

Press Release

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12th Vega mission from Guiana Space Centre set to launch Europe's Aeolus satellite

Tuesday 21 August, Vega will lift off from the Guiana Space Centre (CSG) carrying the European Space Agency's Aeolus satellite, built by Airbus Defence & Space. The launch will be the fifth this year from the CSG and the first for Vega, which will be making its 12th flight in all.

The latest of ESA's Earth-observation satellites, Aeolus will weigh 1.35 tonnes at lift-off and has an expected service life of three years. It is the first satellite capable of observing winds using laser technology to generate dynamic 3D maps of surface winds around the globe.

Aeolus's unique Atmospheric LAsEr DopplEr INstrument (ALADIN) is the result of France's internationally renowned expertise in lidar technology, supported for this project by CNES and led notably by the LATMOS atmospheres, environments and space observations laboratory and the LMD dynamic meteorology research laboratory of the Institut Pierre Simon Laplace (IPSL).

With ALADIN, the satellite will experiment an all-new technique using a powerful laser system designed to probe the lower layers of Earth's atmosphere up to altitudes of 30 kilometres and generate wind profiles to learn more about aerosols and clouds. These data from Aeolus will enhance understanding of tropical dynamics and processes and improve the quality of weather forecasting.

This flight comes at the start of a particularly busy launch schedule at the CSG for the second half of this year, during which Europe's spaceport is once again primed to prove its availability and performance.

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