

First Member Of Galileo Satellite Family To Be Launched 26 December

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Galileo, Europe's global navigation satellite system, will start becoming concrete reality the day after Christmas with the launch of Galileo In-Orbit Validation Element GIOVE-A on top of a Soyuz-Fregat rocket from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

The complete constellation of 30 satellites, specifically designed for civil use, will eventually offer European citizens and institutional users state-of-the-art global positioning and timing services with outstanding accuracy, availability, integrity and a guaranteed signal. Galileo is a joint

initiative being taken by the European Commission and ESA.

The Soyuz rocket, operated by Starsem, the Euro-Russian company in charge of its marketing, is scheduled to lift off at 06:19 CET. The satellite will be released from the Fregat upper stage at 10:01 following a long ballistic cruise to reach its operational orbit.

Only at 13:51 will ground controllers in Guildford (UK) at Surrey Satellite Technology – the company in charge of building and operating GIOVE-A - have completed their job and placed the satellite in its operational Medium Earth Orbit slot at an altitude of 23,222 km.

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