

# ESA's Fifth ATV named after Georges Lemaître

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Backdropped by a blanket of clouds, ESA's Automated Transfer Vehicle Jules Verne (lower left) departs from the International Space Station. The ATV undocked from the aft port of the Zvezda module at 21:29 GMT on 5 September 2008 and was placed in a parking orbit for three weeks, scheduled to be deorbited on 29 September when lighting conditions are correct for ESA imaging of reentry. Credits: NASA

ESA's Automated Transfer Vehicles (ATVs) are an essential contribution by Europe to running the International Space Station. Naming the fifth after Belgian scientist Georges Lemaître continues the tradition of drawing on great European visionaries to reflect Europe's deep roots in science, technology and culture.

The first [Automated Transfer Vehicle](#) (ATV), which made a flawless flight in 2008, was named after French science fiction writer Jules

Verne.

It was followed in 2011 by ATV-2, named in honour of German mathematician and astronomer Johannes Kepler.

It will be the turn of the third ATV, named after the Italian physicist and space pioneer Edoardo Amaldi, to head towards the [Space Station](#) on 9 March.

ATV-4, aiming for launch in early 2013, carries the name of Albert Einstein.

Naming the last vehicle of the family, ATV-5, after Belgian physicist Georges Lemaître, father of the Big Bang theory, continues this approach.



Automated Transfer Vehicle Edoardo Amaldi is moved to the Ariane integration building in Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. From there it will be loaded onto an Ariane 5 rocket for launch in March 2012. ESA's third automated space freighter will carry about two tonnes of dry cargo, 285 kg of water and more than three tonnes of propellants to the International Space Station. Credits: ESA/CNES/Arianespace/Optique Video du CSG - P.Baudon

The name, proposed by Belgium's delegation to ESA, was endorsed on 14–15 February by the ESA Programme Board responsible for Space Station matters during a meeting at ESA Headquarters in Paris.

On that occasion, ESA Director General Jean-Jacques Dordain said: “Belgium has been a key participant in the European space adventure since its very beginning.

“Its contribution to ESA programmes and activities in general, and to the International Space Station in particular, has been a success for both Belgium and ESA.

“By naming ATV-5 after Georges Lemaître, we honour a world-class Belgian scientist who was instrumental in expanding our knowledge of the origins of the Universe.”

The Belgian Minister responsible for Space, Paul Magnette, noted: “I am extremely happy that the great Belgian scientist George Lemaître, born in my hometown, is honoured in this way.

“This shows that his work and achievements have not been forgotten and are still relevant so many decades on.

“Clearly, Belgium's involvement in space in Europe has deep roots and is based on a long tradition.

“The ATV “Georges Lemaître” will carry supplies to the ISS, allowing today's – equally excellent – Belgian researchers to carry out experiments and research on the ISS, thus pushing the boundaries of human knowledge forward in the tradition of Georges Lemaître.”

The Space Station depends on regular deliveries of experiment equipment and spare parts, as well as food, air and water for its crew.

Since 2008, every year and a half, an ATV has delivered about 6 tonnes of cargo some 400 km above Earth.

After launch on an Ariane 5 from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana, ATV automatically navigates to a precision docking with the Station's Russian Zvezda module.

It remains attached to the ISS for up to six months before reentering the atmosphere and deliberately burning up together with several tonnes of Station waste.

Provided by European Space Agency

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