

ESO, the European Southern Observatory, was created in 1962 to "... establish and operate an astronomical observatory in the southern hemisphere, equipped with powerful instruments, with the aim of furthering and organising collaboration in astronomy ...". It is supported by eight countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. ESO operates at two sites. It operates the La Silla observatory in the Atacama desert, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile, at 2,400 m altitude, where several optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m and a 15-m submillimetre radio telescope (SEST) are now in operation. In addition, ESO is in the process of building the Very Large Telescope (VLT) on Paranal, a 2,600 m high mountain approximately 130 km south of Antofagasta, in the driest part of the Atacama desert. The VLT consists of four 8.2-metre and three 1.8-metre telescopes. These telescopes can also be used in combination as a giant interferometer (VLTI). The first 8.2-metre telescope (called ANTU) is since April 1999 in regular operation, and also the second one (KUEYEN) has already delivered pictures of excellent quality. Over 1200 proposals are made each year for the use of the ESO telescopes. The ESO Headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, Germany. This is the scientific, technical and administrative centre of ESO where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the La Silla and Paranal observatories with the most advanced instruments. There are also extensive astronomical data facilities. In Europe ESO employs about 200 international staff members, Fellows and Associates; in Chile about 70 and, in addition, about 130 local staff members.

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EUROPEAN  
SOUTHERN OBSERVATORY  
Karl-Schwarzschild-Str. 2  
D-85748 Garching bei München  
Germany  
Tel. (089) 320 06-0  
Telefax (089) 3202362  
ips@eso.org (internet)  
URL: <http://www.eso.org>  
<http://www.eso.org/gen-fac/pubs/messenger/>

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# PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS

## International Staff

(July – September 2000)

### ARRIVALS

#### EUROPE

ARNOUITS, Stéphane (F), Fellow  
FYNBO, Johan (DK), Fellow  
LEDoux, Cédric (F), Fellow  
SOLLERMAN, Jesper (S), Fellow  
ZOCCALI, Manuela (I), Fellow

#### CHILE

BAGNULO, Stefano (I), Fellow  
BROOKS, Kate (AUS), Fellow  
ELLISON, Sara (UK), Fellow  
JAUNSEN, Andreas (N), Fellow  
JEHIN, Emmanuel (B), Fellow  
MARCO, Olivier (F), Operations, Staff  
Astronomer  
MENDEZ BUSSARD, Rene (RCH),  
Astronomer/2P2  
SCARPA, Riccardo (I), Operations  
Staff Astronomer  
SELMAN, Fernando (RCH),  
Operations Staff Astronomer

### DEPARTURES

#### EUROPE

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Science Archive Group  
BENOIST, Christophe (F), Associate  
EIS  
BOITQUIN, Olivier (B), Scientific  
Application Developer  
CARBOGNANI, Franco (I), Software  
Engineer  
CURRIE, Douglas (USA), Support  
Engineer to Adaptive Optics Group

ROGON, Thomas (DK), Scientific  
Applications Developer  
TELANDER WEISS, Christine (S),  
Division Secretary  
WIEDEMANN, Günter (D),  
Instrumentation Scientist

#### CHILE

BREWER, James (UK), Operations  
Staff Astronomer  
ELS, Sebastian (D), Student  
ENDL, Michael (A), Student  
MARCHIS, Franck (F), Student

## Local Staff

(June – September 2000)

### ARRIVALS

BAEZ, José, Electro Mechanical  
Maintenance Technician, Paranal  
CASTEX, Duncan, Telescope  
Instruments Operator, La Silla  
CERON, Cecilia, Data Handling  
Administrator, Paranal  
CORTES, José Ignacio, Telescope  
Instruments Operator, La Silla  
HADDAD, Juan Pablo, Electronics  
Technician, Paranal  
LOBOS, Claudio, Optical Technician,  
Paranal  
MARTINEZ, Mauricio, Telescope  
Instruments Operator, La Silla  
PINO, Andres Iván, Instrument  
Technician, Paranal

### DEPARTURES

GONZALEZ, José Luis, Cook,  
Guesthouse  
ROJAS, Luis, Cook, Guesthouse

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