

Stephane Guisard). During the December run, an overall image quality of 0.7–0.8 arcsec was routinely achieved, while the outside seeing was about 0.5 arcsec.

The standard filter set for EFOSC2 is that of SUSI, that is, Bessel U, B, V, R, Gunn g, r, i, z, and a number of narrow-band filters. The presently available grism set is the one which was previously offered at the 2.2-m. A number of new grisms have been ordered, which should be available for period 61 (see our web page for details, <http://www.lis.eso.org/lasilla/Telescopes/360cat>). In period 61, MOS shall be available as well. A second EMMI punching unit shall be used to

prepare the MOS plates. The quality of the slits punched with the EMMI unit is superior to that available with the old EFOSC1 PUMA machine.

An important aspect of the December technical time concerns the installation of the new VLT autoguider at the 3.6-m telescope. Two new VLT technical CCDs were installed in the Cassegrain adapter, one of which is used for the autoguider. The Cassegrain adapter functions and the autoguider are now controlled by dedicated local control units. The error vectors calculated by the software are fed back directly to the position loop of the telescope control system (TCS).

This is a significant improvement over the old autoguider, where constant offsets were applied to correct for tracking errors. Thus, the new autoguider provides a faster response to large tracking errors, and ensures a smoother tracking when the errors are random.

With the commissioning of EFOSC2 at the 3.6-m telescope, a major milestone of the 3.6-m upgrade project is concluded. Our main effort now goes into the replacement of all HP1000 computers. Next milestones include the adaptation of the NTT software modules to replace the TCS, and the adaptation of the EMMI instrument software for EFOSC2.

## Signing of Contract for the Delivery of the Delay Line of the VLTI

At a ceremony in Leiden, the Netherlands, on March 12, a contract was signed between Fokker Space B.V. and ESO for the delivery of the Delay Line of the VLTI.

Fokker Space B.V. is the largest company in the Dutch space industry. It is based in Leiden. Fokker Space is mainly active in the field of solar arrays, launcher structures, thermal products, instruments and simulators. It also plays a key role in the development of robotics and is responsible as a prime contractor for the European Robotics Arm (ERA) to be used on the International Space Station.

Fokker Space is well embedded in the Dutch aerospace infrastructure, thanks to close relations with the Dutch Space Agency (NIVR), the National Aerospace Laboratory (NLR), the Delft University of Technology and other Dutch space industries and institutes like TNO-TPD (Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research - Institute of Applied Physics).

The VLTI Delay Line programme will be realised in collaboration with TNO-TPD.



*P.G. Winters, president of Fokker Space B.V., and R. Giacconi, ESO Director General, signing the contract.*

*Prof. E.P.J. van den Heuvel, Dutch delegate to the ESO Council, speaking at the ceremony. ▼*

