaloupy, M.: The Airborne Demonstrator for the Direct-Detection Doppler Wind Lidar ALADIN on ADM-Aeolus. Part I: Instrument Design and Comparison to Satellite Instrument. *Journal of Atmospheric and Ocean Technology*, 26, 2501--2515. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/2009JTECHA1309.1>, 2009.
- 1010
- Rogers, R. R., Ferrare, R. A., Liu, Z., Obland, M. D., Harper, D. B., Cook, A. L., . . . Winker, D. M.: Assessment of the CALIPSO Lidar 532 nm attenuated backscatter calibration using the NASA LaRC airborne High Spectral Resolution Lidar. *11*, 1295--1311. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-11-1295-2011>, 2011.
- 1015

- Rogers, R. R., Vaughan, M. A., Hostetler, C. A., Burton, S. P., Ferrare, R. A., Young, S. A., . . . Winker, D. M.: Looking through the haze: evaluating the CALIPSO level 2 aerosol optical depth using airborne high spectral resolution lidar data. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 7, 4317--4340. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-7-4317-2014>, 2014.
- 1020 Röttenbacher, J., Ehrlich, A., Müller, H., Ewald, F., Luebke, A. E., Kirbus, B., . . . Wendisch, M.: Evaluating the representation of Arctic cirrus solar radiative effects in the Integrated Forecasting System with airborne measurements. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, 24, 8085--8104. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-24-8085-2024>, 2024.
- Schäfer, M., Wolf, K., Ehrlich, A., Hallbauer, C., Jäkel, E., Jansen, F., . . . Wendisch, M.: VELOX – a new thermal infrared imager for airborne remote sensing of cloud and surface properties. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 15(5), 1491-1509. doi:[10.5194/amt-15-1491-2022](https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-15-1491-2022), 2022.
- 1025 Schäfler, A., and Coauthors.: The North Atlantic Waveguide and Downstream Impact Experiment. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 99, 1607--1637. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-17-0003.1>, 2018.
- Sourdeval, O., Gryspeerdt, E., Krämer, M., Goren, T., Delanoë, J., Afchine, A., . . . Quaas, J.: Ice crystal number concentration estimates from lidar–radar satellite remote sensing – Part 1: Method and evaluation. *Atmos. Chem. Phys.*, 18, 14327-14350. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5194/acp-18-14327-2018>, 2018.
- 1030 Stephens, G. L., Vane, D. G., S, T., Im, E., Durden, S., Rokey, M., . . . Marchand, R.: CloudSat mission: Performance and early science after the first year of operation. *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmosphere*, 113(D8). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1029/2008JD009982>, 2008.
- Stephens, G., Winker, D., Pelon, J., Trepte, C., Vane, D., Yuhas, C., . . . Lebsock, M.: CloudSat and CALIPSO within the A-Train: Ten Years of Actively Observing the Earth System. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 569--1035 581. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-16-0324.1>, 2018.
- Stevens, B., Ament, F., Bony, S., Crewell, S., Ewald, F., Gross, S., . . . Farrell, D.: A High-Altitude Long-Range Aircraft Configured as a Cloud Observatory: The NARVAL Expeditions. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 100(6), 1061-1077, <https://journals.ametsoc.org/view/journals/bams/100/6/bams-d-18-0198.1.xml>, 2019.
- Stevens, B., Bony, S., Gross, S., Klocke, D., Windmiller, J., Wing, A. A., . . . Wu, Y.: ORCESTR: Organized Convection and EarthCARE Studies over the Tropical Atlantic. *Tellus B*, in review, 2026
- 1040 Stevens, B., Farrell, D., Hirsch, L., Jansen, F., Nuijens, L., Serikov, I., . . . Prospero, J. M.: The Barbados Cloud Observatory: Anchoring Investigations of Clouds and Circulation on the Edge of the ITCZ. *Bulletin of the American meteorological Society*, 97(5), 787--801. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-14-00247.1>, 2016.
- Urbanek, B., Groß, S., Schäfler, A., and Wirth, M.: Determining stages of cirrus evolution: a cloud classification scheme. 1045 *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 10, 1653–1664, 2017.
- Volkmer, L., Kölling, T., Zinner, T., and Mayer, B.: Consideration of the cloud motion for aircraft-based stereographically derived cloud geometry and cloud top heights. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, 17, 6807--6817. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-17-6807-2024>, 2024.

- Wandinger, U., Floutsi, A. A., Baars, H., Haarig, M., Ansmann, A., Hünerbein, A., . . . Cole, J.: HETEAC – the Hybrid End-
1050 To-End Aerosol Classification model for EarthCARE. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *16*, 2485–2510.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-16-2485-2023>, 2023.
- Wandinger, U., Haarig, M., Baars, H., Donovan, D., and van Zadelhoff, G.-J.: Cloud top heights and aerosol layer properties
from EarthCARE lidar observations: the A-CTH and A-ALD products. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *16*, 4031–4052.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-16-4031-2023>, 2023.
- 1055 Weber, A., Kölling, T., Pörtge, V., Baumgartner, A., Rammeloo, C., Zinner, T., and Mayer, B.: Polarization upgrade of
specMACS: calibration and characterization of the 2D RGB polarization-resolving cameras. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *17*,
1419–1439. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-17-1419-2024>, 2024.
- Weber, A., Pörtge, V., Emde, C., and Mayer, B.: Retrieval of cloud thermodynamic phase partitioning from multi-angle
polarimetric imaging of Arctic mixed-phase clouds, *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *18*, 7581–7601,
1060 <https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-18-7581-2025>, 2025.
- Wehr, T., Kubota, T., Tzeremes, G., Wallace, K., Nakatsuka, H., Ohno, Y., . . . Bernaerts, D.: The EarthCARE mission –
science and system overview. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *16*(15), 3581–3608. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-16-3581-2023>, 2023.
- Weinzierl, B., Sauer, D., Esselborn, M., Petzold, A., Veira, A., Rose, M., . . . Freuntenthaler, V.: Microphysical and optical
1065 properties of dust and tropical biomass burning aerosol layers in the Cape Verde region—an overview of the airborne
in situ and lidar measurements during SAMUM-2. *Tellus B: Chemical and Physical meteorology*, *4*, 589–618.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0889.2011.00566.x>, 2011.
- Winker, D. M., Pelon, J., Coakley, J. A., Ackerman, S. A., Charlson, R. J., Colarco, P. R., . . . Wielicki: The Calipso Mission:
A Global 3D View of Aerosols and Clouds. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, *91*(9), 1211–1230.
1070 doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/2010BAMS3009.1>, 2010.
- Wirth, M., Fix, A., Mahnke, P., Schwarzer, H., Schrandt, F., and Ehret, G.: The airborne multi-wavelength water vapor
differential absorption lidar WALES: system design and performance. *Applied Physics B*, *96*, 201–213.
doi:[10.1007/s00340-009-3365-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00340-009-3365-7), 2009.
- Witschas, B., Lemmerz, C., Geiß, A., Lux, O., Marksteiner, U., Rahm, S., . . . Weiler, F.: First validation of Aeolus wind
1075 observations by airborne Doppler wind lidar measurements. *Atmos. Meas. Tech.*, *13*, 2381–2369.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-13-2381-2020>, 2020.
- Witschas, B., Lemmerz, C., Geiß, A., Lux, O., Marksteiner, U., Rahm, S., . . . Weiler, F.: Validation of the Aeolus L2B wind
product with airborne wind lidar measurements in the polar North Atlantic region and in the tropics. *Atmos. Meas.*
Tech., *15*, 7049–7070. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5194/amt-15-7049-2022>, 2022.
- 1080 Wolf, K., Ehrlich, A., Mech, M., Hogan, R. J., and Wendisch, M.: Evaluation of ECMWF Radiation Scheme Using Aircraft
Observations of Spectral Irradiance above Clouds. *Journal of Atmospheric Science*, *77*, 2665–2685.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1175/jas-d-19-0333.1>, 2020.

Appendix A: PACE-Validation

1085 The focus of the PERCUSION campaign was clearly on the validation of EarthCARE. However, our flight schedule and measurement strategy allowed also to underfly NASA's PACE (Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem) mission during four measurement flights out of Barbados. PACE ([NASA PACE - Home](#)) was launched on 8 February 2024 and aims to extend the data record of ocean colour, aerosol and cloud data for Earth systems studies as well as to address new and emerging science questions. For that, PACE is equipped with the Ocean Color Instrument (OCI) and the Multi-angle Polarimeters HARP2 and SPEXone. The maximum swath width is about 2500 km for the OCI, 1500 km for HARP2, and 100 km for
1090 SPEXone. Any measurements within the swath width of the satellite ~~is~~are thus valuable for validation. Figure A1 gives an overview of the flight scene from a lidar perspective for the different days a underpass was performed or HALO was measuring within the swath of PACE. Over measurements covered a variety of different conditions from background marine aerosol conditions, over midlevel stratiform clouds, thin cirrus condition, cirrus clouds, to clouds of deep convective systems. With that our measurements not only ~~se~~rve for direct comparisons of the polarimeter measurements using the specMACS data, but
1095 also for the verification of the atmospheric model to investigate the impact of aerosol and clouds on PACE measurements. For the latter especially the vertical information from lidar and radar as well as their synergistic use to derive microphysical cloud properties is of interest. Table A1 gives information on dates and times of the underpasses.

Table A1: Information of date, time and location of HALO measurements along or in the PACE track.

Date	Best Match Time (UTC)	Time on track (UTC)	Best Match Distance (km)
7 September 2024	16 :00	17:10 – 17:39	89.9
16 September 2024	16 :15	16:02 – 16:43	1.0
19 September 2024	16 :22	15:45 – 16:27	0.6
28 September 2024	16 :35	16:23 – 17:30	21.5

1100

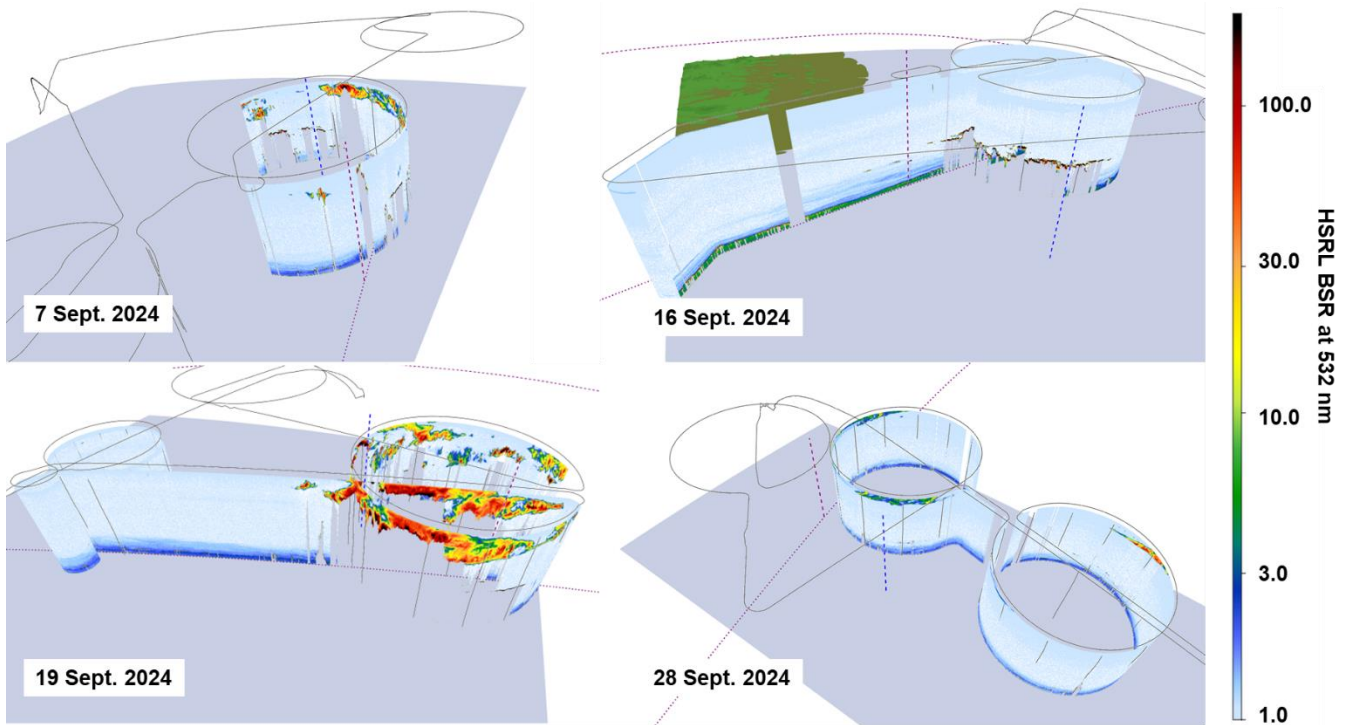


Figure A1: Cross-section of the backscatter ratio at 532 nm from WALES measurements for the four underpasses within the PACE track. The dashed red lines indicate the nearest PACE measurement in time, the blue dashed line indicate the nearest EarthCARE measurement in time.

1105 **Appendix B: Bridging the gap from CALIPSO/Cloudsat to EarthCARE**

CALIPSO and Cloudsat provided a large opportunity to study aerosol, clouds, their interaction and their impact on radiation and precipitation. This will be continued with EarthCARE. However, going from CALIPSO/Cloudsat to EarthCARE, we do not only have a change in lidar wavelength and technique, but also a change in sensitivity and resolution for both, lidar and radar. Unfortunately, both satellite constellations did not have a direct overlap, making it difficult to directly link the two time-series and data sets. Collocated measurements with both, the CALIPSO/Cloudsat constellation and with EarthCARE, are needed to bridge that gap. Next to continuing ground-based lidar and radar measurements, which provide long-term measurements but with limited overlap, collocated airborne measurements with lidar and radar provide a valuable contribution. The largest number of CALIPSO underflights is certainly provided by the NASA Langley lidar group with their HSRL/HSRL-2 system (Hair et al., 2006). After the launch of EarthCARE, they also performed EarthCARE underpasses for the validation of the ATLID. However, our combined active (lidar and radar) and passive remote sensing payload (Stevens, et al., 2019) bridges both satellite missions with correlative airborne lidar and radar measurements underflying both CALIPSO/CloudSat and EarthCARE. The basic lidar and radar products are analyzed and available as two combined datasets for WALES lidar data and MIRA cloud radar data from A-Train underflights with HALO via Zenodo (Ewald and Wirth, 2026; Ewald, 2026). However, with our combined active (lidar and radar) and passive remote sensing payload (Stevens, et al., 2019) we address to bridging both; the lidar and radar measurements from CALIPSO/Cloudsat and EarthCARE underpasses. Table B.1 gives an overview of our performed CALIPSO/Cloudsat underflights.

Table B1: Information on date, region, time flight mission and measurement conditions for CALIPSO/Cloudsat underpasses with the same lidar and radar instruments used during PERCUSION.

Date	Flight region	Time of collocation [UTC]	Flight mission	Condition
24 Jul. 2013	Germany	12:18	NARVAL (test)	Thin cirrus clouds Continental background aerosol
10 Dec. 2013	North Atlantic	15:08	NARVAL (south)	Low level precipitating clouds Marine aerosol
11 Dec. 2013	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	17:26	NARVAL (south)	Marine aerosol Shallow marine convection
12 Dec 2013	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	16:30	NARVAL (south)	Marine aerosol Shallow and stratiform clouds
14 Dec. 2013	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	16:18	NARVAL (south)	Marine aerosol Shallow convection, partly precipitating
15 Dec. 2013	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	17:01	NARVAL (south)	Marine aerosol Shallow convection, partly precipitating
16 Dec. 2013	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	16:07	NARVAL (south)	Marine aerosol Shallow convection, partly precipitating
20 Dec. 2013	North Atlantic	17:23	NARVAL (south)	Marine aerosol Shallow convection
9 Jan. 2014	Extra-tropical North Atlantic	15:29	NARVAL (north)	Marine aerosol Scattered low level clouds, partly precipitating
18 Jan. 2014	Extra-tropical North Atlantic	13:44	NARVAL (north)	Deep convective clouds, ice anvils, frontal bands
21 Jan. 2014	Extra-tropical North Atlantic	14:19	NARVAL (north)	High and convective clouds Marine aerosol
10 Aug. 2016	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	17:09	NARVAL-II	Low to mid-level clouds, partly precipitating Marine aerosol and Saharan dust
15 Aug. 2016	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	17:10	NARVAL-II	Stratiform and upper-level clouds Marine aerosol and Saharan dust
17 Aug. 2016	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	17:01	NARVAL-II	Low level and cirrus clouds Marine aerosol and dust mixture
19 Aug. 2016	Sub-tropical North Atlantic	16:47	NARVAL-II	Shallow marine convection Marine aerosol, Saharan dust and dust mixture
14 Oct. 2016	Extra-tropical North Atlantic	12:53	NAWDEX	Deep convection, precipitation, stratiform clouds Marine aerosol