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German astronaut Thomas Reiter to become member of DLR Executive Board with responsibility for space research and development

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German long-duration astronaut Thomas Reiter - From space to the DLR Executive Board

The astronaut Thomas Reiter, who has spent almost a year in total conducting research in space, is to take on a new role on the Executive Board of the German Aerospace Center (DLR) with responsibility for space. In this new post, he will head DLR's department of space research and development.

This decision was taken today by the DLR Senate in an extraordinary meeting in Berlin chaired by the Permanent Secretary to the German Federal Economics Ministry, Dr Joachim Wuermeling. The Federal Minister Of Economics and Technology, Michael Glos explained: "We are very happy because, in bringing Thomas Reiter to DLR to take up this important post, we are not just gaining the services of a popular astronaut, but also those of a renowned researcher with first-rate scientific skills with an exceptional knowledge of space matters".

The Chairman of the DLR Executive Board, Professor Johann-Dietrich Wörner, who had suggested Reiter for the post, said that he was extremely pleased to be able to welcome his new colleague to the Board: "Thomas Reiter has in the past accepted many extraordinary challenges and has always come through them with brio. I am quite sure that he will apply the same energy and commitment, and indeed achieve the same success as in all his earlier endeavours in this new post responsible for space research and technology. Moreover, as the German and European astronaut with the longest experience in space, he will undoubtedly also bring completely new aspects to that vital domain of DLR activity that is space."

The proposal by Professor Wörner has been made in full consultation with Jean-Jacques Dordain, the Director General of the European Space Agency, where Thomas Reiter has worked for 15 years as a member of the ESA Astronaut Corps in Cologne. Mr Dordain declared: "I am glad to see that the

experience gained at ESA is valued by the German Space Agency and that Thomas Reiter will be taking on a high-ranking position with DLR. What is good for Germany is good for ESA."



German long-duration Astronaut Thomas Reiter

Reiter himself said he was very pleased with his appointment and with this new challenge: "I am acutely aware of the honour that has been extended to me and am very happy to accept this new position. This research management role will be a completely new direction for me, even though it has a great deal to do with what I have been involved with to date. I hope that I will be able to bring my previous experience to bear in this new role on the Executive Board and thus make a valuable and useful contribution to DLR", he explained.

Thomas Reiter – close to a year performing research in space on Russia’s MIR space station and the International Space Station, and three spacewalks

Thomas Reiter is the European astronaut who has acquired the longest experience of space. In two missions (179 days on the Euromir 95 mission and 171 days on the 2006 Astrolab mission), he has conducted research and lived in Earth orbit for precisely 350 days, 4 hours and 55 minutes. Given that the International Space Station (ISS) performs a single orbit of the Earth in approximately 90 minutes, travelling at a speed of around 28 000 kilometres per hour, in that time he could theoretically have witnessed more than 5 600 sunrises and sunsets. German astronauts have lived and worked in space, in orbit around Earth, for a total of over 481 days. Thus, Reiter alone accounts for almost 75 percent of the total time the country’s astronauts have spent in space.

Along with Swedish fellow astronaut Christer Fuglesang, Reiter is among the European astronauts to have conducted the largest number of and the longest spacewalks: in a total of three EVAs (extra-vehicular activities), performed during missions to the Russian MIR space station and the International Space Station, Reiter has spent a combined 14 hours 15 minutes outside in space.



ESA astronaut Thomas Reiter during a 5-hour, 54-minute excursion

Reiter was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1958, and is married with two sons. He lists his hobbies as fencing, badminton, cooking and playing the guitar. He has a degree in aerospace engineering and is a colonel in the German air force. He has more than 2 000 hours of experience flying military fighter aircraft in 15 different types of aircraft.

Reiter has been a member of ESA's European Astronaut Corps in Cologne since 1992. He is one of the few non-Russian astronauts entitled to fly on board the Russian Soyuz capsule as flight engineer. In addition, he was awarded a "Soyuz Return Commander" certificate, entitling him to pilot a Soyuz capsule with three crew members on its return from space.

Related Contacts

Andreas Schütz

Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt (DLR) - German Aerospace Center
Corporate Communications, Spokesman

Tel: +49 2203 601-2474

Mobile: +49 171 3126466

Fax: +49 2203 601-3249

E-Mail: andreas.schuetz@dlr.de

Cornelia Schmitz

Tel: +49 30 67055-470

Mobile: +49 171 6428022

Fax: +49 30 67055-475

E-Mail: Cornelia.Schmitz@dlr.de

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