

Fabiola Gianotti: Director General at CERN

Emma Bryant (November 06, 2014)



On November 4th, Fabiola Gianotti, Italian physicist, was named first female Director General at CERN, the International Nuclear Research Lab in Switzerland.

On Tuesday, November 4, 2014, [Fabiola Gianotti](#) [2], 52, an Italian particle physicist who led a research team in the discovery of the Higgs boson, was the first woman to be named the Director General for [CERN](#) [3], the international Nuclear Research Lab based in Geneva, Switzerland.

The CERN council elected Dr. Gianotti to succeed [Rolf-Dieter Heuer](#) [4] on January 1, 2016. She is to remain in position until 2021.

The president of CERN's governing council, [Agnieszka Zalewska](#) [5], stated that what made Dr Gianotti stand out and led to her appointment was her "vision for CERN's future as a world leading accelerator laboratory, coupled with her in-depth knowledge of both CERN and the field of experimental particle physics".

On Gianotti's election into her new position, Heuer commented, "It has been a pleasure to work with her for many years. I look forward to continuing to work with her through the transition year of 2015,



and I am confident that CERN will be in very good hands.”

Gianotti graduated with a PhD in experimental sub-nuclear physics from the University of Milan and began working for CERN in 1987.

Prior to her election, Gianotti was a spokeswoman and coordinator in the ATLAS experiment responsible for the anticipated discovery of the Higgs boson, the elementary particle in the [Standard Model of Particle](#) [6] physics, in 2012.

“It is a great honor and responsibility for me to be selected as the next CERN Director General following fifteen outstanding predecessors,” Gianotti explained. “CERN is a cradle for technology and innovation, a fount of knowledge and education and a shining, a concrete example of worldwide scientific cooperation and peace... that makes better scientists and better people. I will fully engage myself to maintain CERN’s excellence in all its attributes.”

The appointment of Gianotti as next Director General of CERN is an important precedent for not only future women physicists but also Italian successors. Italian President [Giorgio Napolitano](#) [7] explained that this election proved “Italian talents can compete on the world stage.” Gianotti draws attention to the recognition of Italian physicists that deserve more funding from the institution.

Gianotti’s appointment will be formalized at the December session of Council.

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