

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 organizing collaboration in astronomy ... It is supported by eight countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. It operates the La Silla observatory in the Atacama desert, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile, at 2,400 m altitude, where thirteen optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m and a 15-m submillimetre radio telescope (SEST) are now in operation. A 3.5-m New Technology Telescope (NTT) is being constructed and a giant telescope (VLT=Very Large Telescope), consisting of four 8-m telescopes (equivalent aperture = 16 m) is being planned for the 1990's. Six hundred scientists make proposals each year for the use of the telescopes at La Silla. The ESO Headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, FRG. It is the scientific-technical and administrative centre of ESO, where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the La Silla observatory with the most advanced instruments. There are also extensive facilities which enable the scientists to analyze their data. In Europe ESO employs about 150 international Staff members, Fellows and Associates; at La Silla about 40 and, in addition, 150 local Staff members.

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## Europa decide construir el telescopio óptico más grande del mundo

El día 8 de diciembre de 1987 el Consejo de la ESO dio luz verde para el gran telescopio (Very Large Telescope – VLT) de ESO de 16 metros, que representa el sueño de cada astrónomo y significa un desafío impresionante para la ingeniería. El VLT será el telescopio más grande del mundo y para Europa "el ojo" hacia el universo.

## Algunos conceptos involucrados en el trabajo que se realiza en Paranal

La atmósfera afecta de varios modos las observaciones ASTRONOMICAS hechas desde la superficie de la tierra, cambiando su dirección y su intensidad. Se considera que ambos efectos consisten en un término constante y otro variable. El término constante del cambio de dirección del rayo de luz al pasar a través de la atmósfera se llama REFRACTION y las fluctuaciones al azar de la dirección producen un efecto llamado SEEING. El término constante de la pérdida de luz cuando el rayo de luz atravesía la atmósfera se llama EXTINCIÓN, y las fluctuaciones no sistemáticas de la intensidad de la luz recibida en la superficie de la tierra constituyen el CENTELLEO o TITILACIÓN. EL SEEING

se debe a inhomogeneidades en el índice de refracción de la atmósfera, a ras de suelo, en tanto que la TITILACIÓN se debe a razones similares, pero a cierta distancia del suelo. (El índice de refracción depende de la temperatura, de ahí que muchos de los detectores diseñados para determinar el seeing lo hagan a través de mediciones de microturbulencia térmica.) Ambos fenómenos se traducen en un aumento del tamaño de la imagen, cuyo diámetro es mayor que el calculado teóricamente, de esta forma el PODER RESOLUTIVO y la LUMINOSIDAD del TELESCOPIO resultan menores que el calculado teóricamente (esto bajo la suposición que el TELESCOPIO es ópticamente perfecto). R. Castillo

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