



German astronaut Alexander Gerst to fly to the ISS in 2014

18 September 2011

On 18 September 2011, German ESA astronaut Alexander Gerst was nominated for his first mission to the International Space Station (ISS). Gerst will visit humankind's largest outpost in space for a long-term mission lasting from May to November. Germany's Federal Minister of Economics and Technology, Philipp Rösler announced this decision, taken by the European Space Agency (ESA), during his visit to German Aerospace Day at the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) in Cologne.

Geophysicist Alexander Gerst will follow Thomas Reiter, a former ESA astronaut and the first German to live and work on board the ISS, at an altitude of 400 kilometres, for several months. The 35-year old astronaut said: "This opportunity is a great honour. The mission will be a positive challenge, not only for me, but for all the dedicated staff at ESA and the national space agencies whose fascination with and commitment to space make it possible." Gerst will fly to the ISS as flight engineer for Expeditions 40 and 41; the current plan is for a launch in May 2014 on board a Russian Soyuz spacecraft, with the return journey in November. Alexander Gerst will follow in the footsteps of German astronauts Thomas Reiter and Hans Schlegel, who flew to the ISS on behalf of ESA in 2006 and 2008 respectively.

"The appointment of Alexander Gerst for his long-term mission in 2014 is the continuation of a successful German manned spaceflight programme; I thank ESA for their confidence," said Johann-Dietrich Wörner, Chairman of the DLR Executive Board, on Gerst's appointment. "Since the flight of Sigmund Jähn in 1978, there have been another nine Germans in space. In addition, by participating in the successful construction and operation of the Spacelab and Columbus space laboratories, Germany has secured its place among the nations involved in manned spaceflight," Wörner added.

Alexander Gerst has already started his mission training at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. Gerst joined the European Astronaut Corps in September 2009 and, on 22 November 2010, after conclusion of basic training at the European Astronaut Center (EAC) in Cologne, was officially appointed as an astronaut. He is the second member of the newest ESA group of astronauts to be nominated for an ISS mission, after the Italian Luca Parmitano.

The other crewmembers for ISS Expedition 40 will be NASA astronauts Steven Swanson and Gregory Wiseman, together with Russian cosmonauts Aleksandr Skvortsov, Oleg Artemyev and Fyodor Yurchikhin.

Contacts

Andreas Schütz
German Aerospace Center (DLR)
Corporate Communications, Spokesman
Tel.: +49 171 3126-466
Andreas.Schuetz@dlr.de

Elisabeth Mittelbach
German Aerospace Center (DLR)
Communications, Space Administration
Tel.: +49 228 447-385
Fax: +49 228 447-386
Elisabeth.Mittelbach@dlr.de

German ESA astronaut Alexander Gerst



In May 2014, German astronaut Alexander Gerst will be launched on his first mission to the International Space Station.

Credit: ESA.

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