

IAF SPACE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS SYMPOSIUM (D2)
Launch Vehicles in Service or in Development (1)

Author: Mr. Stefano Bianchi
European Space Agency (ESA), Italy

Mr. Patrick BONGUET
ArianeGroup SAS, France
Mr. Pier Domenico Resta
European Space Agency (ESA), France
Mr. Guy Pilchen
European Space Agency (ESA), France
Mr. Mathieu CHAIZE
ArianeGroup SAS, France
Mr. Julio Aprea
European Space Agency (ESA), France
Mr. Guillaume Collange
Airbus Safran Launchers, France

THE ARIANE 6 LAUNCH SYSTEM - DEVELOPMENT STATUS

Abstract

In December 2014, the European Space Agency (ESA) Council at Ministerial level decided to commence the Ariane and Vega development programme. The Ariane 6 launch system development started with the decision for ESA to procure the development of the Ariane 6 launcher system from ArianeGroup, and the development of the launch base from the French National Centre for Space Studies (CNES). ESA acts as procurement entity and launch system architect to coordinate parallel development activities and ensure launcher system coherence. The aim of developing Ariane 6 is to guarantee independent European access to space at the lowest overall cost. Today, Europe relies on Ariane 5, Vega, and Soyuz to lift payloads off to space. Tomorrow, the European launch vehicle fleet will be composed of Ariane 6 with two different versions – Ariane 62 and 64 – as well as Vega-C that replaces and upgrades the Vega launch system. Ariane 6's maiden flight is planned for Q4 2020, and it will achieve full operational capability by 2023. Major milestones in the accomplishment of this timeline include the first and second static test firings of the P120C solid rocket motor which occurred in July 2018 and January 2019 respectively, with a third test scheduled for 2020; the successful completion of the Vinci re-ignitable engine's test campaign in October 2018; the successful completion of the Vulcain 2.1 core stage engine's test campaign in July 2019; and the successful completion of the launch system Critical Design Review in September 2019. The new Ariane 6 launch complex is also on track with combined tests underway. The aim of this paper is to present the status of the development of the Ariane 6 launch system as of 2020, as well as some aspects required for its operational use.