

Press Release

SPACE SYSTEMS

Airbus ships first high-power all-electric EUTELSAT 172B satellite to Kourou for Eutelsat

All-electric propulsion for orbit-raising and on-station manoeuvres inaugurates significant mass savings on this class of mission

Toulouse, 15/03/2017 – EUTELSAT 172B, the first high power all-electric telecommunications satellite, is now ready for shipment on 20 March from the Airbus satellite assembly facility in Toulouse to Kourou, French Guiana for Eutelsat, one of the world's leading satellite operators. The satellite will be launched into orbit on an Ariane 5 in April, and will provide enhanced telecommunications, in-flight broadband and broadcast services for the Asia-Pacific region.

“We are the first company to demonstrate full electric propulsion for satellites of this size and capacity,” said Nicolas Chamussy, Head of Space Systems at Airbus. “With this spacecraft we are clearly setting a new benchmark - enabling powerful and complex satellites to be launched in the most cost efficient manner.”

EUTELSAT 172B combines electric power of 13 kW with a launch weight of only 3,500 kg. It hosts three distinct payloads that will strengthen Eutelsat's capabilities across Asia-Pacific markets: a C-band payload, a regular Ku-band payload and a high throughput Ku-band payload designed for in-flight connectivity along Pacific air corridors. The satellite also incorporates other state-of-the-art features, in particular the flexibility to dynamically distribute power between the 11 elliptical beams in the high throughput payload.

"Using electric propulsion for initial orbit raising and all on-station manoeuvres has led to a substantial weight reduction, enabling the satellite to be launched in the Ariane 5 lower position and offering more competitive launch costs," said Arnaud de Rosnay, Head of Telecommunications Satellites at Airbus.

Underpinning EUTELSAT 172B is Airbus' highly reliable Eurostar E3000 platform in its latest EOR (Electric Orbit Raising) evolution.

Innovative deployable robotic arms will be used to orientate the satellite's electric propulsion thrusters and to control thrust direction and attitude as needed during the different phases of the mission. A proprietary network of ground stations around the world will allow Airbus engineers to control orbit raising operations until the satellite reaches geostationary orbit.

The development of Airbus' Eurostar all electric platform has been supported by ESA and space agencies of European countries, in particular in France by CNES in the framework of the PIA programme (Plan d'Investissements d'Avenir).

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About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2016, it generated revenues of € 67 billion and employed a workforce of around 134,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners from 100 to more than 600 seats. Airbus is also a European leader providing tanker, combat, transport and mission aircraft, as well as Europe's number one space enterprise and the world's second largest space business. In helicopters, Airbus provides the most efficient civil and military rotorcraft solutions worldwide.

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