



ISSUE 69  
APRIL 2026

# ESPI

## Insights

---

SPACE SECTOR WATCH

## NASA enters active integration phase for Artemis III

Following the successful launch on 1 April 2026, the Artemis II mission has safely returned to Earth. The crew splashed down in the Pacific Ocean on 10 April 2026, concluding the first crewed flight beyond LEO in over 50 years. To ensure mission success and prioritise astronaut safety, NASA has officially reconfigured Artemis III as a crewed orbital test flight, scheduled for mid-2027 and postponing the first human lunar landing to Artemis IV in early 2028. Artemis III will aim to test rendezvous and docking between Orion and one or both commercial landers, while also evaluating the Axiom Space AxEMU suits. Preparations for Artemis III are already underway. The Space Launch System core stage has arrived at the Kennedy Space Center and the Mobile Launcher has been moved to the Vehicle Assembly Building to begin rocket stacking operations.



Credit: NASA

## NewSpace Africa Conference 2026 takes place in Gabon

On 20-23 April 2026, the fifth edition of the NewSpace Africa Conference took place in Libreville, Gabon. The event was organised by Space in Africa in collaboration with the African Space Agency and hosted by the Government of Gabon. With over 600 delegates from more than 300 organisations and over 70 countries, the conference focused on the theme “Inclusive Growth: Expanding Space Benefits to All Africans.” Discussions heavily emphasised the importance of reducing fragmentation, promoting joint initiatives and peer learning among African space agencies, and the role of bilateral partnerships to strengthen Africa’s collective capabilities. This commitment to collaboration was reinforced by several formal agreements, including an MoU between Egypt, Somalia, and China to strengthen satellite imagery applications, as well as partnerships between STAR.VISION and RIIS, and AGEOS with GGPEN and the University of Energy and Natural Resources in Ghana.



Credit: Space in Africa

The increasing demand for sovereign space assets and locally manufactured satellite components was highlighted as an opportunity to increase Africa’s space sovereignty and drive inclusive economic transformation. However, delegates also called for structured international cooperation and coordinated frameworks, particularly in the context of Space Situational Awareness, spectrum management, and sustainable orbital practices. Furthermore, participants identified challenges in the growing tension between the proliferation of commercial LEO satellite constellations and the impact on ground-based astronomical observation, as well as the need for structured. Another central theme was the need to transform raw satellite imagery into affordable, accessible, value-added services that deliver equitable benefits to African citizens. Delegates emphasised the importance of integrating Earth Observation into governance frameworks to ensure satellite-derived insights are translated into decision-making and action on the ground.

Overall, the conference strongly highlighted the need for Africa to advance beyond small-scale initiatives and pursue bold, inspirational missions to fully realise its potential as a space-capable continent. In a concluding panel, the diaspora of talent was underscored as a critical challenge, with delegates calling for systemic investments in research infrastructure, stronger academia-industry pipelines, and compelling national missions.

## White House requests \$18.8B FY27 budget for NASA but congress rejects proposal

The Trump administration has proposed an **\$18.8B fiscal 2027 budget for NASA, represented a 23% decrease from the FY2026 funding level.** The budget proposal comes one week after NASA's recent shift in the Artemis programme, including plans to establish a lunar base and conduct monthly launches to the Moon with robotic landers and biannual crewed missions. The funding proposal allocates \$8.5B for Artemis, \$175M for robotic missions to initiate lunar base camp infrastructure, and \$109M to shift NASA's Landsat EO programme to commercial providers. The document also outlines significant reductions, including \$3.4B in science funding, \$143M in STEM, \$297M in space technology, and \$1.1B in ISS spending. **NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman has defended the proposal,** indicating that the cuts would enable NASA to be more efficient and focus on winning the space race against China. However, **Members of the House Science Committee have rejected the proposal,** stating that the ambitious plans for the agency are not feasible under the requested budget, with particular complaints about the proposed elimination of NASA's education (STEM) office.

## Poland signs agreement with Thales, Airbus, and Radmor for defence satellite

The Polish Ministry of Defence has signed an agreement with Thales Alenia Space, Airbus Defence and Space, and Polish electronics manufacturer Radmor for the development of a GEO telecommunications defence satellite. The satellite will provide secure communications for the Polish armed forces, increasing resilience to threats, and strengthening Poland's national space sovereignty. **The three partners will combine their expertise** in military communications payloads, mission control, efficient platform design, industrialisation, secure ground infrastructure, and cybersecurity.



Credit: Airbus

## Spain approves €325M expansion of Atlantic Constellation

Spain's Council of Ministers has allocated **€325M to develop three additional Earth Observation satellites for the Atlantic Constellation.** The expanded programme, referred to as ESCA+, is designed to enhance real-time data capabilities and improve response to extreme climate events. The funding forms part of a broader €625M investment package intended to strengthen Spain's strategic position within ESA, which is supporting the implementation of Spain's contribution to the Atlantic constellation. The funds will be channelled through ESA and represent part of Spain's commitment of €1.854B to the agency during the November 2025 Ministerial Council meeting.

## Italy signs agreement with NASA for lunar base development

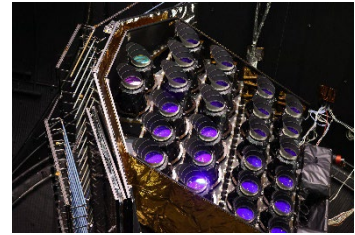
The Italian government has signed an agreement with NASA to cooperate on the development of a NASA-led lunar surface base. This follows a June 2022 cooperation agreement for the design of a multi-purpose lunar habitation module, which is currently under development by Thales Alenia Space Italia through an Italian Space Agency contract. The agreement on the lunar base involves cooperation on habitation modules, communications systems, and scientific activities on the lunar surface. Senator Urso has declared that Italy's contributions to NASA's lunar base will secure a seat for at least one Italian astronaut on a future Artemis mission.



Credit: ASI

## ESA's Plato Mission completes thermal vacuum testing

ESA's Plato Mission has successfully completed a series of thermal vacuum tests in the Large Space Simulator chamber at ESA's Test Centre. The tests validated the functionality of the spacecraft under extreme hot and cold conditions, confirming the performance of its 26 ultrasensitive cameras and ensuring that they can maintain the high-precision focus required to detect Earth-like planets in orbit and around Sun-like stars. Having cleared this technical milestone, the mission remains on track for its scheduled January 2027 launch aboard an Ariane 6 rocket.



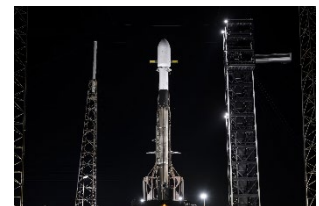
Credit: ESA

## ESA Rosalind Franklin Mars Rover to launch aboard SpaceX Falcon Heavy in 2028

NASA has selected a SpaceX Falcon Heavy to launch ESA's Rosalind Franklin Mars rover, scheduled for late 2028. The mission was originally part of a joint initiative between ESA and Roscosmos, scheduled for 2022, but was reconfigured as an ESA-led mission following the invasion of Ukraine. Under a 2024 partnership agreement, NASA committed to providing launch services for the rover, braking engines for its landing platform, and radioisotope heater units for its internal systems. Despite NASA securing the launch provider, its continued participation remains uncertain, as the mission is one of 53 NASA science projects targeted for cuts in the White House's FY2027 budget proposal. Nonetheless, ESA remains committed to proceeding with the 2028 launch.

## Egypt, Kenya, and Uganda successfully launch ClimCam payload to ISS

On 11 April 2026, a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket successfully launched the Climate Camera (ClimCam) payload, a collaborative initiative between Egypt, Kenya, and Uganda, to the International Space Station. Supported by UNOOSA and Airbus, the 3.5kg payload, engineered and led by the Egyptian Space Agency, has been installed on the ISS' Columbus Module for a one-year mission. Using Machine Learning algorithms, the camera is designed to monitor climate conditions across East Africa, aiming to strengthen regional early warning capacity and response to climate-related challenges.



Credit: SpaceX

## European-Chinese Smile mission scheduled for launch on 19 May 2026

The European-Chinese Smile (Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer) mission is scheduled to launch on 19 May 2026, aboard a European Vega-C rocket from French Guiana. The launch, previously postponed due to technical investigations into a Vega-C subsystem, has now been cleared to proceed. The collaborative mission between ESA and the Chinese Academy of Sciences will use advanced X-ray and ultraviolet instruments to conduct unprecedented, long-duration observations of Earth's magnetic field and aurorae. After deployment into LEO, the spacecraft will manoeuvre into a unique, highly elliptical orbit to monitor the planet's response to solar radiation.

## **IN OTHER NEWS**

### **François Jacq appointed CNES Chairman and CEO**

François Jacq has been appointed Chairman and CEO of CNES for a five-year term, after having already served as the head of the agency since May 2025. He was appointed at the Council of Ministers on Wednesday 15 April.

### **Latvia, Jordan, and Morocco join Artemis Accords**

Latvia, Jordan, and Morocco have joined the Artemis Accords, bringing the total number of members to 64. The three countries are the first to sign since NASA's Artemis II mission, with Morocco becoming the fifth African signatory.

### **ESA awards Kepler €18.6M contract for HyDRON**

ESA has awarded Kepler a €18.6M contract to lead the third element of the HyDRON optical relay network programme, involving testing interoperability across multiple optical communication systems.

### **FCC rejects requests to change MSS spectrum licensing**

The FCC has rejected requests from SpaceX, Kepler Communications, Sateliot, and AST SpaceMobile seeking market access to "Big LEO" mobile satellite services (MSS) spectrum. To ensure regulatory certainty and service continuity, the FCC maintained the exclusive operating rights of incumbents like Globalstar and Iridium.

### **U.S. Space Systems Command awards 14 companies \$1.8B**

The U.S. Space Force's Space Systems Command (SSC) has awarded 14 companies over \$1.8B in "Andromeda" contracts for the Geosynchronous Reconnaissance & Surveillance Constellation (RG-XX) satellites.

### **China launches PRSC-EO3 for Pakistan**

On 25 April 2026, a Long March 6 rocket launched Pakistan's high-resolution PRSC-EO3 satellite into orbit. This follows the launch of PRSC-EO1 and PRSC-EO2 by China for Pakistan in January 2025 and February 2026 respectively.

### **Russia postpones lunar missions to 2032-2036**

Russia has postponed the launch of three lunar missions Luna-28, Luna-29, and Luna-30 to 2032 to 2032-2036. The delay follows NASA's successful lunar flyby mission Artemis II.

## Rheinmetall expands space presence with OHB and a new Norwegian test facility

On 16 April 2026, Germany's Federal Cartel Office (Bundeskartellamt) approved a joint venture between Rheinmetall and OHB to bid for a German armed forces satellite communications contract, the third of the three constellation types outlined by Defence Minister Boris Pistorius as part of Germany's €35B space defence spending commitment through 2030. Within the venture, OHB will be responsible for the space and associated ground segments, while Rheinmetall Digital — a Rheinmetall subsidiary — will handle the user and network segments, including end-user terminals. The joint venture follows two previous Rheinmetall-led defence satellite awards: a contract for a surveillance constellation awarded to a Rheinmetall joint venture in late 2025, and the €1.7B Rheinmetall ICEYE Space Solutions contract for a reconnaissance constellation. In parallel, Rheinmetall Nordic and the municipality of Andøy, Norway, signed a Letter of Intent on 17 April to establish the Rheinmetall Integrated Process Facility (RhIPF) at Prærien Business Park in Andenes, intended to serve as a satellite test centre and contribute to the growing space and defence cluster at Andøya. The project remains subject to a final investment decision by Rheinmetall.



Credit: Rheinmetall

## Airbus contracts MDA Space for OneWeb and unveils on-orbit service platform

Airbus has contracted Canadian MDA Space to supply replacement antennas for the OneWeb constellation extension. More than 880 Ka-band steerable antennas and 440 Ku-band user replacement antennas will be built and tested at MDA Space's high-volume production facility in Montréal and integrated into Arrow telecommunications satellites manufactured by Airbus at its Toulouse facility. The award follows MDA Space's original supply of approx. 2,000 antennas for OneWeb's initial constellation deployment contracted in 2016, and forms part of Eutelsat's broader programme to replace its OneWeb fleet. MDA Space has also unveiled MDA Midnight, a new on-orbit servicing platform designed for rendezvous and proximity operations (RPO), targeting space domain awareness and defensive applications. The platform builds on MDA Space's Skymaker robotics and Aurora satellite bus technologies.

## ispace signs lunar agreement with Shimizu and with Saudi Arabia's KACST

ispace has signed two partnership agreements in April 2026, expanding its commercial and institutional network ahead of its upcoming missions. On 15 April, ispace and Shimizu Corporation, a Japanese construction and engineering firm, signed an MoU to jointly develop a basic concept and phased implementation roadmap for cislunar infrastructure, including a lunar surface data centre. The two companies will examine construction sites, facility configurations, power and thermal management, and communications systems, aiming to progress towards demonstration and commercialisation in coordination with public and private sector partners. ispace has also signed a separate strategic partnership with the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), Saudi Arabia's national laboratory and innovation park, on the sidelines of the Saudi-Japanese Ministerial Forum. The agreement targets the design, manufacture, testing, and operation of advanced lunar exploration technologies including rover systems, and examines the possibility of transporting Saudi payloads to the Moon, contributing to the development of national space capabilities in line with Saudi Vision 2030.



Credit: ispace

## Ariane 6 successfully deploys second batch of 32 Amazon LEO satellites on VA268

On 30 April 2026, Arianespace successfully launched 32 Amazon LEO satellites aboard Ariane 64 from the Guiana Space Centre, completing mission VA268 in one hour and 54 minutes across 12 separation phases. The satellites were delivered into LEO at an altitude of approximately 465 km, accommodated under a 20-metre fairing bringing the launcher's total height to approximately 62 metres. The flight was Ariane 6's seventh overall, its second in the four-booster configuration, and the second of 18 launches contracted for the deployment of the Amazon LEO constellation.

## New Glenn launches and lands but upper stage failure costs AST's satellite

Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket lifted off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station on 19 April 2026 carrying BlueBird 7, an upgraded broadband satellite for AST SpaceMobile, in the vehicle's third flight and first commercial customer mission. While the first-stage booster was successfully recovered, marking the first booster reuse for the New Glenn programme, the upper stage suffered an anomaly during its second burn: one of the BE-3U engines failed to produce sufficient thrust, placing the satellite into a lower orbit than planned. AST SpaceMobile confirmed that BlueBird 7, though successfully separated and powered on, cannot sustain operations from the lower altitude using its onboard thruster technology and will be de-orbited. The FAA has opened a mishap investigation and grounded New Glenn pending confirmation that no aspect of the anomaly affects public safety.



Credit: NSF

## GomSpace and Ukraine's Stetman establish UASAT satcom joint venture

Danish satellite manufacturer GomSpace and Ukrainian company Stetman have signed an agreement to establish UASAT, a joint venture based in Ukraine focused on developing sovereign satellite communications capabilities for dual-use applications. UASAT's first satellite is planned for launch in autumn 2026, with the mission intended to provide operational feedback to inform subsequent phases of the programme's development roadmap. GomSpace is participating through its National & Defence Solutions business unit, which targets sovereign space capabilities for national authorities. The signing took place in the presence of representatives from the European Commission's DG for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST), the European Investment Bank, and the Ukrainian government.

## Eutelsat expands in Americas and Africa and retires GEO satellite

Eutelsat has signed a series of new commercial agreements in April 2026, including broadcast and broadband deals with Co-op Cable in the Caribbeans, a renewal with Mexican content distributor PCTV, and a new broadcast agreement with Cadena Tres — Mexico's third-largest national television network — consolidating Eutelsat 117 West A as the primary video neighbourhood for Mexican broadcasters. In Africa, the company also partnered with MTN Côte d'Ivoire to deliver satellite broadband across the country using its EUTELSAT KONNECT high-throughput satellite, targeting consumer, enterprise, and underserved rural communities. Eutelsat has also retired its 139 West A GEO satellite after 22 years of service, transferring it to a graveyard orbit.



Credit: Eutelsat

## France's Exotrail partners with Korean Air on OTV satellite transport services

French space mobility company Exotrail has signed an MoU with Korean Air Lines in Seoul to cooperate on orbit transfer vehicle (OTV) services, covering LEO satellite transport, multi-orbit deployment, payload hosting, and satellite life extension. The partnership targets demand from defence-oriented small satellite constellations and commercial operators, with Exotrail seeking a strategic foothold in Asia and Korean Air contributing space system manufacturing and mission control capabilities.



Credit: Korean Air

## China's Space Pioneer's Tianlong-3 commercial rocket fails on debut launch

Chinese commercial launch company Space Pioneer's Tianlong-3 rocket failed on its debut flight on 3 April 2026, lifting off from the Dongfeng Commercial Aerospace Innovation Test Zone at Jiuquan before suffering an anomaly during ascent. The specific cause remains under investigation, and the company did not disclose whether any payloads were aboard. Tianlong is a 72-metre, two-stage kerosene-liquid oxygen vehicle designed for partial reusability and capable of delivering between 17,000 and 22,000 kg to LEO, positioning it as a Falcon 9-class competitor. The debut failure follows a near-catastrophic incident in June 2024, when a static fire test saw the first stage unintentionally lift off and explode on a nearby hillside, prompting a regulatory review and a full redesign of the stage.

## KSAT and Kongsberg NanoAvionics launch integrated smallsat mission services

Kongsberg Satellite Services (KSAT) and Kongsberg NanoAvionics have announced a strategic partnership to deliver end-to-end smallsat mission services, combining NanoAvionics' satellite platforms with KSAT's global ground network and Integrated Mission Services offering, covering spacecraft development, launch access, on-orbit operations, data downlink, and real-time tasking for both single satellites and constellations. KSAT already manages several NanoAvionics customer satellites, and the partnership formalises this cooperation into a unified commercial offering targeting commercial and governmental operators. Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace (KDA) was also selected for seven projects under the European Commission's 2025 European Defence Fund (EDF) programme, including for SPIDER2, a space-based intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance constellation.

## TEC signs separation system agreement with Spain's OCCAM Space

The Exploration Company signed an MoU with Spanish company OCCAM Space on 13 April 2026 to develop a four-metre variant of OCCAM's KISS-XL clampband separation system for the Nyx cargo capsule, with a first demonstration mission to the ISS targeted for 2028 under ESA's LEO Cargo Return Services initiative. The agreement remains non-binding, pending completion of the technical and programmatic assessment phase.



Credit: The Exploration Company

## **IN OTHER NEWS**

### **RFA targets July 2026 window for inaugural flight from Scotland**

Rocket Factory Augsburg has submitted an application for the marine licence required for Test Flight 1 from SaxaVord Spaceport in Scotland, specifying a launch window opening no earlier than 1 July 2026.

### **Spaceflux selected for Canadian Armed Forces programme**

London-based Spaceflux was selected by Canadian MDA Space to supply optical systems and its Cortex AI platform for Canada's Surveillance of Space 2 programme, covering three new ground-based telescope observatories in Alberta, Manitoba, and New Brunswick, to be delivered by 2028 for the Canadian Armed Forces.

### **SSC Space and Kuva Space sign Nordic cooperation agreement**

SSC Space and Finnish hyperspectral EO start-up Kuva Space have signed a Letter of Intent to explore collaboration across ground segment services, mission development, and launch support from Esrange Space Center, targeting commercial, institutional, and security-related opportunities in the Nordic region.

### **T-Mobile launches business broadband service with Starlink**

T-Mobile has launched Super Broadband, a managed connectivity service for business customers combining 5G and Starlink, with real-time traffic orchestration between the two networks, building on the company's existing T-Satellite direct-to-cell service launched in summer 2025.

### **Redwire opens new office to support UK defence programmes**

Redwire has opened a London office to support current and future UK Ministry of Defence programmes, including the Tiquila programme and its Stalker Eagle uncrewed aerial vehicle platforms, adding to existing European offices in Luxembourg, Riga, Warsaw, and Kruikebe.

## True Anomaly raises \$600 million in Series D to scale space superiority capabilities

U.S. company True Anomaly has secured **\$600 million in a Series D round** co-led by Eclipse and Riot Ventures, with participation from Paradigm, Atreides, G Squared, The Private Shares Fund and VanEck, alongside other investors. True Anomaly also raised \$50 million in debt financing from Stifel Bank.



*Credit: True Anomaly*

The capital will be directed towards the implementation of the company’s planned missions across LEO and GEO in the next 18 months: those include the delivery of the “Jackal” autonomous orbital vehicle to the U.S. Space Force and the development of the “Mosaic” software platform, designed for Space Domain Awareness applications. In addition to that, the company plans to use the funding to scale its headcount from 250 to over 500 by year-end 2026.

## Xoople closes €110 million in Series B to develop data infrastructure platform

Spanish data infrastructure company Xoople has raised **€110 million in a Series B round** led by Nazca Capital, with participation from MCH, the Centre for Technological Development and Innovation of the Spanish government, Buenavista Equity Partners, and Endeavor Catalyst. The capital will be directed towards the commercialisation of Xoople's Earth data platform, a Digital Twin of Earth capable of providing a record of physical changes on the planet through Artificial Intelligence and agentic systems with real-time world data. The applications for this software span from supply chain optimisation, infrastructure monitoring, agricultural forecasting, to insurance risk modelling and disaster response.

## Starfish Space raises \$100 million in Series B for satellite servicing vehicle

U.S. company Starfish Space has secured over **\$100 million in a Series B round led** by Point72 Ventures and co-led by Activate Capital and Shield Capital, among other investors. The company will use the capital to execute contracted missions for its satellite servicing vehicle “Otter” and to scale its business line by expanding its engineering team. The “Otter” satellite servicing vehicle integrates an autonomous space navigation system, which makes it capable of docking to GEO and LEO satellites in order to perform life extension mission or end-of-life disposal services.



*Credit: Starfish Space*

## CloudFerro secures €75 million in debt financing for Cloud and EO data services

Polish company CloudFerro has secured **€75 million in debt financing** from mBank and Santander Bank Polska. The company will direct the capital towards the expansion of its data-centres infrastructure across Europe in order to scale its cloud capacity and fund R&D for Earth Observation AI-based analysis services.

CloudFerro specialises in secure cloud computing services for Earth Observation data by managing platforms for their access and elaboration such as “CREODIAS”. This platform is part of the EU’s “Copernicus Data Space Ecosystem”, which integrates comprehensive EO data archives from the Copernicus program for European scientific, institutional, and commercial users. The “CREODIAS” cloud-based environment, enables the operational use of EO data in order to perform advanced analysis and development of downstream applications.

## Yunyao Aerospace completes a ¥500 million “B+” round to scale production

Chinese company Yunyao Aerospace Accelerate (also known as Tianjin Yunyao Aerospace Technology) has completed a **“Series B+” financing round, raising ¥500 million (approx. €64 million)**. The round saw the participation by Tianjin Port Free Trade Zone Fund, Yuekai Capital, Jiangsu Jianyin Investment and Hongfu Assets, among other investors. Yunyao Aerospace will use the funding to accelerate the manufacturing and deployment of its multi-payload **“Yunyao Meteorological Constellation”**, a planned commercial meteorological constellation, comprised of 90 satellites capable of providing real-time global weather forecasting for countries part of the Belt and Road initiative. Other applications of the new injection will include strengthening the R&D on commercial SAR payloads and on the application of meteorological data for navigation and energy production forecasting.

## Turion Space raises \$75 million Series B for orbital intelligence and mobility

The U.S.-based Space Domain Awareness (SDA) company Turion Space has raised approx. **\$75 million in a Series B round** led by Washington Harbour Partners. The capital will be directed towards scaling spacecraft production capacity from 8 to 40 vehicles per year, leading to the expansion of its DROID satellite fleet across LEO and GEO orbits.



*Credit: Turion Space*

Turion Space’s DROID spacecrafts are designed to perform in-orbit SDA operations such as Earth and Non-Earth Imaging, debris removal and satellite servicing. At the same time, Turion Space is also developing its in-house Starfire software for satellite operations autonomy, precise navigation and collision avoidance.

## Portal Space Systems raises \$50 million Series A for trans-orbital manoeuvring



*Credit: Portal Space Systems*

U.S. startup Portal Space Systems has raised **\$50 million in a Series A round** co-led by Geodesic Capital and Mach33, with participation from Booz Allen Ventures, ARK Invest, AlleyCorp and FUSE.

With the capital, the company aims to scale its manufacturing capabilities and advance the development of its “Starburst” compact, ESPA-class satellite bus designed for rapid orbital repositioning and proximity operations in LEO. The company is also developing the “Supernova” trans-orbital vehicle, designed to perform high-energy transfers between Earth and cislunar orbits.

## UNIVITY raises €27 million Series A for VLEO 5G connectivity demonstration

French company UNIVITY has raised **€27 million in a Series A round** backed by Blast Club and Expansion Venture Capital, with additional support from the Deep Tech fund managed by Bpifrance. The company is developing VLEO satellite-based 5G connectivity systems, to be interoperable with existing terrestrial mobile networks in order to reduce latency. UNIVITY will use the funding to expand its workforce, execute uniShape, a two-satellite VLEO demonstration mission to validate its end-to-end hardware and software capabilities. The mission is intended to support the commercial deployment of UNIVITY’s planned “uniSky” constellation from 2028.

## **IN OTHER NEWS**

### **PLD Space closes €30 million debt financing for MIURA 5 rocket**

Spanish launch company PLD Space has signed a €30 million venture debt loan with the European Investment Bank (EIB), guaranteed by InvestEU, in support of the final development stage of its MIURA 5 small satellite launcher. This marks the EIB's first direct investment in a European small satellite launch vehicle.

### **ATMOS Space Cargo raises €25.7 million for orbital return vehicles**

German orbital transport and re-entry vehicle developer ATMOS Space Cargo (from here ATMOS) has closed a €25.7 million Series A round co-led by Balnord and Expansion, with participation from Keexn Defence and Security and the European Innovation Council (EIC), among other investors. ATMOS will utilize the funding to deploy its initial fleet of PHOENIX 2 orbital transfer and return vehicles, launch ATMOS WORKS – a dedicated business unit specialised in in-orbit operations and to develop PHOENIX 3, the company's next-generation orbital return vehicle.

### **Archangel Lightworks secures £10 million for ground connectivity**

UK laser communications company Archangel Lightworks has closed a £10 million (approx. €12 million) Series A round led by Santander Alternative Investments, with participation from the National Security Strategic Investment Fund (NSSIF) among other investors. The company will utilize the capital to accelerate the commercialisation of the company's TERRA-M deployable dual-use optical ground station.

### **Citra Space raises \$15 million in Series A for object identification**

U.S. company Citra Space has secured \$15 million in a Series A round led by Washington Harbour Partners, with participation from Industrious Ventures, Reliable Properties, Scout VC, Squadra Ventures, Alumni Ventures, and Flex Capital. The new capital injection will be utilized towards the development and deployment of Citra's space object identification platform across commercial and government customers.

### **Rhea Space Activity raises \$6 million for non-GPS navigation**

U.S. company Rhea Space Activity has secured approximately \$6 million in a Series A round with participation from BG Space Tech Investors and Iron Prairie Ventures among others. The capital will be directed towards accelerating the deployment of the company's AutoNav optical navigation software for operations in GPS-denied and contested environments

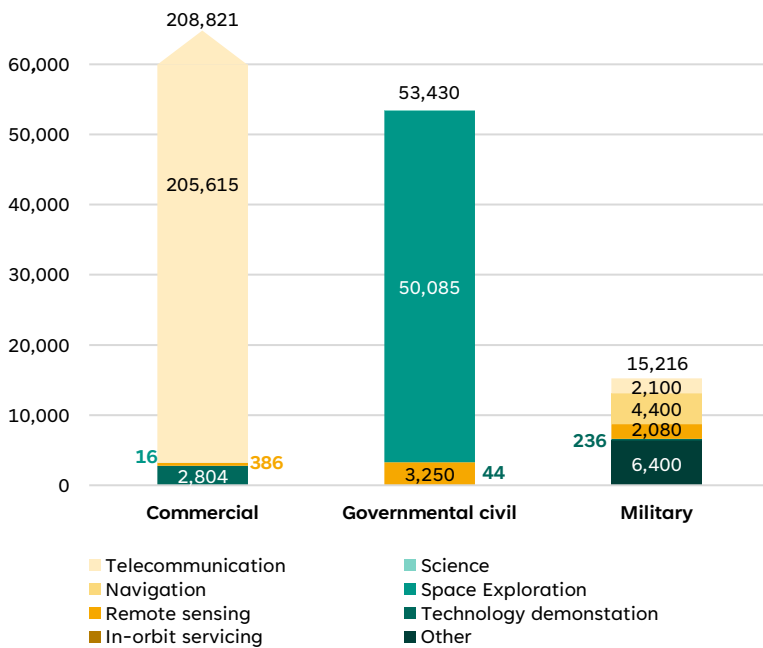
# LAUNCHES & PAYLOADS – APR 2026

Launch provider's region	USA	China	Europe	Russia	India	Japan	Others (NZ)	Total
Number of launches	17	8	1	4	0	0	1	31
Number of spacecrafts launched	306	39	32	14	0	0	9	400
Mass launched (in kg)	225,969	15,336	18,272	17,860	0	0	30	277,467

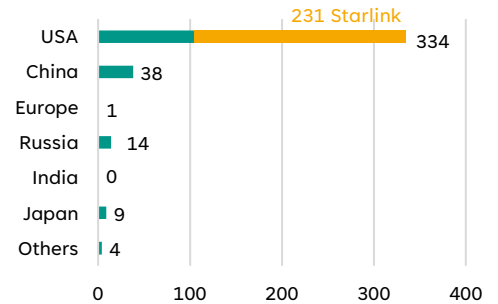
**Top launch service providers of the month**

- 1 SpaceX (12)
- 2 CASC (6)
- 3 Russian Aerospace Forces (3)

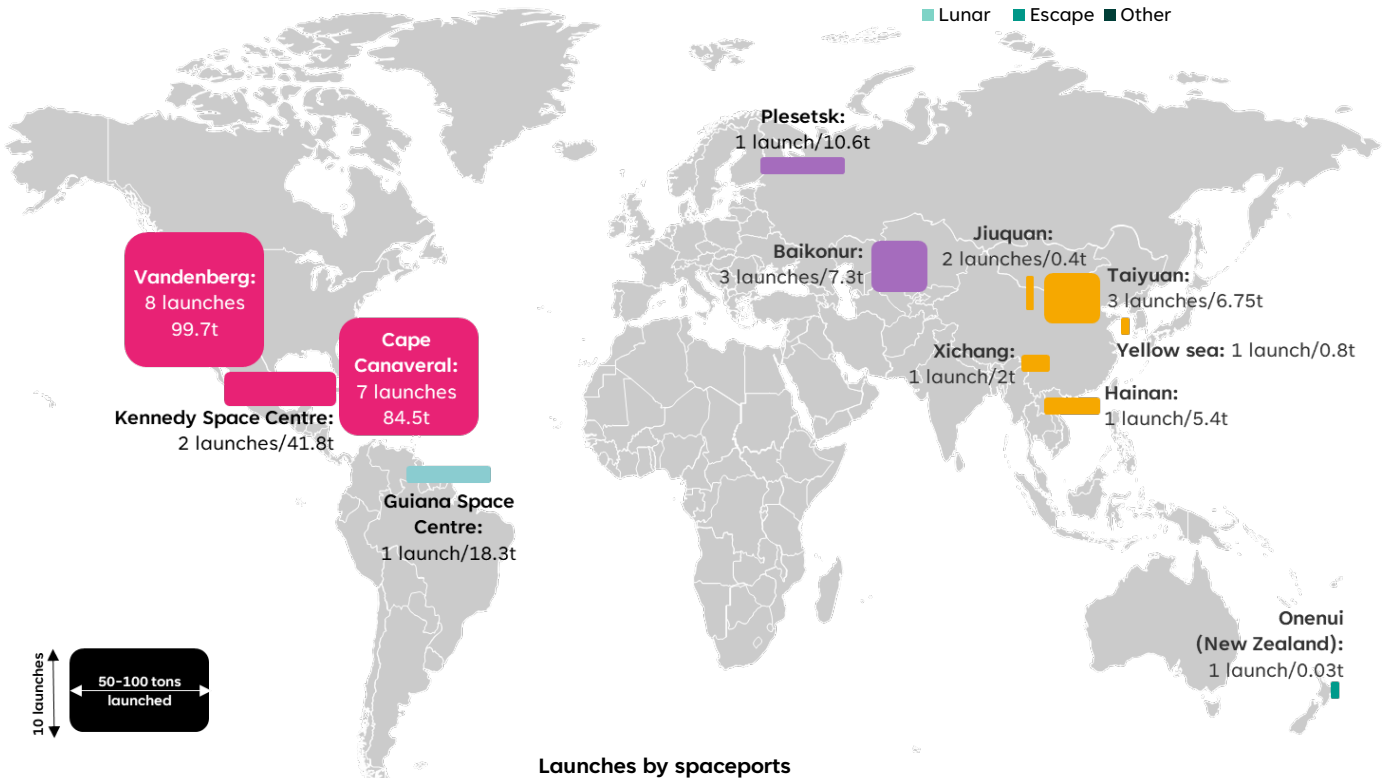
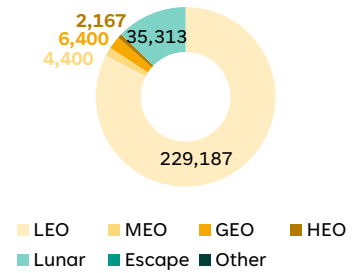
Mass launched (in kg) by market and by mission



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 through the [ESPI Launch Dashboard](#).

# ESPI

## Insights

### EDITORIAL TEAM

---

#### EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT

Emily Wallis

#### POLICY & PROGRAMMES

Emily Wallis  
Michele d'Emilia

#### INDUSTRY & BUSINESS

Emily Wallis  
Michele d'Emilia

#### INVESTMENT & FINANCE

João Falcão Serra  
Ieva Kalnina  
Virginio Dotto

#### LAUNCHES & PAYLOADS

Elizaveta Shashkova