



PRESS RELEASE

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The European Space Agency and Dassault Aviation paving the way for potential collaborations

ESA and Dassault Aviation have identified a mutual interest in developing a closer relationship to commonly foster technology development in areas such as LEO destinations and particularly around orbital vehicles.

The European Space Agency (ESA) has signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with Dassault Aviation, a French civilian and military aircraft manufacturer recognized worldwide for its excellence, underlying their common interest to develop a closer relationship.

ESA, with its ambitious strategy for space exploration, Explore2040, is seeking innovative solutions for capabilities development to reach and return from Low Earth Orbit (LEO), Moon and Mars, and supports the advancement of selected critical enabling technologies to be used and demonstrated in particular in LEO, such as hypervelocity re-entry.

Dassault Aviation, also a leader in aerospace engineering, is developing its space activities with a focus on the design of a reusable spaceplane based on lifting bodies shapes that bridge aeronautical and space technologies. Their interest in automated LEO platforms suitable for commercial and institutional markets, led them to develop a vehicle concept called “*Véhicule Orbital Réutilisable de Transport et d'Exploration (VORTEX)*”, designed for research in space, transport of cargo to and from space stations, and a range of in-orbit services. This project is based on a considerable expertise in spaceplanes having participated in numerous programmes like Hermes, NASA X-38 Crew Rescue vehicle, ESA Intermediate eXperimental Vehicle (IXV) demonstrator, and Airborne Reusable Hypersonic Experimental Vehicle (VEHRA) concepts.

“Dassault Aviation’s decades of expertise in aeronautical and space systems, perfectly position them to pioneer critical space technologies”, said Josef Aschbacher, Director General of the European Space Agency. “With VORTEX, Dassault is contributing to strengthening European capacities and securing sovereign access to space in a strongly growing and competitive space sector. We look forward to combining our expertise and working hand-in-hand for a stronger Europe in space.”

“Our Vortex roadmap aims to strengthen Europe's essential sovereign capabilities and meet the new challenges of the space economy. This letter of intent is a perfect recognition of the complementary expertise of the European Space Agency and Dassault Aviation in the development of critical technologies and innovative space solutions,” declared Eric Trappier, Chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation.



As such, the signatories of the Lol, have identified a mutual interest in developing a closer relationship with the potential to commonly derisking critical technologies as well as to further explore the potential for collaboration in areas such as LEO destinations and particularly around orbital vehicles. As such, both foresee an interest to cooperate on a scaled down suborbital version of VORTEX, serving as a testbed, with a focus on, but not limited to:

- Designing, testing and qualifying key technologies and components.
- New materials and integration processes.
- Assessing the feasibility to include future payloads in case of the integration of a dedicated bay on the end-product.

This joint work will be based on exchanging relevant information and conducting studies or preparatory activities, to help establish respective roles and responsibilities in the realisation of potential joint activities, leveraging on each side's capabilities.

"Europe benefits from a wide range of diverse and complementary skills. Enlarging the European industrial base is key for new opportunities arising in Space Exploration, aiming at more autonomy," said Daniel Neuenschwander, Director of Human and Robotic Exploration at ESA.

About the European Space Agency

The European Space Agency (ESA) provides Europe's gateway to space.

ESA is an intergovernmental organisation, created in 1975, with the mission to shape the development of Europe's space capability and ensure that investment in space delivers benefits to the citizens of Europe and the world.

ESA has 23 Member States: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia are Associate Members.

ESA has established formal cooperation with other four Member States of the EU. Canada takes part in some ESA programmes under a Cooperation Agreement.

By coordinating the financial and intellectual resources of its members, ESA can undertake programmes and activities far beyond the scope of any single European country. It is working in particular with the EU on advancing the Galileo and Copernicus programmes as well as with Eumetsat for the development of meteorological missions.

Learn more about ESA at www.esa.int

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About Dassault Aviation

With over 10,000 military and civil aircraft delivered in more than 90 countries over the last century, Dassault Aviation has built up expertise recognized worldwide in the design, production, sale and support of all types of aircraft, ranging from the Rafale fighter, to the high-end Falcon family of business jets, military drones and space systems. In 2024, sales amounted to € 6.2 billion. Dassault Aviation has 14,600 employees.

<http://www.dassault-aviation.com/>



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