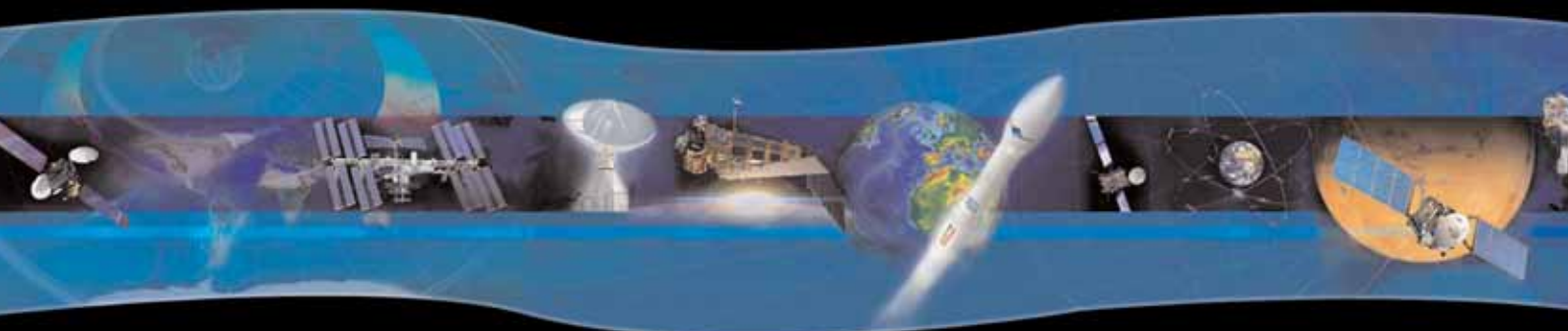




The European Space Agency



The European Space Agency is an intergovernmental organisation, in charge of research and development in the space field and its applications for exclusively peaceful purposes.

ESA has 17 Member States: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom. Canada takes part in some project under a co-operation agreement.

ESA has the task to carry out a European space plan, to co-ordinate European space activities with national programmes and to guarantee the competitiveness of the industrial sector at a worldwide level.

ESA's involvement spans the field of space science, Earth Observations, telecommunications and satellite navigation (Galileo Programme), space segment technologies including orbital stations and platforms. Ground infrastructures and space transportation systems comprise the Ariane 5 Plus Programme, the technological programme for the next launcher and Vega, the small launcher Programme.

One of the main ESA Programme is in Telecommunication: ESA Telecom is responsible for co-ordinating, shaping and supporting European and Canadian innovation in satellite communications. In order to fill this role, ESA works closely with many organisations, particularly with business and industry from Member States, both those involved directly in satellite communications and those in the broader fields of telecommunications and IT. In addition ESA takes part to the realisation of the International Space Station; it develops a basic research in microgravity and has its own European crew of astronauts.

ESRIN is ESA's establishment in Italy, and it's located in Frascati, near Rome. ESRIN is responsible for ESA's Earth Observation data exploitation, by managing more than 22 international Earth Observation satellites. It is also in charge of all the agency's corporate informatics applications and associated infrastructures.