

ESO plans construction of giant telescope

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The European Southern Observatory says it is creating an office dedicated to building a giant telescope for Europe's astronomers.

The ESO's Extremely Large Telescope Project Office is to be headed by Jason Spyromilio, formerly the director of La Silla Paranal Observatory.

"We believe that the European Extremely Large Telescope is essential if we are to ensure the continued competitiveness of the astronomical community in ESO's member-states," said Catherine Cesarsky, ESO's director general.

The ESO said a baseline design is to be presented by the end of this year for a telescope with a primary mirror between about 100 feet to 200 feet in diameter and estimated to cost approximately \$944 million.

The telescope is expected to have a 10-fold performance advantage over the ESO's Very Large Telescope at the Paranal Observatory in northern Chile.

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