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## So long, Rosetta!

**All good things must come to an end, including space missions... Rosetta, Europe's favourite space mission that has been making headlines since 2004, bowed out today in a moment of pure poetry when the orbiter landed softly on the surface of comet Churyumov-Gerasimenko. Rosetta and Philae will now remain forever in an eternal slumber, leaving behind for the public and the international space community a legacy of unforgettable feats and a treasure trove of science data.**

Twelve years and six months ago, on 2 March 2004, the Rosetta mission launched atop an Ariane 5 from Europe's spaceport in Kourou. Who could have thought back then that 10 years and more than six billion kilometres later, Rosetta and its tiny Philae lander would become the space superstars they are today? For no other European space mission before has attracted such a keen following from the public and the international space community alike, and Rosetta and Philae have now joined the select club of missions that completely changed the way we see space, in the same way as Man's first steps on the Moon.

For France and CNES, this international mission led by the European Space Agency (ESA) will remain a great source of pride. From the preliminary concept phase through to operations, France made a key contribution supplying instruments and components, with CNES providing its expertise not only to the 300 French scientists and engineers involved in the mission, but also to its international partners. Indeed, along with Germany, France was the largest contributor. **CNES provided technical support and funding to the French space research laboratories taking part in the project (IAS, IPAG, IRAP, LAM, LATMOS, LESIA and LPC2E)** and oversaw delivery of a host of science equipment. For Philae, the German aerospace agency DLR was in charge of the Lander Control Centre (LCC) in Cologne and CNES of the Science Operations and Navigation Centre (SONC) in Toulouse. The SONC was responsible for planning science operations on the lander's 10 instruments, identifying landing sites, calculating descent trajectories and solar illumination, communicating with the Rosetta orbiter and determining Philae's location and orientation after landing.

But in fact, despite today's announcement, the mission is far from over. As well as firing the public's imagination in Europe and all over the world, Rosetta will continue to deliver to the science community a plethora of data with the potential to reveal many major new insights. During its long descent today, for instance, Rosetta was able to take a series of high-definition pictures of the comet, another first on which scientists will now be focusing their attention.

On this occasion, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall, watching the event live with the world's heads of space agencies from the 67<sup>th</sup> IAC in Guadalajara, commented: "After Rosetta, things will clearly never be the same again. Besides the mission's prodigious haul of data, which will continue to occupy scientists for years to come, it was also an extraordinary human and technical adventure, and I would like to congratulate all those in Europe and the rest of the world who contributed to this fantastic success!"

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### Contacts

Pascale Bresson  
Julien Watelet

Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 75 39  
Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 78 37

[pascale.bresson@cnes.fr](mailto:pascale.bresson@cnes.fr)  
[julien.watelet@cnes.fr](mailto:julien.watelet@cnes.fr)

**[presse.cnes.fr](http://presse.cnes.fr)**