

The Galileo constellation grows bigger after successful Launch 11

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Two new Galileo satellites were successfully launched from the European spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana on 4 December 2021, bringing the number of Galileo satellites launched to a total of 28 satellites, thereby enabling the provision of more robust services and precise signals across a range of industries.

Earlier today, the Soyuz launcher VS-26, successfully lifted off from Kourou, French Guyana, for a nearly four-hour voyage till the separation of the Galileo satellites 27-28 from the rocket. The Galileo Launch 11 is the first of a series of 6 launches (with two satellites per launch), which will allow Galileo to deliver greater accuracy to existing users and open up new market opportunities.

The Galileo satellites were ejected from the upper stage of the launcher at 05:09 CET, and are currently managed by the EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) and its industrial team, in charge of the satellite operations from the separation of the Launch vehicle onwards, as part of the Launch and Early Orbit Phase (LEOP).

The LEOP is one of the crucial phases of a space mission during which the spacecraft is launched and put into the correct orbit and the first satellite elements are gradually switched on and tested. Over the following days, the EUSPA team in charge of the satellite operations after separation from the launch vehicle will be maneuvering the satellites for the first time from the dedicated Galileo Control Center in Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany until they are precisely placed into their home orbit at 23 220 km. Upon commissioning and rigorous in-Orbit tests, the spacecraft will enter into the Galileo service provision.

Undertaken by a European partnership, the European Commission manages Galileo, with EUSPA overseeing Galileo operations and service provision and ESA as the design authority overseeing its development, procuring satellites, and the ground segment.

“Today we can proudly celebrate another milestone achieved by the European Union’s most ambitious and largest industrial project, Galileo” says EUSPA Executive Director, Rodrigo da Costa. The successful addition of satellites 27-28 to the world’s most precise positioning system is a very important step for our more than 2 billion users around the world and is the result of a robust collaboration between us, the European Commission, the European Space Agency (ESA), and our industrial partners. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the parties involved, who are working relentlessly to ensure the success of the mission.”

About the European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA)

The European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) provides safe and secure European satellite navigation services, promotes the commercialization of Galileo, EGNOS, and Copernicus data and services and coordinates the EU’s forthcoming governmental satellite communications programme GOVSATCOM. EUSPA is responsible for the security accreditation of all the EU Space Programme components. By fostering the development of an innovative and competitive space sector and engaging with the entire EU Space community, EUSPA contributes to the European Green Deal and digital transition, the safety and security of the Union and its citizens, while reinforcing its autonomy and resilience.

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