



## Events in the European Astronaut Center – pinning in progress

The European Astronaut Center EAC in Cologne has lately seen a series of events which will benefit the Astronaut Community. The LUNA Moon Analogue facility is quickly taking shape with first operations planned later this year. Says Matthias Maurer, ESA astronaut in charge: [“LUNA and its moonscape terrain](#) will be open to ideas and research teams from all directions, strongly supporting the push towards the Moon that we now see in many parts of the world.”

A [group of five newly graduated ESA astronauts](#) will have the privilege of working in this environment. ESA on April 22, 2024, handed them their astronaut diploma, after a year of intense basic training. For the first time, ESA also trained a non-European astronaut, Katherine Bennell-Pegg from Australia. Fittingly, the class of 2009 is now called The Hoppers, because of the typical way they dashed around the EAC corridors to make it in time to their next lesson.

On stage with the newly graduated were ESA DG J. Aschbacher, ESA’s HRE Director D. Neuenschwander, Head of EAC F. de Winne, with ESA astronauts M. Maurer, Th. Pesquet, and A. Gerst.



At this occasion the pin #536 from a newly fabricated batch of Universal Astronaut Insignia could be given to EAC astronaut Alexander Gerst, who had mentored the astronaut candidates through their basic training in his function as Astronaut Corps and Crew Operations Team Lead.



Many astronauts are also educators as lecturers or university professors, giving courses in Human Spaceflight during which the hands-on experience of on-site visits to EAC makes an un deletable impression onto aerospace students. Christer Fuglesang from KTH in Stockholm and his student groups are regularly welcomed to EAC just as ASE President Reinhold Ewald’s groups from Stuttgart University. A very good occasion to hand Christer his #449 UAI pin. ESA astronauts Matthias Maurer and Samantha Cristoforetti joined the hand-over in front of Andreas Mogensen’s Huginn Mission poster.

