



Press release

Formia: 27th Ariane's Cup begins

Telespazio (Finmeccanica/Alcatel), current holder of the Cup, has organised the 2006 international sailing event, which will run from 29 September to 2 October

Rome, 26 September 2006 – Between 29 September and 2 October Formia (LT) will play host to the 27th Ariane's Cup, the international sailing event for representatives of Europe's space agencies and companies. Thanks to the Telespazio team's victory in the 2005 regatta in Martinique, Italy is this year hosting the event for the first time in its history.

Around 700 sailing enthusiasts from all parts of Europe will compete for the Cup, which will include three days of competitions and events. The 81 vessels entered, varying in length from 34 feet to 46 feet, will compete in the waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea over a course embracing the port of Formia, the Circeo Promontory and the northern coast of Campania. The town of Formia will stage the awards ceremony and numerous events planned for the days of the competition in a village set up especially for the event within its port area.

The Ariane's Cup was conceived in the 1970s by a group of managers involved in the European space programme, Ariane, who shared a passion for sailing. Just 15 teams took part in the first regatta, held in the Bay of Quiberon in Brittany in 1979, but their number steadily grew to reach a record 950 participants on board 99 yachts at the 1999 event in the Grenadine Islands — a record that will be hard to beat.

Alongside Telespazio, participants in this year's regatta include all Italy's main space companies and organisations (ESA-ESRIN, ASI, Alcatel Alenia Space Italia, Datamat, Vitrociset, Contraves) and leading representatives of the sector in Europe (ESA, Eumetsat, SES Astra, EADS, DLR, CNES, Astrium, Arianespace, etc).

This year's event, organised by Telespazio with the invaluable support of Filas, the Lazio Region's innovation promotion company, and the Formia local authority, aims to raise international awareness of the Lazio aerospace technology district (DTA) and showcase the expertise of the companies based there, which include Finmeccanica, a leader in the development of key space programmes. In particular, Lazio will provide a base for some of the main companies involved in the Galileo programme, the satellite navigation system developed jointly by the European Union and the European Space Agency that constitutes the largest project ever undertaken by European institutions.



According to Raffaele Ranucci, District Councillor for Economic Development, Research Innovation and Tourism, “this is an event that unites and showcases the various strengths of the Lazio Region. It is a major international event that will bring to the attention of diverse interests and audiences the competitiveness of our SMEs, particularly those active in the aerospace sector, and the South Pontine region, its natural beauty and its tourist facilities. Since coming to office, the current city council has sought to implement a well-constructed, synergy-led strategic plan of actions designed to streamline and sustain the different sectors and interests that play a part in our region’s economy and has made it a priority to harness the many, varied resources at our disposal”.

“Formia is at the centre of the sailing world”, explained Antonio Ferraro, Town Councillor on Economic and Industrial Activity, Tourism and Labour Policy, “because of the characteristics of the region. Its waters are a natural venue for competitive events, with ideal constant winds blowing through a gulf at the foot of mountains that enhance the beauty of the coastline and the appeal of the region as a place to live and work. We’d like to thank Telespazio and the Lazio Region for having given us the opportunity to put ourselves on the map with an event that has required the total redesign of our entire port area and resulted in the creation of a leisure port that will very soon be operating alongside the everyday mix of ferries, fishing boats and sea rescue facilities”.

As Telespazio SpA chairman Alessandro Bellini explained, “Telespazio is proud to have brought the Ariane’s Cup, an event that will bring together around 700 sailing enthusiasts representing Europe’s leading space agencies, to Italy for the first time. We are also delighted that we were able to stage the event in Formia and the Lazio Region — a region that has assumed a strategic role in the development of the main international space programmes. For some time now, together with Filas and the Lazio Region, Telespazio has been working to make some of the opportunities offered by the European satellite navigation system Galileo an industrial reality. The prime example of this collaboration is the creation of the Galileo Test Range in Rome, a permanent laboratory that will be used as a Galileo signal validation facility and for the development of services and applications.”

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