

Asteroid named after Strathclyde Professor

13 September 2016

A Professor at the University of Strathclyde has had his name written among the stars, after an asteroid was named after him.

Professor Massimiliano Vasile, who actively works on finding solutions to control the motion of asteroids, has received the honour from the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in recognition of his work.

Professor Vasile said: "There are several hundreds of thousands of asteroids in space. Out of these relatively few are known, and even fewer are actively tracked.

"In honour of my work on [asteroid](#) manipulation, SpaceDyS, one of the partners in the Stardust network, submitted my candidacy to the Minor Planet Centre to name an asteroid after me. The Committee on Small Body Nomenclature of the IAU, part of the MPC, evaluated the submission and finally assigned my name to asteroid 2002 PX33.

"The one they picked is part of the [asteroid belt](#). It is relatively big but, thankfully, not dangerous."

Professor Vasile is leading the Stardust Network, an international, EU-funded programme comprising researchers and leaders from 20 different institutions, with the purpose of advancing research into the manipulation of asteroids and space debris, and the aim of protecting the planet and [space](#) assets from catastrophic impacts.

Asteroid 2002 PX33, which has been named Maxvasile, is in an orbit between Mars and Jupiter. It measures an estimated 3.1622 km in diameter and has a minimum distance of 1.08 astronomical units -around 100,393,201 miles - from Earth, a similar distance to that of the Earth from the Sun.

The Maxvasile asteroid has a period of orbit around the sun of around three and a half years. The closest distance it reaches to the sun is 2.0794 astronomical units - around 193,292,305

miles. The asteroid was discovered in 2002 by an Italian observatory, with the first recorded observation in 1993.

Other famous people to have had asteroids named after them include astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, scientists Isaac Newton and Stephen Hawking, novelists Jane Austen and Charles Dickens and musicians Stevie Wonder and Freddie Mercury.

Professor Vasile has made numerous media appearances, including on the BBC programmes Stargazing Live and Planet Ant: Life Inside the Colony.

The Stardust team at the University of Strathclyde was the winner in the Space Achievement/Academic Study Research category of the 2015 Sir Arthur Clarke Awards, presented at the UK Space Conference.

Provided by University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

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