

Losilla, Director General for Technological Policy, had agreed on all the conditions for Spain's accession on 7 December 2005. In February 2006, the then Spanish minister of Education, Mrs. María Jesús San Segundo, and I signed an agreement towards the entrance of Spain in ESO as of 1 July 2006. The entrance of

Spain into ESO had been agreed by both parties to be retroactive to mid-2006, even if the required approvals and administrative steps dragged on beyond that date. Thus, in the second part of last year, we already treated our Spanish astronomer colleagues as members, and immediately we could see their enthusiasm,

effectiveness and commitment in the various events, work groups and committees in which they took part. I am truly delighted that we have accreted this vibrant community, with which we were already very familiar.

Tim de Zeeuw to Become the Next Director General of ESO

The ESO Council has appointed Tim de Zeeuw, as the next Director General of ESO effective as of 1 September 2007, when the current Director General, Catherine Cesarsky, will complete her mandate.

Tim de Zeeuw has an excellent record, both as a highly respected scientist and as a leader of an internationally recognised science institute in the Netherlands. He is Scientific Director of the Leiden Observatory, a research institute in the College of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of Leiden University. Tim de Zeeuw also has considerable experience as regards science policy issues. "The ESO Council is very pleased that Professor de Zeeuw has accepted the task as its next Director General. He has played a key role over the last few years in developing a strategic vision for ESO, and I have every confidence that he will now lead the organisation in the realisation of that exciting vision" announced Richard Wade, the President of the ESO Council.

Catherine Cesarsky, ESO's current Director General, commented: "Over the recent years, ESO has developed considerably with more activities and new member states, and with its ambitious project portfolio, ESO is clearly facing an exciting future. I shall be delighted to pass the baton to Tim de Zeeuw, who as a recent Council member is very familiar with our Organisation."

"It is a great honour and an exciting challenge to lead this world-class organisation in the years to come in support of one of the most dynamic areas of science today" said de Zeeuw. "I look forward

to overseeing the continued upgrading of the Very Large Telescope with the second-generation instrumentation and the completion of the ALMA project, and in particular to help developing the future European Extremely Large Telescope."

Tim de Zeeuw's main research interests embrace the formation, structure and dynamics of galaxies, including our own Milky Way galaxy. A second area of research is the study of the origin, structure, and evolution of associations of young, massive stars in the Solar Neighbourhood. He obtained his PhD from the University of Leiden in 1980, moving on to work at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and subsequently at Caltech in Pasadena before returning to the Netherlands. He has received several honours and awards and is the author of a large number of research papers.

In 1993, he became the founding director of NOVA, the Netherlands Research School for Astronomy, which coordinates the graduate education and astronomical research at the five university astronomy institutes in the Netherlands. NOVA has contributed to strongly increasing the international visibility of Dutch astronomy and has enabled intensified Dutch participation in ESO activities. He is also the co-founder of the Lorentz Center, an international centre for Astronomy, Mathematics and Physics in Leiden.

Tim de Zeeuw regularly advises NWO, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. He has served on many committees including the Time Allocation Committee for the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope, and, since 2003, as

the Chairman of the Space Telescope Institute Council in Baltimore. He also serves on the AURA Board of Directors, and on the ESA Space Science Advisory Committee, and leads the development of a Science Vision for European Astronomy as part of the EU ASTRONET initiative.

For three years Tim de Zeeuw served as the Dutch national astronomy delegate to the ESO Council. As a member of the ESO Council he participated in the work of the Council Scientific Strategy Working Group, which resulted in the Council resolution of December 2004 outlining ESO's strategic goals. More recently, as Chair of this Working Group, he has been elaborating various scenarios for ESO's future role in European astronomy.

Tim de Zeeuw, who is 50, is married to Dutch astronomer Ewine van Dishoeck.

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Prof. Tim de Zeeuw, ESO's next Director General.

Photo: C. Oerman