

## The InfraRed Space Interferometer DARWIN

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ESA is currently carrying out a system-level study of Infra Red Space Interferometry (IRSI). This study is also referred to as “DARWIN”, which was the name of the proposal to ESA. An industrial contractor – Alcatel (ex-Aerospatiale) in France have been carrying out this study during 1998, and the main study is just finished. The study has focussed on nulling interferometry which currently is assumed to be the best method for direct detection of terrestrial planets in orbit around stars other than our Sun. A further stage in the study is being initiated where we will focus on the capabilities of doing imaging (Michelson) interferometry with the same type of array (currently foreseen as 6 free flying 1.5 m telescopes with baselines of up to 1km but typically a few hundred meters and operating at wavelengths of between 5 and 17 microns).