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# ESPI

## Insights

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SPACE SECTOR WATCH

## NASA launches Artemis II

On 1 April 2026, the Orion spacecraft lifted off from NASA's Kennedy Space Center and successfully launched the Artemis II crew into orbit. Artemis II represents the first crewed test flight of NASA's Artemis programme and the first mission to carry a human crew into lunar proximity and the broader cislunar environment since Apollo 17 in December 1972. ESA has contributed the European Service Module, which serves as the powerhouse of the Orion spacecraft, providing propulsion and life-support systems, including electricity, water, oxygen, nitrogen, thermal control, and manoeuvring capability. Following repairs in the Vehicle Assembly Building during February, the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket and Orion spacecraft returned to Launch Complex 39B on 20 March 2026. The crew consists of NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, and Jeremy Hansen from the Canadian Space Agency. Orion will fly approximately 7,400km past the far side of the Moon. The spacecraft will then use a gravity-assisted free-return trajectory to head back to Earth without additional fuel. The mission is designed to confirm that Orion can sustain a crew, while also providing the operational experience and performance data required for Artemis III. During the flight, the crew will evaluate spacecraft systems, practice emergency procedures, test the radiation shelter, and conduct science experiments.



Credit: NASA

## EU-African Union Space Dialogue takes place in Brussels

On 24-25 March 2026, the EU-African Union Space Dialogue convened in Brussels, aimed at enhancing space sector cooperation. Led by European Commissioner for Defence Industry and Space, Andrius Kubilius, and H.E. African Union Commissioner Banyankimbona, the Dialogue brought together high-level stakeholders from Africa and Europe to align space ambitions and deliver tangible benefits for citizens on both continents. The discussions primarily focused on several key areas of cooperation, including Earth observation, satellite navigation, space science, and downstream applications supporting climate action, disaster management, and digital transformation. Capacity building also emerged as a priority, with a particular emphasis on education, training, and knowledge sharing, alongside the need to strengthen institutional partnerships and encourage greater private sector participation. A core outcome of the meeting was a renewed commitment to strengthen the EU-AU partnership through collaboration on flagship programmes, expanding data sharing, and promoting joint research and innovation initiatives.



Credit: European Commission

## ESA awards OHB €248M contract for weather satellite constellation

ESA has awarded OHB a €248M contract for the development and construction of 20 small satellites for EUMETSAT's EPS-Sterna weather satellite constellation. The constellation expands upon the capabilities of the Arctic Weather Satellite, which continues to provide high-precision Arctic weather forecasts. The EPS-Sterna constellation will be designed to deliver a more comprehensive view of Arctic weather variability, with a particular emphasis on atmospheric water vapour measurements. The mission will comprise of three waves of six satellites, with each wave replenished twice to ensure operational continuity through 2042. This primary fleet of 18 satellites will be supported by two additional backup satellites. To capture precise humidity and temperature profiles, each satellite will be equipped with a cross-track scanning microwave radiometer. The launch of the first six satellites is scheduled for 2029.

## UK announces £500M space funding package

The UK government has announced a **£500M space funding package to align with industrial growth and national security objectives**. The £500M is in addition to the €1.7B committed to ESA at the Ministerial Council meeting in November 2025. Several key priorities were highlighted, including satellite communications, access to space, in-orbit servicing, assembly and manufacturing, and space domain awareness. The financial package is split across seven sub-sectors of the space economy and includes:

- £105M for in-orbit servicing and manufacturing, with £40M of this specifically dedicated to the National Active Debris Removal mission;
- £85M for the development of the National Space Operations Centre, with £40M for a new ground-based sensing network;
- £80M for LEO connectivity, including a £30M call to support UK companies developing satellites advanced hardware and AI-enabled data delivery;
- £65M for a National Space Innovation programme to accelerate commercialisation;
- £40M for the Unlocking Space Programme for national security initiatives and attracting private investment;
- £37M for space clusters and £20M for spaceport infrastructure development in Scotland.

## Austria to launch first military satellite BEACONSAT

**Austria has announced plans to deploy its first domestic satellite BEACONSAT in early 2027 aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket**. The satellite is designed to detect and analyse GNSS jamming and spoofing attacks. The project is led by domestic start-up GATE Space, responsible for supplying the propulsion system, satellite structure, and thermal management system. Although the total mission cost has not been disclosed, **it is financed through a €1M contribution from the Austrian MoD, €500K from ESA, and €750K from the Ministry for Innovation, Mobility, and Infrastructure** through the Austria Wirtschaftsservice. **BEACONSAT will be followed by three satellites from the Austrian-Dutch LEO2VLEO programme**, scheduled to launch in spring 2027. The three satellites will be focused on communications and space situational awareness.

## ESA launches first two Celeste satellites to demonstrate LEO navigation layer

**On 28 March 2026, ESA launched the first two satellites of its Celeste in-orbit demonstration mission aboard a Rocket Lab Electron rocket from New Zealand**. The two spacecraft are built respectively by GMV with OHB as core partner, and by Thales Alenia Space. Celeste is ESA's LEO-PNT initiative, designed to demonstrate how a satellite navigation constellation in LEO can complement the existing Galileo system in MEO. The two satellites will validate core technologies and new signal capabilities in L- and S-band frequencies, in compliance with ITU regulations. The full demonstration constellation will comprise 11 spacecraft, with additional launches planned for 2027 to reach final configuration. Celeste was further expanded at the 2025 Ministerial Council towards an in-orbit preparatory phase, and forms one of three pillars of ESA's new European Resilience from Space initiative. Results from the mission are intended to inform a future EU decision on whether to establish an operational LEO navigation layer complementing Galileo and EGNOS.



Credit: ESA

## Norway and Iceland join EU GOVSATCOM and IRIS2 programmes

On 26 March 2026, Norway and Iceland signed agreements to participate in the EU's GOVSATCOM and IRIS2 secure communications programmes, with signatures exchanged between the two countries' representatives and EU Commissioner for Defence and Space Andrius Kubilius. Both countries already take part in the Copernicus Earth observation programme, and Norway also participates in Galileo. Both agreements will initially run until the end of 2027 before automatically extending for ten years. Iceland's contribution is estimated at ISK 127 million (approx. €886,000) in 2026 and ISK 119 million (approx. €830,000) in 2027, with the possibility of providing ground station infrastructure. Norway's contribution is estimated at NOK 451.6 million (approx. €40M) through 2027.



*Credit: European Commission*

## Canada commits CAD \$305M to spaceport and launcher development

The Canadian government has announced a package of investments totalling approximately CAD \$305M (approx. €207M) to develop sovereign orbital launch capabilities from Canadian soil, with a target of launching Canadian payloads domestically by 2028. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will invest CAD \$200M over ten years to lease a dedicated launch pad at Spaceport Nova Scotia, operated by Maritime Launch Services, in Canso.



*Credit: NordSpace*

The pad will serve the operational needs of the Canadian Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, while also offering access to allied nations. In parallel, Canada selected three companies to receive conditional development funding of CAD \$8.3M each under the first phase of the Launch the North initiative, a CAD \$105M programme: NordSpace for its Tundra rocket, Canada Rocket Company for its R-1 vehicle, and Reaction Dynamics — also an investor in Maritime Launch Services — for its Aurora-8 system. None of the three vehicles has yet flown.

## NASA pauses development of lunar Gateway to focus on lunar base development

NASA has paused plans on the development of the lunar Gateway, instead deciding to focus on the development of a lunar base. The lunar base will consist of three phases, with Phase 1 (2026–2028) centred around reliably reaching the Moon. Phase 2 is planned to take place in 2029 through 2031 and will involve initiating the construction of the base. Phase 3 is scheduled to begin in 2032 and will focus on enabling “long distance and long duration human exploration” on the Moon. Expected budget consists of \$10B each for Phase 1 and 2, with at least an additional \$10B for Phase 3.

## Department of War awards Rocket Lab \$190M contract for hypersonic test flights

The U.S. Department of War has awarded Rocket Lab a \$190M contract on to conduct 20 hypersonic test flights over four years using the company's HASTE (Hypersonic Accelerator Suborbital Test Electron) vehicle. The contract falls under Task Area 1 of the Multi-Service Advanced Capability Hypersonic Test Bed (MACH-TB) 2.0 programme, a Department of War effort executed in partnership with Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane Division and led by prime contractor Kratos Defense & Security Solutions. HASTE is a suborbital variant of Rocket Lab's Electron rocket, carrying test payloads at speeds exceeding Mach 5. The first of the 20 newly contracted missions is expected within months of contract signing. The award represents the largest launch contract in Rocket Lab's history and brings the company's total launch and space systems backlog above \$2B.

## IN OTHER NEWS

### **ESA plans dedicated Crew Dragon mission to ISS in early 2028**

ESA's Council has endorsed the EPIC on project, chartering a SpaceX Crew Dragon for a one-month ISS mission in early 2028. ESA will lead and fully operate the mission, with a four-person crew expected to include international partners alongside ESA astronauts.

### **Cyprus becomes ESA Associate Member**

Cyprus has officially become an Associate Member of ESA, following the entry into force of a seven-year Association Agreement signed in October 2025, opening the way for Cyprus's participation in ESA's optional programmes.

### **Netherlands upgrades space body to agency status**

The Netherlands Space Office has been formally upgraded to the Netherlands Space Agency (NLSA) during the Amsterdam Space Symposium. At the same event, the Netherlands Aerospace Centre led a group of Dutch space industry organisations in signing ESA's Zero Debris Charter.

### **Space Force awards Kratos \$447M contract for ground system**

The U.S. Space Force has signed a \$446.8M agreement with Kratos Technology and Training solutions for the construction of a Ground Management and Integration system for the Space Force's Resilient Missile Warning Tracking (MWT) architecture in MEO, designed to detect and track threats such as ballistic and hypersonic missiles.

### **Sweden to add €36.5M more to its 2026 Spring budget**

The Swedish government has proposed an addition of SEK 400M (approx. €36.5M) to its 2026 Spring budget for the development of sovereign launch capability at Esrange, with a particular emphasis on military space operations.

### **ESA issues call for reusable spaceplane launch system**

ESA published a call for European SMEs to propose designs for a fully reusable, spaceplane-based launch system, targeting at least two distinct concepts.

## Isar Aerospace scrubs second Spectrum launch and signs ADR deal with Astroscale

Aerospace scrubbed its second Spectrum flight, mission "Onward and Upward", on 25 March 2026 at Andøya Space in Norway after an unauthorised vessel entered the designated maritime danger zone during the final countdown. A 15-minute hold caused engine fuel temperatures to rise beyond acceptable limits, preventing a restart within the remaining launch window. The mission, which had already experienced delays since its initial target of 21 January 2026, is designed to qualify Spectrum's critical systems under operational conditions and carries five CubeSats and experiment selected through the German Space Agency at DLR's microlauncher competition under ESA's Boost! programme. In parallel, **Isar Aerospace signed a launch service agreement with Astroscale's UK subsidiary the ELSA-M In-Orbit Demonstration mission**, which will use a dedicated Spectrum flight to deploy Astroscale's 520 kg servicer spacecraft tasked with capturing and removing an end-of-life Eutelsat OneWeb satellite. **Isar Aerospace is also seeking a €250M funding round, which would support the company's production ramp-up and development of subsequent vehicles.**



Credit: Isar Aerospace

## Open Cosmos launches LEO connectivity constellation "ConnectedCosmos"

UK-based Open Cosmos has unveiled its LEO broadband constellation as ConnectedCosmos, positioning it as a sovereign connectivity infrastructure for European governments and commercial operators. The constellation will use optical inter-satellite links in a "gatewayless sovereign space mesh" architecture, offering point-to-point broadband and D2D IoT connectivity. It will operate in high-priority Ka-band spectrum filings held by Liechtenstein, the rights to which the country's government awarded Open Cosmos in January 2026. The first two satellites were launched on 22 January via Rocket Lab. ConnectedCosmos will also link with Open Cosmos's existing Earth observation assets under the Open Constellation, in which the company holds standing agreements to deliver national EO satellites for Greece and Spain. Open Cosmos operates manufacturing facilities in the UK, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, and has indicated it will launch further satellites and announce new partnerships over the course of 2026.



Credit: Open Cosmos

## Firefly Aerospace's Alpha rocket completes first fully successful flight on 7<sup>th</sup> attempt

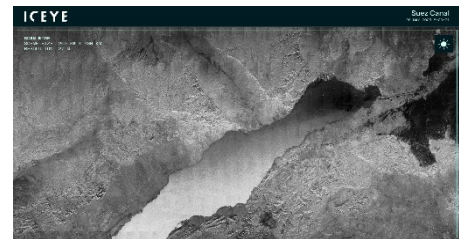
On 11 March 2026, Firefly Aerospace's Alpha rocket lifted off from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, completing the company's first fully successful flight in nearly two years. The mission, Alpha Flight 7, deployed a demonstration payload for Lockheed Martin, successfully relit the second stage engine, and validated two upgraded technologies — new avionics and a thermal protection system — intended for the vehicle's next flight. The previous mission, Flight 6 in April 2025, ended in failure after a plume-induced flow separation caused the first stage to break apart and damage the second stage engine. The next mission will fly Block II, an upgraded configuration of Alpha featuring a seven-foot increase in vehicle height, a new in-house avionics and battery system, and optimised propellant tanks designed to extend burn time. Firefly currently holds a backlog of \$1.3B, of which \$344.8M is attributed to multi-launch agreements.

## Vodafone and Deutsche Telekom sign LEO satellite connectivity partnerships

Two of Europe's largest telecoms operators signed separate satellite connectivity agreements at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona in early March 2026. **Vodafone signed an agreement with Amazon LEO to use the constellation as a backhaul link for 4G and 5G base stations in remote areas across Europe and Africa.** The service, which propose to offer download speeds of up to 1 Gbps, will be deployed first in Germany and other European markets, before being rolled out across the African continent through Vodacom. The first connected base stations are expected to go live in 2026. In parallel, **Deutsche Telekom signed a partnership with Starlink to deploy a direct-to-device (D2D) service across ten European markets,** with a commercial launch planned for early 2028. Operating in Starlink's Mobile Satellite Service spectrum, the service will allow compatible smartphones to switch automatically to Starlink's satellite network when terrestrial coverage is unavailable.

## ICEYE expands new imaging mode and deforestation monitoring solution

**ICEYE has introduced Scan Wide, a new imaging mode capable of capturing a 200 km × 300 km footprint — equivalent to 60,000 km<sup>2</sup> — in a single collection.** The mode extends the company's imaging range from 25 cm Dwell collections over 5 km × 5 km areas to wide-area 27 m resolution coverage, enabling surveillance across large operational zones in a single pass. Primary use cases include maritime domain awareness. **ICEYE has also launched a dedicated deforestation monitoring solution targeting government agencies, law enforcement bodies, and conservation organisations operating in tropical regions.** The service uses ICEYE's SAR constellation to deliver near real-time change detection through cloud cover. The system provides incremental deforestation detections with pre- and post-event imagery.



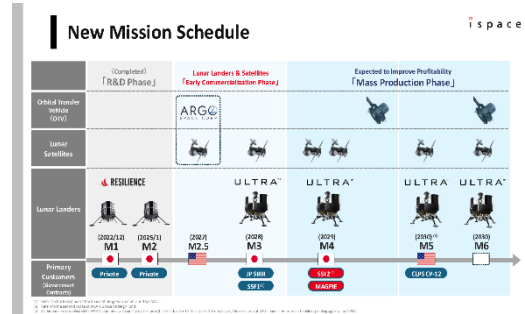
*Credit: ICEYE*

## SES launches MEO network with K2 Space and expands O3b mPOWER

**SES has unveiled meoSphere, a next-generation MEO satellite network targeted for operation by 2030, developed in partnership with U.S.-based satellite manufacturer K2 Space.** The initial phase comprises 28 high-power satellites, with K2 Space supplying the satellite platforms and SES developing its own software-defined payloads in Luxembourg. Orbiting at approximately 8,000 km, the network is designed to serve government, mobility, and fixed telecommunications markets, with compatibility with Europe's IRIS2 programme. Each satellite will support optical inter-satellite links capable of up to 100 Gbps data relay. In parallel, **SES has deployed its O3b mPOWER MEO network at the Farchana refugee settlement in Chad, in cooperation with emergency.lu — the public-private partnership led by Luxembourg's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN Refugee Agency — marking the first use of O3b mPOWER satellites under the emergency.lu framework,** which had previously operated exclusively on GEO infrastructure. To support these infrastructure investments, **SES issued €650M in hybrid securities in March 2026,** with proceeds intended to refinance approximately €525M of outstanding hybrid notes as part of the company's balance-sheet strengthening objectives.

## ispace unveils unified ULTRA lunar lander and new Lunar Connect Service

On 27 March 2026, ispace announced ULTRA, a new unified lunar lander consolidating two designs previously in parallel development at its Japanese and U.S. entities — the Series 3 and the Apex 1.0 respectively. The integration follows a decision to replace the VoidRunner engine, co-developed with Agile Space Industries, after the supplier reported delays in meeting performance specifications. As a consequence, the first ispace-U.S. mission — selected to carry NASA's CLPS task order CP-12 as part of Team Draper — has been rescheduled from 2027 to 2030, pending NASA approval, representing a three-year delay. Under the revised schedule, ispace's next two missions will be Japanese landers launching in 2028 and 2029 respectively, both funded through Japanese government programmes. In parallel, **ispace unveiled the Lunar Connect Service, a new commercial initiative targeting communications, navigation, lunar surface imaging, and SSA for operators in cislunar space.** The service is designed to be compatible with the LunaNet framework led by NASA, ESA, and JAXA, and will be developed in collaboration with Japanese telecommunications operator KDDI, which will provide ground station support.



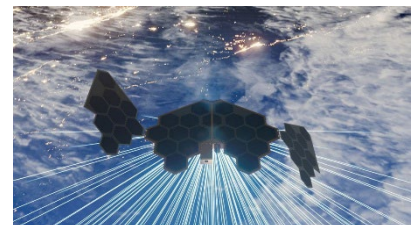
Credit: ispace

## RFA delivers RFA ONE stages to Scotland ahead of summer launch attempt

Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA) has delivered both the first and second stages of its RFA ONE rocket to SaxaVord Spaceport on the Shetland island of Unst in Scotland, targeting an inaugural orbital launch for summer 2026. The first stage arrived in early February directly from RFA's factory in Augsburg, while the second stage followed after completing a hot-fire test campaign at the Esrange Space Center in Sweden. The nine Helix engines for the first stage are still undergoing final acceptance testing in Sweden and will be shipped to SaxaVord once complete, after which on-pad integration and a static fire test of the assembled first stage are planned. A 52-metre umbilical tower has been erected at Launch Pad Fredo, with all remaining launch pad infrastructure in place except water tanks for the deluge system. The delivery follows a significant setback in August 2024, when a first-stage fire during a static fire test — attributed to a turbopump anomaly — destroyed the vehicle. RFA has since conducted a full investigation and implemented upgrades to the Helix engines, tank pressurisation systems, and operating procedures

## Kongsberg and SpinLaunch partner to offer sovereign LEO communications to allies

Norwegian defence and technology group Kongsberg has unveiled a sovereign satellite communications offering for allied governments, developed in partnership with U.S.-based SpinLaunch and built around the Meridian LEO broadband constellation. The two companies have signed an agreement to deliver government-controlled LEO broadband constellations, pairing Kongsberg's end-to-end infrastructure capabilities, with Meridian's communications architecture, which is designed to deliver higher capacity and lower lifecycle costs than existing systems through fewer launches and simplified global coverage. Kongsberg will support both the dual-use Meridian constellation and Meridian Defense, a purpose-built defence variant designed to route data through space rather than terrestrial relay points to improve resilience in contested environments.



Credit: Kongsberg

## **IN OTHER NEWS**

### **Arianespace to launch another 32 Amazon LEO on 28 April 2026**

Arianespace announced VA268, the second Ariane 64 mission for Amazon LEO, scheduled for 28 April 2026 from the Guiana Space Centre, carrying 32 satellites as part of an 18-launch series contracted for the deployment of the constellation.

### **MaiaSpace delays inaugural Maia rocket launch to 2027**

ArianeGroup subsidiary MaiaSpace has pushed back the inaugural flight of its Maia rocket from late 2026 to 2027, announcing the delay on 24 February at the Guiana Space Centre alongside the signing of an agreement with CNES to begin adapting the former Soyuz launch facility for Maia operations.

### **SpaceSail receives regulatory authorisation to operate in Brazil**

Brazil's telecoms regulator Anatel has authorised Shanghai SpaceSail Technologies' LEO constellation to operate in the country with up to 324 satellites until July 2031, with commercial broadband services targeted for the fourth quarter of 2026.

### **Avio secures U.S. contract for solid rocket motor development**

Avio has signed a \$65M, three-year contract with Defense Systems and Solutions — a joint venture acting as prime contractor for the U.S. Department of War — for the development of a solid rocket motor for air defence applications, with full series production from 2029 potentially utilising Avio's U.S. facility.

### **Nigeria's Nigus and UAE's Elmirate sign satellite MoU**

Nigerian firm Nigus International Investment and UAE-based Elmirate Investment have signed an MoU for a planned investment of up to \$200M to develop a satellite and defence manufacturing platform in Nigeria, which will operate under the framework of Nigeria's Defence Industries Corporation.

### **Blue Origin unveils NEO Hunter concept**

Blue Origin has unveiled NEO Hunter, a planetary defence concept built on its Blue Ring platform combining ion-beam deflection and kinetic impact techniques, developed with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Caltech.

## Sierra Space raises \$550 million in Series C round to pursue defence contracts

Sierra Space announced the closing of a **\$550 million Series C round**, valuing the company at \$8 billion, led by LuminArx Capital and joined by General Atlantic, Coatue, Moore Strategic Ventures and Andalusian Private Capital. With the additional funding, the company aims to boost its production capacity and technological capabilities. The latest funding round comes in the context of an increasing activity in the defence sector, with Sierra Space launching a dedicated defence business unit in June 2025. Sierra Space is currently developing solutions within several defence and security-oriented contracts for the U.S. federal government, such as the missile-tracking component of the **Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture programme, led by the Space Development Agency**.

## Vast secures \$500 million in debt and equity to develop a commercial space station



*Credit: Vast Space*

U.S. company Vast has secured a **\$300 million financing in a Series A venture round**, plus an additional \$200 million through debt financing, led by Balerion Space Ventures, with the participation of the Qatar Investment Authority, Mitsui & Co, MUFG, Nikon Corporation, Stellar Ventures, Space Capital and Earthrise Ventures. The funding will support the development of “Haven-2”, Vast’s planned ISS successor, a

**commercial 9-module LEO space station** designed to host 12 astronauts. The company aims to finish the space station’s construction by 2032. Following the successful launch of its technology demonstrator “Heaven-Demo” last November, Vast targets to launch its first **one-module Space Station, Haven-1** by 2027.

## Rocket Lab receives regulatory approval to acquire Mynaric

Rocket Lab has received regulatory approval from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy **to acquire the German provider of laser optical communications terminals startup Mynaric**, with the transaction expected to close in April. The German company is already a subcontractor to Rocket Lab under its \$1.3 billion prime contracts with the U.S. SDA, covering 36 satellites across the Transport Layer-Beta Tranches programmes. The acquisition will enable Rocket Lab to scale the production of Mynaric's “CONDOR Mk3” terminal and to establish a presence in the European market. Rocket Lab plans for Mynaric to remain headquartered in Germany and to support both German and broader European space programmes.

## PLD Space secures €180 million in Series C funding for Miura-5 commercialisation

Spanish launcher startup PLD Space has raised **€180 million in a series C funding round** led by Mitsubishi Electric Corporation, with the participation of the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities and the Spanish public funds management company COFIDES. With the funding, the company aims to accelerate the development of its reusable rocket “MIURA-5” and foster its commercialisation process in Europe and Japan. The capital injection follows the announcement of **an agreement between PLD Space and Sateliot**, also a Spanish company, for the launch of two Sateliot “Tritó” satellites in 2027, which is going to be performed by the “MIURA-5” launcher. According to the company, the launcher is expected to conduct its first test flights within 2026 and reach full commercial capability by 2030.



*Credit: PLD Space*

## Starcloud raises \$170 million Series A to advance orbital data-centre infrastructure

U.S.-based company Starcloud has secured **\$170 million in a Series A funding**, led by Benchmark and EQT Ventures. The company develops orbit-based computing systems, including satellites equipped with high-performance GPUs for data processing, developing solutions which would be suitable for future in-orbit data centres. Starcloud will use the funding to develop its new satellite “Starcloud-2” and to initiate design work on Starcloud-3, a 200-kW orbital data centre compatible with Starship’s deployment mechanism. Starcloud-2 will integrate multiple GPU architectures, such as Nvidia Blackwell and an AWS server blade, adding a bitcoin-mining unit, enhancing radiative-cooling and power-generation systems.

## Xona Space Systems raises \$170 million to scale its LEO-PNT constellation



*Credit: Xona Space Systems*

U.S. company Xona Space Systems has raised **\$170 million in a Series C round** led by Mohari Ventures Natural Capital, with participation from Craft Ventures, ICONIQ, Woven Capital and NGP Capital, among other investors. The capital will be used to scale production of Pulsar satellites at the company’s manufacturing facility in California, to deploy a 258-satellite LEO-PNT constellation.

The first batch of U.S.-manufactured satellites are scheduled for launch later in 2026, with the constellation designed to deliver centimetre-level PNT accuracy, jam-resistant signals, and compatibility with existing receiver devices via software updates.

## CACI acquires EO firm ARKA Group for \$2.6 billion to expand its ISR portfolio

U.S.-based defence company CACI has completed the **acquisition of ARKA Group for \$2.6 billion**. ARKA core business lies in the development of electro-optical/infrared and hyperspectral hardware and geospatial data intelligence services for defence and security applications. The transaction will bring the totality of ARKA’s workforce to CACI. The operation is part of CACI’s efforts to verticalize its defence solutions infrastructure through EO capabilities integration, providing a multi-source data collection and application approach.

## PAVE Space raises \$40 million for in-space propulsion technology development

Swiss startup PAVE Space has closed a **\$40 million seed round** led by Visionaries Club and Creandum with participation from Lombard Odier Investment Managers and eight other investors. PAVE Space develops storable bipropellant propulsion systems, an in-orbit propulsion system for orbital transfer and a payload-agnostic satellite platform for security applications.



*Credit: Pave Space*

The capital will be used to support a series of test and demonstration milestones, including a hotfire test of the company’s engine before the end of 2026, an in-orbit demonstration of its avionics system and the qualification of its in-space mobility platform by 2027. The company is aiming towards the opening of an office in the EU and to expand its engineering and commercial teams.

## BlueStar Optical Domain raised €66 million in Series C for laser communications

Chinese laser communications company BlueStar Optical Domain (also known as Laser Link) has secured nearly **¥500 million (approx. €66 million) in a Series C funding round**, with the participation from Yuekai Capital, Galaxy Innovation Capital, Jiangsu Venture Capital, Saizhi Bole, and Hangzhou High-tech Investment Group.



*Credit: BlueStar Optical Domain*

The capital will be directed towards expanding the company's manufacturing capacity, targeting an annual output of 1,000 laser communication units by the first half of 2026, alongside continued research and development on high-end chips and high-power lasers. The company is positioned as a key supplier for China's Guowang and Thousand Sails satellite internet constellations, each planning to deploy over 10,000 satellites.

## Infinite Orbits expands its European footprint with two acquisitions



*Credit: Infinite Orbits*

French startup Infinite Orbits announced **the acquisition of UK-based company Lúnasa Space** and of the **Luxembourgish startup LMO** as part of Infinite Orbits' strategy to expand its European footprint. The British company is specialised in reusable orbital transfer vehicles, which are capable of hosting and transferring small satellites to different altitudes within the lower Earth orbits.

LMO develops software solutions for in-orbit servicing, operations and SSA. Its acquisition comes after years of collaboration between the two companies. Infinite Orbits offers a range of solutions for small geostationary satellites, such as orbital transfer vehicles for lifecycle extension and altitude correction, to asset monitoring and SSA.

## Astrostone announces "Pre-A" venture round for reusable rocket development

Chinese launch startup Astronstone has secured approximately **¥200 million (approx. €27 million) in a "Pre-A+" funding round** led by Hillhouse Capital and Xingxiang Capital, with participation from Minghui Zhiyuan, among others.

The capital will be directed towards final assembly and testing of the "AS-1" reusable rocket, validation of its mechanical arm booster capture and recovery system and the expansion of its production facility. The company is targeting a debut launch of the AS-1 in the first quarter of 2027, preceded by a first-stage static fire test in 2026.

## Enpulsion raises €22.5 million to scale research on satellite propulsion solutions

The Austria-based startup has secured **a €22.5 million investment** led by the German investment fund Nordwind Growth. Founded in 2016 as a spin-off of the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt, Enpulsion develops field emission electric propulsion thrusters for in-orbit operations and manoeuvrability. The devices are modular and scalable, and therefore applicable to different categories of satellite buses and stacked or clustered if needed. The company will use the fresh capital to support the rollout of its thruster variants, which will be integrated with other components (such as altitude determination and control systems) and to increase its U.S. market footprint.

## IN OTHER NEWS

### **Bellatrix Aerospace raises \$20 million to scale manufacturing**

Indian in-space propulsion company Bellatrix Aerospace has secured \$20 million in a “Pre-Series B” round, led by Cactus Partners and Hero Enterprise, among existing investors. The firm will apply the fresh capital to expand its production facilities to meet domestic and foreign demand for in-space manoeuvrability solutions

### **Orbital Lasers adds ¥3.02 billion for in-space laser technologies**

Japanese space laser and optical technology startup Orbital Lasers has secured ¥3.02 billion (approx. €18 million) in a Series A round led by Keio Innovation Initiative and with participation from SPARX Asset Management, among others. The company will direct the fresh capital towards R&D on laser transmission, high-resolution photon reception technologies and to mission-optimised satellite bus systems in the 250-500 kg range.

### **Hawkeye 360 adds \$23.5 million to its Series E round**

HawkEye 360 has added \$23.5 million to its Series E funding round with participation from new investors Ghisallo, Principia Growth and Sixty Degree Capital. The already existing investor Strategic Development Fund also participated in the round.

### **Lux Aeterna adds \$10 million for returnable satellite platform**

U.S. startup Lux Aeterna has raised \$10 million in a seed round led by Konvoy and joined by Decisive Point, Cubit Capital, Wave Function, Space Capital, Dynamo Ventures, and Channel 39. The company will use the fresh capital to scale the development of the reusable satellite platform “Delphi”, designed to host returnable payloads.

### **Mantis Space achieves a \$10 million seed for in-space energy**

Mantis Space, a U.S. startup developing orbital energy infrastructure to capture solar energy and transmit it to other spacecraft in orbit, has raised \$10 million in a seed round. Rule 1 Ventures and Montauk Capital co-led the round, joined by Planet Ventures. The funding will be used to expand Mantis’ headquarters.

### **AIRMO raises €5 million for space based GHG-monitoring**

German startup AIRMO has closed a €5 million seed round to launch its first GHG-monitoring satellite and to expand its drone and aeroplane monitoring into the Middle East market. The round was led by Ananda Impact Ventures with the participation of Pi Labs, Kopa Ventures, Desai Ventures, E2MC Ventures, Unconditional Ventures and Findus Ventures

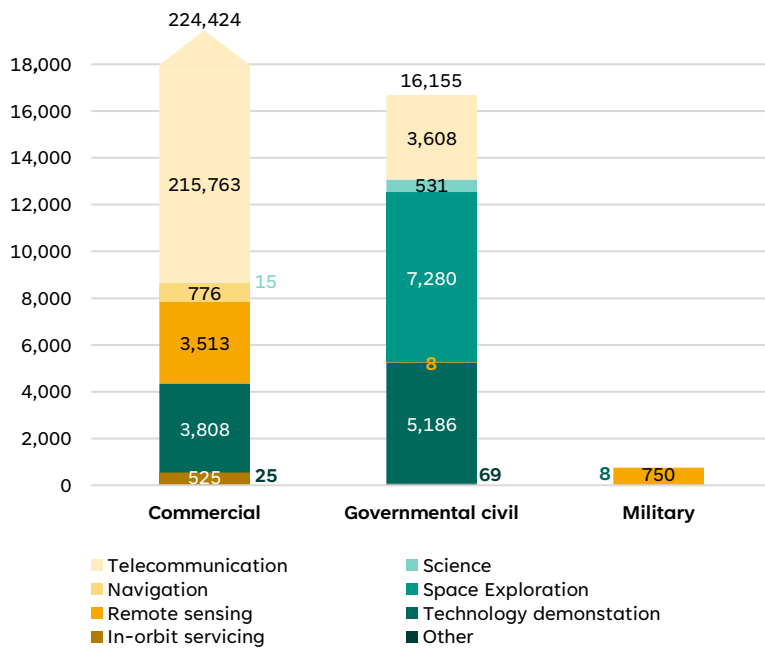
# LAUNCHES & PAYLOADS – MAR 2026

Launch provider's region	USA	China	Europe	Russia	India	Japan	Others (NZ)	Total
Number of launches	16	8	0	2	0	1	3	30
Number of spacecrafts launched	463	36	0	18	0	5	4	526
Mass launched (in kg)	215,837	12,506	0	13,250	0	66	206	241,865

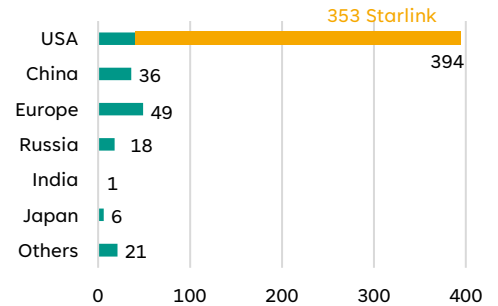
**Top launch service providers of the month**

- 1 SpaceX (15)
- 2 CASC (8)
- 3 Rocket Lab (3)

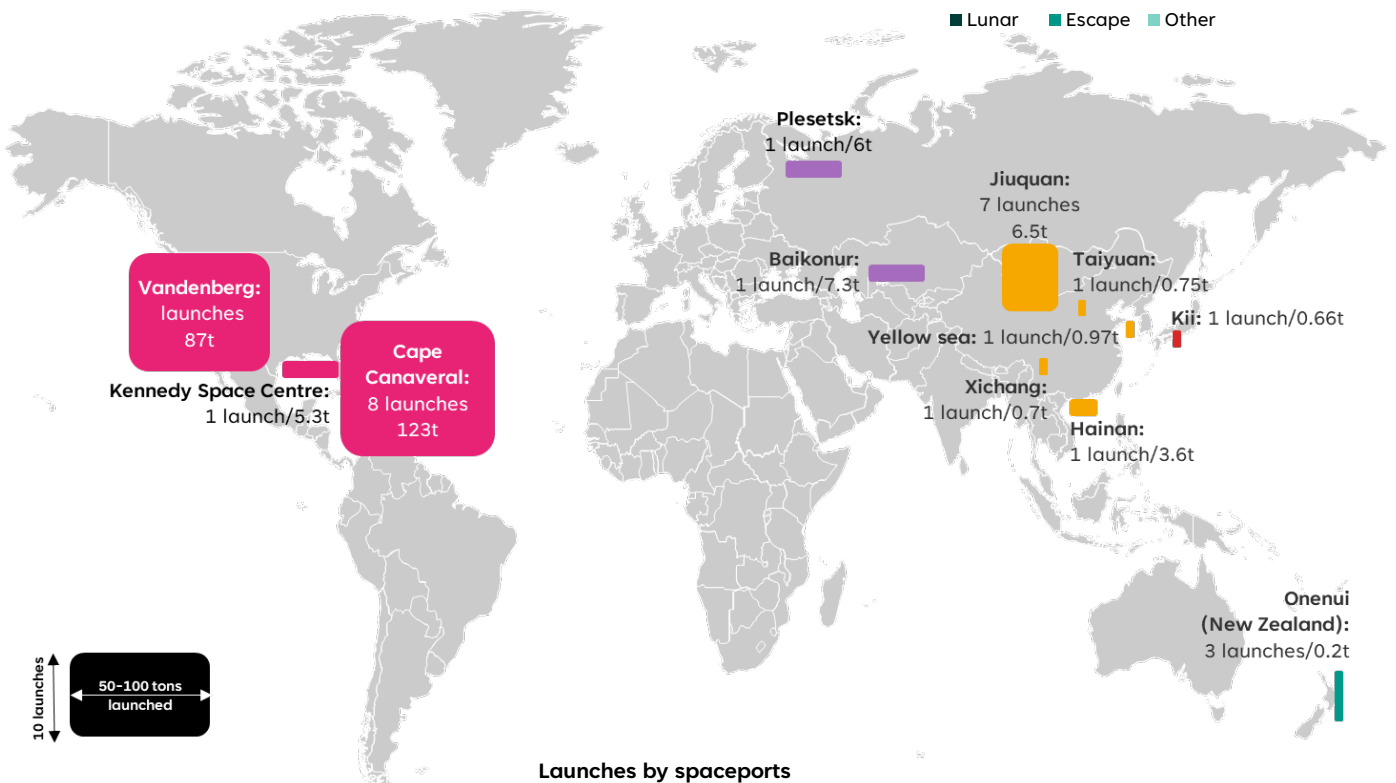
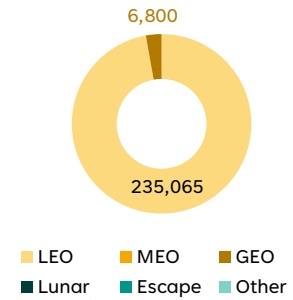
Mass launched (in kg) by market and by mission



Number of spacecrafts launched by payload owner's region



Mass launched (in kg) by orbit



The data is an estimation from ESPI's internal launches dataset, publicly accessible since May 2025 through the **ESPI Launch Dashboard**.

# ESPI

## Insights

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