

ESA Head of Science sets out Cosmic Vision goals

David Southwood (ESA Head of Science):

One of the purposes of space science is to learn how to work together, how the Americans work with Europeans, how European teams work with Russians or with Chinese or Indians or Japanese. Then you learn the vocabulary of communication. And don't get me wrong, the cultures are very different but you learn to work together. You learn where your strengths lie and where you can rely on the strengths of others.

Voice-over 1:

Once the main themes were decided scientists from across Europe set forth their proposals for 2015 - 2025. Fifty-one projects made it through the first round of selection.

David Southwood (ESA Head of Science):

If we just said: give us the best ideas you can, they would come up with very, very big, expensive ideas because scientists are certainly not limited in imagination. So we brought up the idea of: well, if you get a smaller mission, an M mission, a medium mission, you're likely to see it fly earlier than the large mission. This may be common sense to an ordinary person but to a scientist, it needs to be explained.

Voice-over 1:

The proposed Cosmic Visions missions were split into the fields of astrophysics and solar system science. They were then divided up into M Medium Term and L Long Term projects. From the fifty-one in the first round a total of eight have made the cut - four M missions and four L missions. All are exactly the kinds of projects Southwood feels ESA should be tackling.

David Southwood (ESA Head of Science):

The scientific goals are almost unquestionably fundamental. You could never have the nerve to propose something that might cost er, er 600/700 million euros just from our contribution and then you think of involving other countries, maybe you're talking certainly over a billion euros. You've got to be able to stand up and honestly say: this will change the way we see our universe.

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