The Project

The Ariane 6 project aims to develop a new launch unit, with the main objective of providing low-cost independent access to space for Europe. The Ariane 6 programme was undertaken following the conclusions of the European Space Agency Ministerial Council meeting on December 2, 2014. The Ground Segment development programme is managed by the CENTRE NATIONAL D’ÉTUDES SPATIALES (CNES), based in Toulouse. The ECLAIR 6 consortium, with EIFFAGE GENIE CIVIL as lead contractor, is responsible for the construction of the infrastructure of the new launch complex (ELA4). The declaration of the Ariane 6 programme includes a schedule with a first launch end of 2020.

The new launch unit is located at the Guyana Space Centre, in Kourou. The space centre is on the former coastal plain of Guyana, and the ELA4 site itself is in a savannah zone. The former coastal plain consists of marine deposits of the Coswine series (sands and variegated clays), sandy deposits and silty deposits with lateral variation of facies, resulting from Quaternary sea level changes. These recent deposits overlay granitic material, encountered in the form of multicoloured and often micaceous rock breakdown products, over the ancient bedrock made of plutonic or grainy metamorphic rocks, showing surface weathering to a depth of around ten centimetres.

Despite a subhorizontal spatial distribution of the top of the granular disintegration, the ancient bedrock presents abrupt level variations on the scale of the site.