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 two sites in the Atacama desert region of Chile. The new Very Large Telescope (VLT), the largest in the world, is located on Paranal, a 2,600 m high mountain approximately 130 km south of Antofagasta, in the driest part of the Atacama desert where the conditions are excellent for astronomical observations. 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 and a submillimetre radio telescope (SEST). 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. There are also extensive astronomical data facilities. ESO employs about 320 international staff members, Fellows and Associates in Europe and Chile, and about 160 local staff members in Chile.

The ESO MESSENGER is published four times a year: normally in March, June, September and December. ESO also publishes Conference Proceedings, Preprints, Technical Notes and other material connected to its activities. Press Releases inform the media about particular events. For further information, contact the ESO Education and Public Relations Department at the following address:

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ESO Workshop on Large Programmes and Surveys

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On 19 to 21 May, 2003, the scientific impact of Large Programmes was assessed at a workshop in Garching. Several members of the OPC and STC actively participated in the workshop.

Every PI of a Large Programme (LP) approved up to ESO Period 69 was invited to present the results of their project. All LPs but one were presented in half-hour talks. A two-hour discussion session was held to assess whether the current scheme of LPs is adequate or should be adjusted.

The general impression was that most LPs have produced excellent results and unique science, which would have been unachievable through regular programmes. They allowed European astronomers to directly compete with the best American groups, some of whom profit from significant access to large telescopes. The LPs have had the effect of unifying the community in certain astronomical fields.

The effectiveness of the restriction of LPs to two years duration was cited as a good incentive to produce important results quickly, one major reason to originally introduce the LPs.

Overall the LPs are considered a success and should be continued. They provide European astronomers with the opportunity to achieve important results in a competitive and timely fashion.

The OPC discussed the outcome of the workshop at its meeting on June 2 and decided to continue with Large Programmes with P73. ESO will accept Large Programmes for this period again.

An article on the workshop providing more details will appear in the next issue of *The Messenger*.

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