



LAST ROCKET MOTOR FIRING CLEARS PATH FOR VEGA-C LAUNCH

Colleferro (Rome), 3 October 2024 – A redesigned Zefiro-40 solid rocket motor, the second stage of the Vega-C rocket, was successfully fired up today for the second time by prime contractor Avio at its Salto di Quirra test facility in Sardinia, Italy. This second firing follows from a first firing test of the motor in May 2024 and concludes the qualification tests for the improved engine nozzle design of the Zefiro-40.

Engineers are analysing the motor's performance, with the initial post-test review indicating that the new nozzle assembly and the motor performed as expected.

Whereas the first test in May was performed under high operating pressure and with a short burning time, today's test was conducted at a low operating pressure and burnt for longer, as expected and according to the test predictions. The two firings are standard procedure when preparing solid-fuel rocket motors for operations, allowing Vega-C to be launched by the end of 2024.

Zefiro-40 is a 7.6 m tall rocket motor, loaded with over 36 tonnes of solid propellant, and just one of three solid-propulsion stages that are used by Vega-C. For this test the motor was installed on its horizontal test bench. Zefiro-40 is developed and manufactured by Avio in their Colleferro factory near Rome, Italy.

Farewell Vega, welcome Vega-C

Vega-C is the larger evolution of the versatile Vega family of rockets specialising in taking Earth observation satellites to orbit. The original Vega was launched in 2012 and flew 22 times over 12 years, its last flight was on 4 September launching the third Sentinel 2 satellite into orbit perfectly.

Vega-C is set to take over from Vega's legacy, ensuring that Europe has a versatile, independent access to space, complementing the Ariane family of rockets to launch any satellite to any orbit.

Vega-C delivers increased performance, greater payload volume and improved competitiveness. Operating from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana, from the same launch pad as Vega, the rocket extends Europe's autonomy in space by supporting new mission possibilities and includes two new solid propulsion stages, an improved upper stage and new fairing, and new ground infrastructure.

ESA is responsible for the Vega-C launch system qualification and also purchases launch services for European institutional missions. The Vega-C development programme was carried out with participation of thirteen ESA Member States, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain,

Sweden, Switzerland. The Agency is the contracting authority for the development of Vega-C, supports both the development and exploitation, while also providing technical supervision based on its 30 years of experience.

Avio is the prime contractor and design authority of the Vega-C launchers. Arianespace is the launch service provider for the next launch of Vega C planned before the end of the year.

Avio is a leading international group engaged in the construction and development of space launchers and solid, liquid and cryogenic propulsion systems. The experience and knowhow built up over more than 50 years puts Avio at the cutting edge of the space launcher sector and defence program. Avio is present in Italy, France, United States and France Guyana with 5 facilities, employing approx. 1,300 highly qualified personnel, of which approx. 30% involved in research and development. Avio is a prime contractor for the Vega programme and a sub-contractor for the Ariane programme, both financed by the European Space Agency (ESA) placing Italy among the limited number of countries capable of producing a complete spacecraft.

For further information

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