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## CNES's next satellite, Microscope, arrives at the Guiana Space Centre

**CNES's Microscope satellite (MICROSatellite à trainée Compensée pour l'Observation du Principe d'Équivalence) arrived at the Guiana Space Centre (CSG) on 10 March. It is now set to be orbited on the next Soyuz launch from the CSG scheduled on 22 April. Microscope will test the universality of free fall for the first time in space using an experiment 100 times more precise than anything on Earth.**

The Microscope satellite is designed to test the validity of the equivalence principle in space at a level of precision 100 times better than any experiment yet performed on Earth, thus opening new vistas for theories of gravitation.

Testing of the equivalence principle is based on the universality of free fall. On the ground, the principle has been verified with a relative degree of precision on the order of  $10^{-13}$ . With Microscope, CNES is set to test the principle with even greater precision in space, where free fall is a lot less perturbed. It will thus be able to study the relative motion of two bodies on an orbiting satellite in permanent free fall and to verify results over the course of several months instead of just seconds on Earth.

CNES is in charge of developing the full system and of building the satellite. It is providing 90% of funding for this mission, for which it is also prime contractor in charge of satellite bus development, satellite integration and testing up to launch, and construction and operation of the mission control centre.

After departing the Toulouse Space Centre, the satellite is now in the hands of CNES teams at the Guiana Space Centre, where it will be prepped and tested in the EPCU S5 payload preparation building before being mated with the Soyuz launcher.

**SAVE THE DATE** (a media advisory will be sent out in due course)  
Microscope press conference at CNES Head Office on 15 April at 10.30 a.m.

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