

Press release

ARIANESPACE AWARDED NEW VEGA C LAUNCHES FOR THE IRIDE PROGRAMME

- **2 firm Vega C launches and one option to deploy future Earth observation constellation IRIDE.**
- **3 launches to be scheduled from late 2025 onwards.**
- **Vega C backlog boosted to 15 firms launches, demonstrating yet again the competitiveness of the new European light launcher.**

On March 14, Arianespace announced having signed with ESA, who is acting on the behalf of the Italian government, for the procurement of two Vega C launches. The contract also includes an option for a third dedicated launch. These launches, scheduled for the last quarter of 2025 onwards from the Guiana Space Center (CSG), will support the deployment of the future Earth Observation constellation IRIDE.

“I would like to thank the Italian government, along with the European Space Agency and the Italian Space Agency ASI, to entrust Arianespace to deploy the state-of-the-art Earth Observation constellation IRIDE with Vega C,” said Stéphane Israël, CEO of Arianespace. *“To support implementation of such constellations projects, pivotal to a better understanding of the Environment changes at a global scale and to improving life on Earth, is at the core of our mission and we are particularly excited to be part of this adventure.”*

This new contract also demonstrates the versatility and competitiveness of the new European light launcher Vega C, whose backlog has now grown to 15 launches. The Vega C is an upgraded variant and is perfectly suited to serve the Earth observation market because of its higher performance and versatility. The Vega C is an ESA program carried out in cooperation between public institutions and private industry across 12 European partner states. AVIO SpA (Colleferro, Italy) is the prime contractor of Vega C, responsible for the development of the launcher system and delivering to Arianespace a launcher “ready-to-fly” at the Guiana Space Center.

“The Italian government has requested the European Space Agency to assist in the implementation of the ambitious IRIDE Earth Observation programme, funded by the PNRR” – declared Simonetta Cheli, director of the Earth Observation Programmes at the European Space Agency. *“The first major programme milestone – set for end of March 2023 – is approaching and with this contract ESA repays the trust of the Italian government while confirming its confidence in Arianespace and in the Vega C launch system. IRIDE represents a unique growth opportunity for the entire Italian space ecosystem.”*

IRIDE is an end-to-end system composed of constellations of LEO satellites (Upstream Segment), the ground-based Operations infrastructure (Downstream Segment) and a range of Services to be delivered to the Italian Public Administration (Service Segment). The constellation will be based on different sensing techniques and technologies, encompassing Synthetic Aperture Radars, SAR, imaging as well as optical imaging, from medium to high resolution and in many different frequency ranges.

With institutional purposes primarily, the IRIDE constellation will be used to support the Civil Protection and other State institutions to implement measures against hydro-geological instability, to protect the coastline and prevent fires, to monitor critical infrastructures, air quality, and weather conditions.

IRIDE is an initiative of the Italian government. With an investment of approximately 1.1 billion euros, the new constellation will be completed within five years. The European Space Agency is providing assistance to this Italian national project and is implementing the procurement actions on behalf of the Italian government.

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About Arianespace

Arianespace uses Space to make life better on Earth by providing launch services for all types of satellites into all orbits, since 1980. Arianespace is responsible for operating the new-generation Ariane 6 and Vega C launchers, developed by ESA, with respectively ArianeGroup and Avio as industrial primes. Arianespace is headquartered in Evry, near Paris, and has a technical facility at the Guiana Space Center in French Guiana, plus local offices in Washington, D. C., Tokyo and Singapore. Arianespace is a subsidiary of ArianeGroup, which holds 74% of its share capital, with the balance held by 15 other shareholders from the Ariane and Vega European launcher industry, and ESA and CNES as censors.

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