

Italian physicist honoured by European space truck

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This picture, released by the European Space Agency in 2008, shows ESA's Jules Verne Automated Transfer Vehicle. Europe's third space freighter will be named after Italian physicist Edoardo Amaldi, the ESA said on Tuesday.

Europe's third space freighter will be named after Italian physicist Edoardo Amaldi, the European Space Agency (ESA) said on Tuesday.

Amaldi was one of a group of young scientists, led by Enrico Fermi, which discovered "slow neutrons" in the 1930s, paving the way to the first nuclear reactor.

He later contributed to research in [cosmic rays](#), [particle physics](#) and gravitational waves.

ESA's first automated transfer vehicle (ATV), named after the French

forerunner of science fiction, Jules Verne, was launched in 2008.

The second, honouring the German astronomer Johannes Kepler, is to be hoisted aloft later this year.

The ATV is an unmanned craft designed to dock automatically with the [International Space Station](#) (ISS), bringing six and a half tonnes of food, water, supplies and equipment and serving as temporary quarters for six months.

In its present design, the ATV is sent on a one-way trip, decoupling from the ISS at the end of its mission before being destroyed by burnup in Earth's atmosphere.

ESA is exploring whether the vehicle can be adapted to bring back cargo and experiments or even astronauts.

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