

ESA announces new Earth Explorer missions

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The European Space Agency announced Tuesday the shortlist of new Earth Explorer mission proposals within its Living Planet Program.

The selection is part of a process that will eventually lead to the launch of the fourth Earth Explorer Core mission during the first half of the next decade.

ESA officials said the six missions cover a range of environmental issues with the aim of furthering the understanding of the Earth system and changing climate.

The newly selected missions will include ones to monitor air quality and long-range transport of air pollutants; further understanding of processes that link trace gases, radiation, chemistry and climate in the atmosphere; observe global photosynthesis through the measurement of fluorescence; improve our understanding of the global carbon cycle and regional carbon dioxide fluxes; and make detailed observations of key snow, ice and water cycle characteristics.

The ESA, which has headquarters in Paris, said the first Earth Explorer Core Missions were selected in 1999, with launch expected next year.

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