

Press release

SPACE SYSTEMS

New Airbus Netherlands facility for production of space technology officially opened by Dutch Prime Minister Rutte

Smart manufacturing process for industrialised production of engine frames for Ariane 6

Oegstgeest, 8 November 2018 - Today, Dutch Prime Minister Rutte officially opened the new production facility of Airbus Defence and Space Netherlands in Oegstgeest. In the 5,000 sqm smart factory, which is equipped with industry 4.0 capabilities, the Leiden-based site of Airbus develops, builds, tests and qualifies the engine frames for the lower and upper propulsion module of the Ariane 6. "The new production facility of Airbus is relevant, not only for the development of space, but also for employment and innovation in the Netherlands," Prime Minister Rutte emphasised in his speech during the celebratory opening event.

Challenging

ArianeGroup, which has the design authority and industrial lead for the Ariane 6 launcher development and operation on behalf of the European Space Agency (ESA), appointed Airbus Netherlands partner for the development and production of the Ariane 6 Vulcain Aft Bay (VUAB) and the Vinci Thrust Frame (VITF) in June 2017. It led to the decision to build a dedicated industry 4.0 facility for the development and production of the Ariane 6 and also Vega-C structures. "Within 10 months, our state-of-the-art assembly facility has been built and equipped with innovative solutions, like a robotised production line and visualisation tools," says Arnaud de Jong, managing director of Airbus Netherlands, "The smart factory is now fully ready to fulfil its challenging task and today's opening is the crowning glory of a huge team effort. An effort which illustrates the clear mind-set to produce the new Ariane 6 engine frames in the most cost- and time-efficient way."



Optimise logistics and assembly

To address the challenging commercial set-up of the European Ariane 6 programme, the Dutch space company Airbus chose a development and industrialisation approach that strikes a balance between

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heritage and the needed innovative green fields approach. This led to two key decisions to optimise the logistics and the assembly line:

- The new site has a direct connection to the Rotterdam sea port, enabling safe and rapid transport of the large VUAB structure (5.4m diameter, 5.2m high) to ArianeGroup in Les Mureaux, France, for final assembly with the Ariane 6 launcher. The VITF engine frame will be transported to Bremen by road. Final stop for both engine frames is the European launch site Kourou in French Guyana.
- The extended enterprise philosophy used by ArianeGroup towards its first tier partners was translated by Airbus Netherlands to its own supply chain. To gain maximum benefit, the main suppliers (and their machining facilities) are being integrated in the dedicated Ariane 6 facility, working as a shop-in-shop.

Industry 4.0

The facility is equipped with 'Industry 4.0' robotisation and automation capabilities, in order to be prepared for the anticipated production rates up to 24 engine frames (12 VUAB's and 12 VITF's) per year. Key elements of the industrialisation approach are:

- Decision to have engineering and production go hand-in-hand;
- Handling and assembly jig & tool concept based on a "flow process" instead of rigid and fixed-placed elements;
- Implementation of smart manufacturing principles, including factory automation, implementation of a paperless factory and the application of lean flow principles.

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Press contacts

Airbus DS NL, Hella van Leeuwen, h.van.leeuwen@airbusDS.nl, +31(0)71-5245126 +31(0)6-37002864

About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2017, 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.

About Airbus Defence and Space Netherlands

Airbus Defence and Space Netherlands B.V. is a supplier of high-tech products and services for the international aerospace industry. Since its founding in 1968, the company contributes to noteworthy space programs and has build-up broad expertise in space technology in areas such as Earth observation, telecommunications and science. The portfolio of Airbus Defence and Space Netherlands B.V. includes solar arrays, launcher structures and instruments & systems. The Leiden-based company employs more than 250 experienced professionals.