

Sentinel-2B satellite launch set for 7 March!



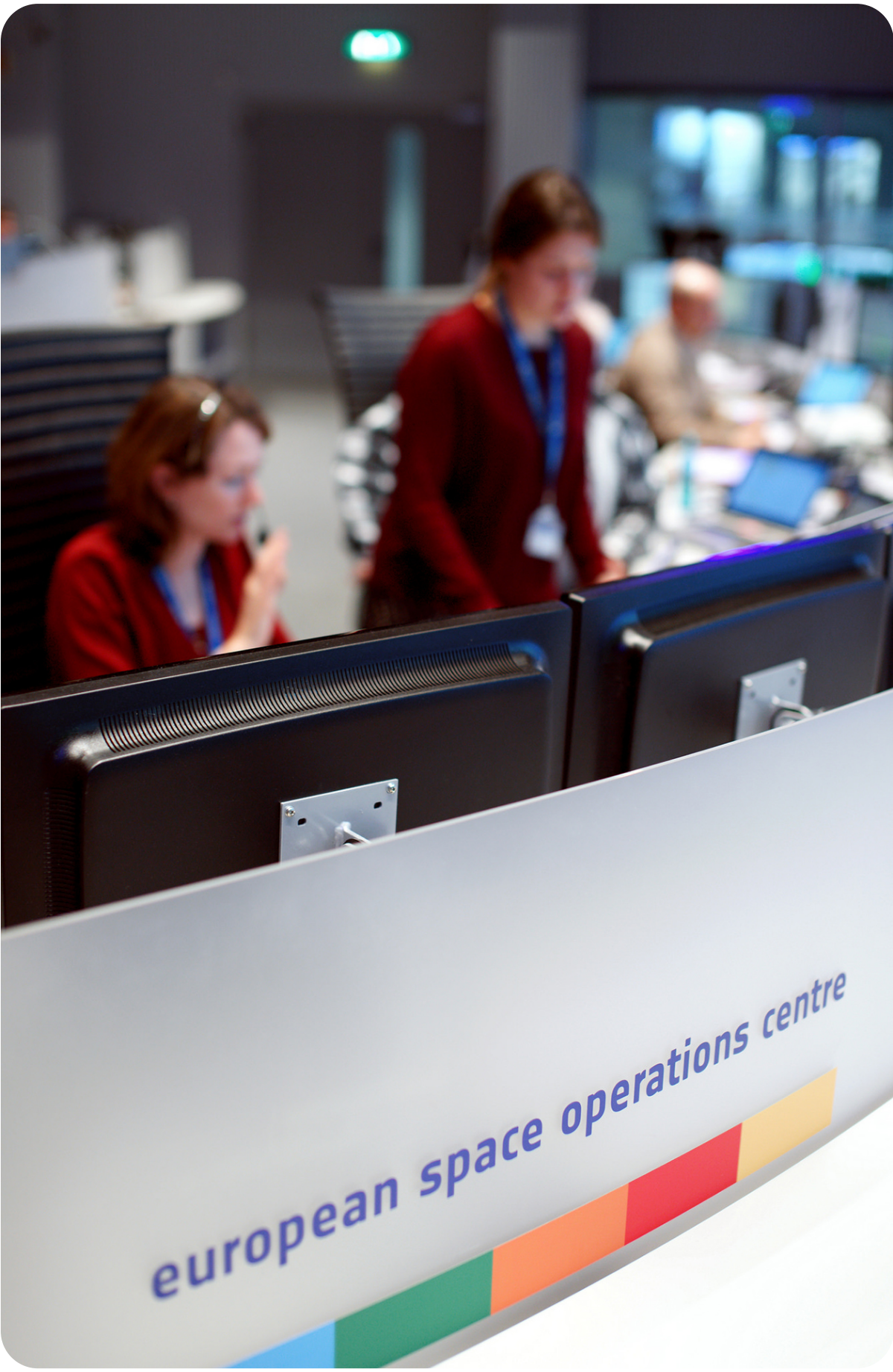
Sentinel-2B will soon be orbiting planet Earth

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Final preparations are now underway for the launch of an ESA satellite called Sentinel-2B. Due for liftoff on 7 March, Sentinel-2B will be carried into orbit by a Vega rocket from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. The launch will be watched very closely by teams at ESA's mission control centre in Darmstadt, Germany.

Already in orbit is Sentinel-2B's twin satellite, Sentinel-2A. Working together, their mission is to watch most of Earth's land, large islands, lakes, and water along the coast. This will help people see how healthy plant-life is; watch large areas of forest; track pollution levels; and help people in disaster areas, such as those near erupting volcanoes and dangerous floods.



Mission specialists have been rehearsing the launch

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When asked about the launch, operations manager Franco Marchese explained, "About an hour after liftoff, we'll receive the satellite's first signals just as it separates from the rocket's upper stage. It will then unfold its solar panel and orient itself in space. For us, this marks the start of the crucial early orbit phase when we work around the clock to establish a two-way data link, and begin switching on and verifying the critical systems."

The first three days after launch are particularly important, as this is when Sentinel-2B's camera will be readied to take images, and the satellite itself will be tested so that it can move in space.

Although other Sentinel satellites have been sent into space before, ESA engineers are leaving nothing to chance. They have been rehearsing the launch for months. We all hope that the launch will be a success, and that soon there will be another Sentinel satellite around Earth!

Cool fact: In April 2014, satellite Sentinel-1A had to dodge some space junk just hours after launch!

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