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Rolf Henke - new DLR Executive Board Member for Aeronautics

2 November 2010



Rolf Henke

On 2 November 2010, Rolf Henke took up his new post Member of the Executive Board responsible for Aeronautics research at the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR). Henke is the successor to Joachim Szodruich, assumed office in October 2002 and, having reached retirement age, left the Board in October 2010. Henke was previously Director of the Institute of Aerospace Technology (Institut für Luft- und Raumfahrt; ILR) at the Technical University of Rhineland-Westphalia (Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule; RWTH) in Aachen. Prior to that, he held various positions at Airbus over a period of more than 20 years.

Henke views his new position as one that offers a range of challenges. "First, of course, I want to maintain and build upon the high standards set by my predecessor, Professor Szodruich. The aviation sector is going to develop further over the next few years, and is also facing major changes – one example being unmanned aircraft – and I see my role as helping to shape these changes. DLR is strongly positioned in all relevant areas of the aviation sector, and working with universities and industry, we can help to shape the future of aviation. Having said that, every systemic approach must put the vehicle and its operations centre stage," explains Henke. In this context, he is also committed to building consistently upon the goal of his predecessors: interdisciplinary cooperation between DLR institutes.

Intensive career development for new talent is another area where Henke firmly intends to follow the footsteps of his predecessor. He wishes to use the experience he has gained over the last few years at RWTH Aachen and to foster even closer links between DLR and the higher education sector. This will enable urgently needed fundamental new technologies to be developed and will also assist the German aviation industry in its efforts to attract skilled employees.

In addition, Henke believes that European aeronautics research efforts are going to grow even closer over the next few years. "This development will apply primarily to large research facilities. The German-Dutch wind tunnels already collaborate with one another, and this is going to extend to other facilities. DLR is at the forefront of this development because it has core skills in the 'overall system' of aviation – from research and aircraft to air traffic control," says Henke.

Henke intends to continue to teach through a special professorship at RWTH Aachen, thereby retaining his links with the University.

Related Contacts

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