

Andreas Mogensen – the Next Nordic in Space

Nordicspace's Baard Kringen talking to the European Astronaut Andreas Mogensen.

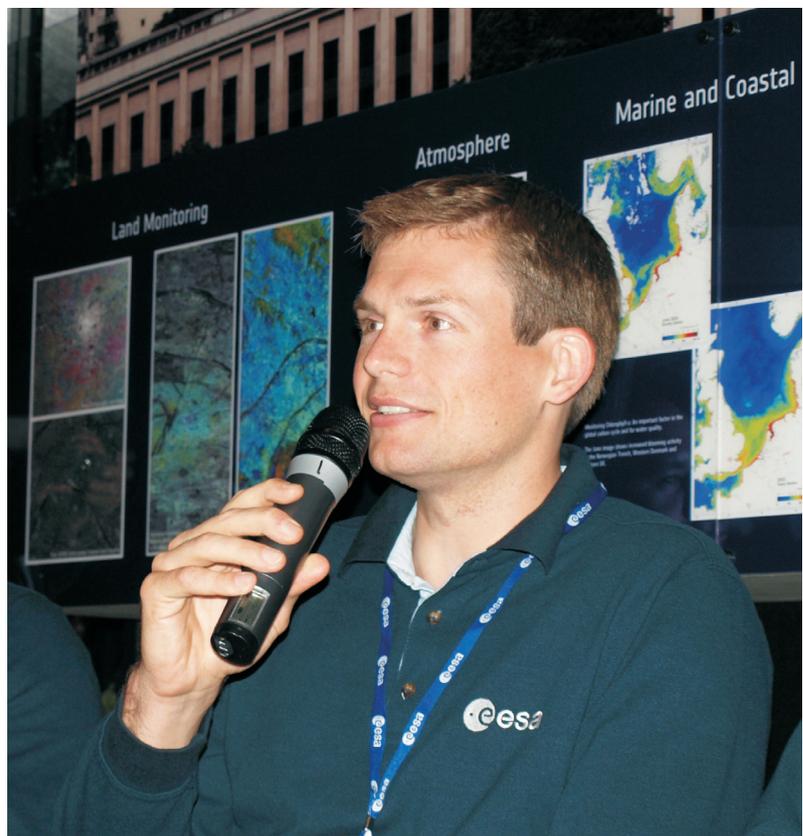
Andreas Mogensen from Denmark is one of ESA's six new astronauts. We met Andreas together with his new colleagues a few days after the news broke about a new representative from the Nordic countries possibly going to space.

Seventeen years ago ESA recruited new astronauts, one of which was the renowned Christer Fuglesang from Sweden, however, times change and ESA has now recruited new members for the crew onboard the International Space Station and possibly other missions. To pass through the eye of the needle and to become an astronaut candidate is in itself a huge achievement. Out of the several thousand people who were interested, some hundred were evaluated, however, at the end only six were approved.

Most of the new astronauts are originally pilots, however, Andreas' education was more space-oriented as such, having experience from the space related industry, and we were curious as to his choices so far; choices that ultimately led him to becoming one of six ESA astronaut candidates.

Andreas' Background

I was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 November 1976, and I lived in Copenhagen during my adolescence. After high school I enrolled at the Copenhagen



Andreas. Photo credit: Nordicspace

International School where I graduated with an International Baccalaureate in 1995. In 1999 I received a Master's Degree in aeronautical engineering from Imperial College London, and I received a Doctorate in aerospace engineering from the University of Texas in Austin, in the United States in 2007.

After my Master's Degree in 1999 I worked as a drilling services engineer on an offshore oil rig outside the coast of

West Africa between 2000 and 2001 and from 2001 to 2003 I worked as a control systems engineer at Vestas Wind Systems in Denmark.

From 2004 my career pointed more towards space and between 2004 and 2007, whilst working towards my Doctorate I worked as a research assistant at the Center for Space Research and as a teaching assistant in the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the University of Texas in Austin.

Later I was employed as an altitude & orbit control systems engineer by HE Space Operations for a period and until the astronaut selection I was employed as a Research Fellow at the Surrey Space Centre at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom. There, my research focused on spacecraft guidance, navigation and control during entry, descent and landing.

What Motivated You?

Space has been my great passion for many years, and no doubt it shaped my career choices and the fact that I am here today training as astronaut is a good indicator of just that. My interests include general science, in particular space exploration, astrobiology and evolution, literature and politics. I also have built and fly remote-controlled airplanes. However, I am no technological nerd, if you ask me. I enjoy rugby, basketball, squash, fitness training and running. I also enjoy adventure traveling, such as canoeing, kayaking, and mountaineering.

The selection process has taken one year. To what extent have you had contact with ESA before the final decision?

As candidates we have been available or at ESA's disposal during the entire process, with a few exceptions. After the first rough selection I attended two interviews at ESTEC and I participated in some medicinal and technological tests at EAC in Cologne. I have been available or at their disposal, however, at the same time I took care of my work at Surrey Space Centre. However, from now I am completely employed by ESA.

Due to the fact that your education differs from the others, will it make any difference in your further education at ESA?

Not so much, but I have more to learn about coordination and operation in different extremely stressful situations than the pilots who already are well trained on those subjects. However, much of the education is technological, and possibly I can have some advantages here. I am



The last instructions before meeting the media. From left: Thomas Pesquet, Timothy Peake, Luca Parmitano, Andreas Mogensen, Alexander Gerst and Samantha Cristoforetti. Photo credit: NordicSpace

sure that my education and employment experience will be very positive for my work at ESA. In the period between being completely educated as astronauts to a possible space journey we will work with different projects within ESA. In this period I will benefit enormously from my previous technological background.

From now on you are to be considered a public figure, being an ambassador both for ESA and for Denmark.. What is your position on that?

In fact, I look forward to being able to spread knowledge about space activities. Yes, I will be a more public person now than before, however, I believe that will be a good experience and not a bad one.

The International Space Station will be in service for possibly ten more years. Do you think you will one day be up in space?

Yes, realistically speaking a trip to the space station will be my possibility to visit space. However, a visit to the Moon is also within reach thinking of the

given timeframe I have as an astronaut. Cooperation between the USA and Europe within this field of Moon exploration may also open some doors.

What do you expect the experience of being an astronaut will provide for you?

I expect that my time as an astronaut candidate and as an astronaut will provide very interesting tasks in the further training and education while waiting to go to space. Meanwhile, I hope to work further within the field where I have my education. I expect the work will be hard at times, however, in sum, very interesting and challenging.

In 2020 Andreas will be forty four years old and is as such still a young astronaut; thus, a trip to the Moon is definitely realistic. We wish him all the best.