AVIO TO LAUNCH COPERNICUS SENTINEL-3C AND FLEX SATELLITES ON SEPTEMBER 14th 2026 ON VEGA C

Colleferro (Rome), 30 July 2026 - On September 14th at 10.21 PM Kourou time (01.21 UTC; 03.21 AM CEST on September 15th), Avio will launch two Earth observation satellites: the Sentinel-3C of the Copernicus programme for the European Commission and the FLEX Earth Explorer for the European Space Agency (ESA). The mission, designated "VV30", will be carried out by a Vega C launcher, the second operated by Avio, lifting off from the European Spaceport in French Guiana.

The satellites will be released into Sun-Synchronous Orbit at an altitude of about 820 km with an inclination of 98.6°. The duration of the launch (from lift-off to separation of the last satellite) is 116 minutes.

Copernicus Sentinel-3C is the third satellite of the Sentinel-3 mission, dedicated to monitoring the health of our planet by observing oceans, land, ice and the atmosphere from space. Once in its routine phase, the mission will be jointly managed by ESA and EUMETSAT, on behalf of the European Commission, with the satellite operations performed by EUMETSAT. It provides essential data for climate monitoring, weather forecasting, environmental protection and disaster response. The satellite has a mass of 1,143 kg.

FLEX is the eighth Earth Explorer mission developed by ESA's FutureEO programme. It is designed to monitor the health of vegetation from space by detecting the faint fluorescence emitted by plants during photosynthesis, an otherwise invisible signal linked to plant activity. This data will support insights into agricultural productivity and provides a unique way to assess plant health and better understand how photosynthesis influences the carbon and water cycles. The satellite weighs 397 kg.

The FLEX and Copernicus Sentinel-3C satellites were both built by Thales Alenia Space, as the prime contractor, with the support of several European companies for the development of the instruments.

With this launch, Avio reaffirms its key role in supporting the European Copernicus Programme and ESA's earth observation and scientific missions.

VV30 launch at a glance

- Second Vega C flight operated by Avio;
- Second Vega C launch in 2026;
- Fifth Sentinel satellite deployed by Vega launchers family;
- Third ESA scientific mission placed into orbit by Vega C;
- Eighth Vega C flight overall.

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Avio is a leading international group engaged in the manufacturing and development of space launchers and solid, liquid and cryogenic propulsion systems. The experience and know-how built up over more than 50 years puts Avio at the cutting-edge of the space launcher sector and defense program. Avio is present in Italy, France, United States and French Guiana, employing more than 1,500 highly qualified personnel. Avio is the prime contractor for the Vega program and a sub-contractor for the Ariane program, as well as a leading solid rocket motor subcontractor for the design and manufacturing of major European tactical missile programs.

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