

MEDIA WORKSHOP 2026

JUNE, 18-19 | **ITALY**
ESA - ESRIN | FRASCATI

**PROGRAM
THURSDAY,
JUNE 18TH**

PROGRAM

Understanding Earth from Space: Data, AI and Communication for Climate Adaptation



ORGANIZER

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**MERI
FOUNDATION**



PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH

In-person only

14:30 – WELCOME INTRODUCTIONS

Presentation on ESA, ESRIN and Earth Observation Programmes

Simonetta Cheli is the Director of Earth Observation Programmes and Head of ESA-ESRIN in Frascati, Rome. With over 30 years at ESA, including roles at Headquarters in Paris and ESA-ESRIN, she leads the agency's Earth Observation strategy, overseeing satellite development, mission operations, ground segment data, and science applications.

As a member of ESA's Executive Board, Simonetta manages an annual budget of €2.4 billion (29,5% of ESA's overall funds) and directs 1000+ staff and contractors across five sites. She plays a key role in forging global partnerships, including major programmes like Copernicus, collaborating closely with space agencies, industry, scientific communities, and international partners.

In her role as ESA's representative in Italy, she leads ESA-ESRIN and represents the agency at international forums and media events worldwide.

Born in Siena, Italy, Simonetta studied Law and Economics at Yale University, earned a Political Science degree with a focus on International Satellite Telecommunication Law in Florence, and holds an advanced diploma from the Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Stratégiques in Paris. Fluent in five languages, she is an acclaimed expert, recipient of prestigious awards, active in numerous international committees, and teaches master's courses on space at several universities.

SIMONETTA
CHELI



*Director of ESA Earth
Observation Programmes
and Head of ESRIN*

 Simonetta Cheli

15:15 – VIP TESTIMONY

15:20 – KEYNOTE

Presentation on Vega and Space Rider

Dante GALLI - Mariano GENITO

This keynote will explore how European space transportation systems, from Ariane6 & Vega-C to Space Rider, enable advanced Earth observation and climate-monitoring missions. The presentation will introduce the role and capabilities of Europe's launchers, highlight key Vega-C missions supporting environmental and climate science, and present Space Rider as Europe's future reusable orbital platform for in-orbit experimentation and technology demonstration.

Through images and video, the session will provide an accessible overview of how space transportation contributes to scientific innovation, sustainability and the future of Earth observation.

Dante GALLI

Graduated in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Rome "La Sapienza", he began his career in the space sector as a thermo-structural engineer at Thales Alenia Space, contributing to the RADARSAT-2 programme.

In 2003, he joined Avio S.p.A., working on the Vega programme as Product Engineer responsible for the AVUM upper stage Assembly, Integration and Test activities.

He joined the European Space Agency (ESA) in 2007, initially serving as Ground Segment Mechanical Infrastructures Manager for the Vega launch site in Kourou. He later held the roles of System Engineer and Lead System Synthesis Engineer for the Vega-C programme. Since 2020, he has been part of the Space Rider programme, first as Space Segment Manager and currently as Programme Manager within ESA's Directorate of Space Transportation.

**DANTE
GALLI**



*Space Rider Programme
Manager - ESA*

 Dante Galli

Mariano GENITO

Mariano Genito, PhD, serves as Chief Development Officer at Avio, where he is responsible for defining and coordinating next-generation technological development programs. With consolidated expertise in space transportation systems, he has provided decisive contributions to the success of the maiden flights of the Vega and Vega C launchers. Currently, he coordinates the company's most strategic frontier projects, including cryogenic space transportation service, orbital platforms and re-entry vehicles, strengthening Europe's position in sustainable and competitive space transportation. His profile integrates a solid academic foundation, culminating in a PhD, with a strategic vision refined at world-class institutions such as the LUISS Business School and the UCL School of Management

**MARIANO
GENITO**



*Chief Development
Officer - Avio*

 Mariano Genito

16:30

Tour of ESRIN facilities with visits to the ESRIN Visitors Centre, Φ-Experience, Science Hub, Φ-Lab, and Heritage Missions Walkthrough

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