

Ayguesvives, March 3rd 2022**PRESS RELEASE**

SPACE

CNIM Air Space and CNES : a manoeuvring balloon to explore the stratosphere

CNES entrusted CNIM Air Space with the development of an innovative stratospheric balloon: the manoeuvring balloon. The contract was signed within the framework of "France Relance", the French government's recovery plan. It enhances the collaboration between CNIM Air Space and CNES in the field of stratospheric balloons.

CNIM Air Space, a French expert in "lighter than air" technologies, and CNES, the French Space Agency, which is internationally recognized for its expertise in stratospheric balloons, have recently signed a new contract within the framework of the space program of "France Relance", the French government's recovery plan. Under this contract, CNIM Air Space will develop, with the support from CNES, a new kind of stratospheric balloon: the manoeuvring stratospheric balloon. The contract includes the development and manufacturing of a demonstrator, which will be tested on CNES's site at Aire sur l'Adour by mid-2023.

The manoeuvring stratospheric balloon will be used by CNES for its scientific campaigns, such as climate study campaigns. Other missions, such as surveillance or communication, have already been considered to meet the current need to facilitate access to Space, a strategic area both economic and geopolitical.



Pressurized stratospheric balloon at launch ©CNES

The manoeuvring stratospheric balloon will be an evolution of the pressurized stratospheric balloon used by CNES since the beginning of the 2000s. With an operating altitude between 18 km and 20 km, they are able to fly during several months. However, their flight path is currently imposed by stratospheric winds. The innovations developed by CNIM Air Space for the manoeuvring stratospheric balloon will make it possible to control the balloons' flight path from the ground.

"Controlling the stratospheric balloons' flight path has several advantages", explains Vincent Dubourg, deputy director of balloon activities at CNES. "It will be possible to fly over an area of interest for a longer time and it will reduce logistical and administrative constraints linked with balloon operations."

Gaëtan Breurec, managing director of CNIM Air Space, specifies *"the development of a manoeuvring balloon is strengthening the collaboration between CNES and CNIM Air Space. Today, we manufacture the envelopes of stratospheric balloons. With the manoeuvring balloon, we will master a complete stratospheric system."*

About CNIM Air Space : cnim-air-space.com

CNIM Air Space benefits from a strong 50 years' experience gained through projects designed for the benefit of major international and French actors.

Its offer is mainly dedicated to Defense, Security and Space markets:

- Design, manufacturing and operations of surveillance and communication systems based on tethered aerostats or drone airships,
- Design and manufacturing of stratospheric balloons, mainly dedicated to scientific missions, led by European and worldwide space agencies,
- Design and manufacturing and thermal protections for satellites, supplied to the main European satellite manufacturers.

CNIM Air Space employs 70 collaborators and is located near Toulouse at the heart of the French aerospace ecosystem. CNIM Air Space is EN9100 certified.

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