

Press release

ArianeGroup and CNES sign Agreement on Prometheus testing

Paris, January 14, 2021

Following the visit to the ArianeGroup site in Vernon by President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron, Minister of the Economy and Finance Bruno Le Maire, and Minister for Overseas France Sébastien Lecornu, ArianeGroup CEO André-Hubert Roussel and CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall signed an agreement preparatory to the testing of the new Prometheus rocket engine at the Vernon site in Normandy.

Initiated by CNES and ArianeGroup in 2015, Prometheus is a very low cost reusable rocket engine demonstrator, the objective of which is to be ten times less expensive than the current Ariane 5 Vulcain 2 engine. Prometheus is meant to equip the launchers of the future, which will succeed Ariane 6 and Vega-C.

The agreement signed on January 12th aims to consolidate the development of Prometheus, in particular by conducting testing at the Vernon site commencing in 2021. It is funded through the space component of the *France Relance* recovery plan, which also includes specific funding for Ariane 6 and a dedicated investment allocated to capacity-building at the ArianeGroup site in Vernon. CNES has been appointed operator of this component on behalf of the French Government.

This agreement was signed against a backdrop of heightened global competition in the field of launch vehicles, with a view to developing French expertise in liquid propulsion systems. The goal is to accelerate the Prometheus schedule by beginning the first tests on the Vernon site at the end of 2021. The *France Relance* recovery plan also provides for an investment to support projects for the diversification of the Vernon site in hydrogen technologies..

The Prometheus engine is at the heart of the European strategy to prepare future launchers. It is intended to equip the Themis reusable stage demonstrator, and then the new family of European launchers which will succeed Ariane 6 and Vega-C.

In 2016, Prometheus became a European project within the framework of the Future Launcher Preparatory Program (FLPP) within the European Space Agency (ESA). Eight countries are participating in this project: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. ESA recently awarded the contract for the initial development phase of Themis to ArianeGroup, building on ArianeWorks, the Innovation accelerator created by CNES and ArianeGroup

About ArianeGroup

ArianeGroup develops and supplies innovative and competitive solutions for civil and military space launchers, with expertise in all aspects of state-of-the-art propulsion technologies. ArianeGroup is lead contractor for Europe's Ariane 5 and Ariane 6 launcher families, responsible for both design and the entire production chain, up to and including marketing by its Arianespace subsidiary, as well as for the missiles of the French oceanic deterrent force. ArianeGroup and its subsidiaries enjoy a global reputation as specialists in the field of equipment and propulsion for space applications, while their expertise also benefits other industrial sectors. The group is a



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joint venture equally owned by Airbus and Safran, and employs approximately 9,000 highly qualified staff in France and Germany. Its 2019 revenues amounted to 3.1 billion euros.

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[About CNES](#)

CNES is the government agency responsible for shaping France's space policy and executing it in Europe. Its task is to conceive and orbit satellites, invent the space systems of the future and nurture new services to aid us in our daily lives. Founded in 1961, it is the initiator of major space projects, launch vehicles and satellites, and the partner of choice for industry, supporting exports and fuelling innovation. CNES is working to further applications in five core areas of focus: Ariane, science, Earth observation, telecommunications and Defence. CNES is a key player driving technology research, economic development and industrial policy for the nation. It also fosters scientific collaborations and has forged numerous international partnerships. France, represented by CNES, is the leading contributor to the European Space Agency (ESA), which conducts Europe's space policy on behalf of its 22 member states.

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