

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 ten countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. ESO operates at three sites in the Atacama desert region of Chile. The Very Large Telescope (VLT), is located on Paranal, a 2,600 m high mountain approximately 130 km south of Antofagasta. The VLT consists of four 8.2 metre diameter telescopes. These telescopes can be used separately, or in combination as a giant interferometer (VLTI). At La Silla, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile at 2,400 m altitude, ESO operates several optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m. The third site is the 5,000 m high Llano de Chajnantor, near San Pedro de Atacama. Here a new submillimetre telescope (APEX) is being completed, and a large submillimetre-wave array of 64 antennas (ALMA) is under development. Over 1300 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 Paranal and La Silla observatories with the most advanced instruments. ESO employs about 320 international staff members, Fellows and Associates in Europe and Chile, and about 160 local staff members in Chile.

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INTERESTED IN ALMA SCIENCE?

Over the last year, ALMA scientists have developed a Design Reference Science Plan (DRSP) with the goal to provide a prototype suite of ALMA projects that could be carried out in ~3 years of ALMA operations. This plan provides a quantitative reference for developing the ALMA science operations plan, for software design, and for other applications within the project. Check out your favorite observing program by clicking on "ALMA DRSP" through the ESO ALMA Web site, or go directly to: <http://www.strw.leidenuniv.nl/~alma/>

Ewine van Dishoeck
(Chair, ALMA European Science
Advisory Committee)

ALMA COMMUNITY MEETING

The second 'ALMA Community Meeting' will be held on September 24, 2004 at ESO, Garching. Topics will include an update of the project, the European ALMA Regional Center, and the science that can be done in the early science phase and later with the full array. The local organization committee will consist of T.L. Wilson (chair), R. Laing, C. De Breuck and M. Zwaan. The scientific organizing committee is formed by the European ALMA Science Advisory Committee. Check the ESO-ALMA Web page this summer at <http://www.eso.org/projects/alma/> for registration, logistical information and updates on the programme.

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