

ESA astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti becomes first European female ISS commander

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ESA astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti performing the Acoustic Diagnostics study. This investigation explores whether equipment noise levels and the microgravity environment found on the International Space Station produces adverse effects on astronaut hearing. The acoustic data will help researchers understand the International Space Station's sound environment and may inform countermeasures to protect crew hearing. This research may in future inform

healthcare approaches for those exposed to similar noise environments here on Earth. Credit: ESA/NASA

ESA astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti will soon fulfill the role of commander of the International Space Station, taking over from fellow Expedition 67 crew member Oleg Artemyev.

Since beginning her Minerva mission in April 2022, Samantha has served as lead of the United States Orbital Segment (USOS), overseeing activities in the U.S., European, Japanese and Canadian modules and components of the station.

Upon taking her new role, she will become the fifth European commander of the Space Station, following in the footsteps of previous ESA astronauts Frank De Winne, Alexander Gerst, Luca Parmitano and Thomas Pesquet. She will also become the first European female to occupy the position.

"I am humbled by my appointment to the position of commander," says Samantha "and look forward to drawing on the experience I've gained in space and on Earth to lead a very capable team in orbit."

ESA's Director General Josef Aschbacher shares Samantha's outlook. "Samantha's selection for commandership clearly demonstrates the faith and value our international partners place in ESA astronauts. Throughout her Minerva mission she has contributed greatly to the scientific and operational successes of the Station, and I anticipate that it will continue to thrive under her command."

Samantha will officially become commander following a traditional handover ceremony which centers around the symbolic passing of a key

from the previous commander. The ceremony itself will take place on Wednesday 28 September 2022, and will be broadcast live from the International Space Station on ESA Web TV.

David Parker, ESA's Director of Human and Robotic Exploration, shared his view that "Samantha's wealth of knowledge and experience makes her an excellent candidate for this role. As the first European woman to fulfill the position of commander, she once again pushes forward boundaries for female representation in the space sector."

The full title of this role is International Space Station crew commander. Commanderships are awarded based on joint decisions taken by NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe), and CSA (Canada). ESA is represented in this [selection process](#) by Head of the European Astronaut Center and ISS Program Manager, Frank De Winne.

"I'm pleased that scheduling has changed in such a way that Samantha is once again due to occupy the position of commander," says Frank. "She retains our full endorsement to fulfill this important leadership role. There is no doubt that her leadership will ensure continued mission success."

This position is vital to the continued success of the Space Station. While flight directors in the control centers preside over planning and execution of Station operations, the Station's commander is responsible for the performance and well-being of the crew on orbit, maintaining effective communication with the teams on Earth, and coordinating the crew response in case of emergencies. Since Samantha takes command in the final weeks of her stay on-board, one of her major duties will be to ensure a smooth and comprehensive handover to the next expedition crew.

Provided by European Space Agency

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