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Portugal and ESO Sign Cooperation Agreement

To some of the experienced diplomats in the attentive audience, the festive ceremony on July 10, 1990, may have been just another of the steps towards European integration, now being taken all over the continent. But for the astronomers from Portugal and ESO, this official act was much more than that; it was a joyous event that marked

the beginning of a new, interactive era with high expectations.

On a hot summer's day in Lisbon, the Republic of Portugal and the European Southern Observatory signed a Cooperation Agreement which is aimed at *full membership of Portugal in ESO within the next ten years.*

During this period, the Portuguese

Government "will allocate an amount equivalent to a percentage of the annual contribution Portugal would have to pay, if it was already a member of ESO, to the development of research in the field of contemporary Astronomy, so as to permit a future efficient usage of ESO's facilities by Portuguese astronomers". This amount will be spent



At the signing ceremony in Lisbon. From left to right: Professor Teresa Lago (Astrophysical Centre, Porto), Professor Harry van der Laan (ESO Director General), Professor José Pedro Sucena Paiva (Portuguese Secretary of State for Science and Technology), Professor Carlos Salema (President of JNICT), Mr. Fernando Gonçalves (Chief of Cabinet of the Secretary of State).

on a number of infrastructures necessary for the development of Astronomy in Portugal and on technological and scientific training actions related to ESO's activities.

In return, Portuguese astronomers will have access to ESO's facilities during the pre-accession period under scientific conditions similar to those of Member Countries. It is expected that the OPC will soon receive the first proposal(s) from Portugal, and that some joint programmes with astronomers from ESO member countries will be worked out before the end of the year.

A Joint Portuguese/ESO Advisory Body is being set up to monitor the development of Portuguese astronomy and its interaction with ESO.

The Agreement was signed on behalf of the Portuguese Government by His Excellency, Secretary of State for Science and Technology, Prof. Dr. José Pedro Sucena Paiva, and for ESO by its Director General, Prof. Dr. Harry van der Laan. Among the invited guests were high government officials, quite a few Portuguese scientists representing other scientific fields, as well as many media representatives who reported extensively about this event in TV, radio and newspapers.

Joining the Secretary of State and the Director General on the platform were the President of Junta Nacional de Investigação Científica e Tecnológica (JNICT: National Board for Science and Technological Research), Prof. Dr. Carlos Salema, and Prof. Dr. Teresa Lago, Astrophysical Centre of the University of Porto, both of whom played key roles during the extensive preparations that preceded the conclusion of this Agreement, which was approved by the ESO

Council in December 1989.

The ceremony commenced with the showing of a short video film about ESO and its role in European astronomy. Professor Lago then commented on the present situation in Portuguese astronomy. It is in a critical period of growth, for which the association with ESO will be a great support and stimulus. The full text of the speech is reproduced on the next page; see also the summary on page 4.

Following the solemn act of signature, Professor van der Laan expressed his great pleasure in connection with the new association between Portugal and ESO. He expressed his conviction that the ancient astronomical tradition in Portugal, particularly evident at the famous naval institute founded by Henry the Navigator and of such a great importance for the far-reaching expeditions of that time, will continue and be strengthened by the interaction with ESO. He surveyed the ESO facilities and the importance of astronomy, not just as a science in its own right, but also as a driver for new and advanced technology which may be of great use in many other fields as well. He looked forward to the day when a new generation of Portuguese astronomers will be able to make full use of their new opportunities within the European astronomical community and when Portugal will become a Member State of ESO.

In his discourse (English translation hereafter), the Secretary of State emphasized the rapid progress in astronomy, in particular because of modern technology. He stressed the importance attached by his country to the furthering of scientific and technological projects within a European framework.

In this connection, significant support is now becoming available, especially after Portugal became a full member of the European Community. In its present quest for development, Portugal can draw inspiration from the Great Maritime Discoveries in earlier centuries.

In the afternoon, the Director General and his small ESO delegation went to Porto to visit the University and its Centre for Astrophysics, which was officially started here last year. Since 1984, when a programme for astronomical studies was first developed in Porto, there has been an increasing interest and a steadily growing number of students in this discipline. Several Master's degrees have been gained abroad and presently, a number of PhDs are well under way. In a few years, the Porto group can be expected to reach the critical mass, needed to introduce more, high-level courses. For the time being, there is a special interest in stellar studies and cosmology. The Astronomy Centre is neighbour to the University's Computing Centre and many of the students have become involved in image processing; MIDAS is being implemented. Some students have already made short visits to the ESO Headquarters.

It is obvious that Portuguese astronomy is in a phase of rapid and well considered expansion. With access to the ESO telescopes, more young astronomers in this country will be drawn towards observational studies and their possibilities for fruitful interaction with astronomers in other places will increase. And in ten years' time, or perhaps even before, the formal adherence of Portugal to ESO will follow naturally, with the full, mutual benefits.

The Editor

Speech by Professor José Pedro Sucena Paiva

It is indeed a great pleasure and privilege for me to sign on behalf of the Portuguese Government the Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of Portugal and the European Organization for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere – ESO –, a prestigious international organization devoted to scientific research in the field of Astronomy.

I firmly believe that this Agreement, which sets the conditions for Portugal's adherence to ESO within a ten-year period, will prove to be a decisive milestone for the development of Astronomy and Astrophysics in this country.

During this period Portugal will reinforce its scientific capability in this field,

namely through advanced training of human resources, so that the number of Portuguese astronomers becomes, in proportion to the scientific community, comparable to that of the ESO Member States. ESO will provide access to its facilities to Portuguese scientists and graduate students under scientific conditions similar to those of the Member States.

Man has always endeavoured to study the objects outside planet Earth and its immediate environment, including the Moon, Sun, planets, stars, the Galaxy and similar external star systems, interplanetary and interstellar matter, and the Universe as a whole.

Until the 17th century, astronomy was largely concerned with the measurement of the positions and motions of the Sun, Moon, planets, and apparently fixed stars visible to the unaided eye. Then the laws of planetary motion were discovered, the telescope was invented, and the laws underlying motion and gravitation were formulated.

In the 18th century the first ideas based on extensive observations of the structure of the Galaxy that contains the Earth and of the Universe were put forward.

The 19th century brought the introduction of two basic techniques, spectroscopy and photography, which led to new and quantitative methods for