

## **Ariane 6**

# **Europe all set to build the dream**

**Tuesday 2 December, the Ministerial Council meeting of the European Space Agency (ESA) in Luxembourg gave spacefaring Europe the means to meet the major challenges that lie ahead. For Ariane 6, the common vision crafted by CNES, ESA and space industry partners received the backing of Europe's ministers, who gave the programme the green light for a first launch in 2020.**

ESA's previous Ministerial Council meeting in Naples in 2012 approved significant investments to support competitiveness and growth. It also agreed to set a date for its next meeting within no more than two years to reach decisions on Europe's contribution to the exploitation of the International Space Station (ISS), on the evolution of ESA to make Europe's space sector more competitive and provide a framework better designed to implement its missions, and of course on the future of Europe's launch services industry.

This meeting was held today, Tuesday 2 December, in Luxembourg, where ministers reached consensus on a series of decisions designed to give spacefaring Europe the means to meet the major challenges that face it in the years ahead.

They began by confirming the programmatic priorities decided in Naples, focused on full exploitation and utilization of the ISS and the implementation of the ExoMars programme.

With regard to ESA, the emphasis was placed on the need to craft a joint long-term space vision capable of best serving Europe's interests for 2030. In particular, the burgeoning space services and applications market offers major opportunities through the European flagship Galileo and Copernicus programmes. Without altering ESA's legal status, the framework agreement that currently governs the agency's relations with the European Union will be modified to help boost the competitiveness of Europe's space sector.

But the most eagerly awaited decision, and the most pivotal for the future of spacefaring Europe, was without doubt that concerning Ariane 6. Here, CNES secured support for its vision of moving directly and as quickly as possible to build Ariane 6 and for the configuration it had proposed for the launcher, with two versions—Ariane 6-2 and Ariane 6-4—capable of meeting market expectations for medium-lift and heavy-lift missions. Alongside Ariane 6, Vega C will serve the small satellite launch market. Europe's family of launchers will thus be in a position to offer competitive solutions for the European institutional market and the world commercial market. Vega C should be operational by 2018 and Ariane 6 by 2020.

The participants signed a formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) specifying that the joint-venture set up by the manufacturers will be the launcher prime contractor, while CNES will be prime contractor

for the new Ariane 6 launch complex. ESA, assisted by CNES, will have oversight responsibility for the overall system.

After this key meeting for the future of Europe's space effort, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "A united spacefaring Europe comes out a winner from this meeting in Luxembourg. This year has been truly historic for us, first with the fantastic odyssey of Rosetta—to which CNES made a big contribution and which culminated in the successful landing of Philae on 12 November, a feat that generated unprecedented public interest—and today with the total success of this Luxembourg meeting that lays the foundations for Europe's future space effort. Credit for this success goes to ESA, the European Union, its member states and their industry. And I am especially proud that CNES, through its talents, creativity and team effort, played a driving role in building a common vision for Ariane 6 to achieve this great success. We dreamed this launcher and now Europe is going to build it."

**More information about Ariane 6 on the CNES website:**  
**[www.cnes.fr/ariane6](http://www.cnes.fr/ariane6)**

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