Press release

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CNES and Nexeya invest to develop nanosatellite industry

To federate efforts and create a nanosatellite industry, CNES and Nexeya are investing and developing a demonstrator called ANGELS.

With a view to structuring a national nanosatellite ecosystem for satellites weighing less than 50 kilograms and in the wake of the Club Nano formed last year to federate stakeholders in industry and academia from across the sector, CNES is to develop a demonstrator called ANGELS (for Argos Neo on a Generic Economical and Light Satellite), planned to launch in 2019.

Following a request for proposals funded under a public-private partnership and drawing on its R&T studies, CNES has selected mid-tier firm Nexeya to pursue this project. Nexeya is a firm with 1,000 employees that is already present in the space sector, designing, integrating and conducting acceptance tests of elements for satellites and ground support equipment. For the ANGELS project, Nexeya has partnered with subcontractors, some of which are also supplying funding, among them CS, Erems, Mecano-ID, SAFT, Spacebell and Steel. CNES is providing its expertise for the industrial consortium through an integrated project team of engineers with solid experience of space working at Nexeya. The agency is thus bringing together the best talents through this innovative cooperation initiative, offering its know-how to industry entrepreneurs eager to embark on the new nanosatellite adventure.

The nanosatellite sector is booming as systems get smaller and costs come down, driven by more-affordable launchers, decreasing satellite mass, standardized spacecraft buses and commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) components. According to Euroconsult, this market is expected to be worth $800 billion in the years ahead. CNES is seeking to federate efforts to fuel a competitive nanosatellite industry in France. Leveraging its research in the field of component miniaturization, CNES will be able with nanosatellites to conduct missions offering multiple scientific, societal and commercial benefits. The first applications will be in the area of data collection. Here, CNES is looking to drive disruptive innovations, from both a technical and a governance standpoint. Nexeya is responsible for development of the bus and final assembly of the demonstrator nanosatellite, while CNES is responsible for the Argos instrument payload being developed by Thales Alenia Space and Syrlinks. CNES will also be responsible for launching and operating the satellite.

On the occasion of this announcement, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: “With its expertise in launchers and satellites, CNES will continue working to cultivate its technological excellence. The development of ANGELS, applying a new mode of governance, will nurture the talent pool of cutting-edge entrepreneurs and start-ups in the field of nanosatellites in France, a promising market for inventing the future of space.”

Nexeya chairman Philippe Gautier added: “We are very satisfied with this innovative agreement with CNES that will enable us not only to get this first operational demonstrator off the ground but also to spark a French nanosatellite industry.”

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