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ISSUE #418 APRIL 2025
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SPACE

Stunning new cosmic map reveals Universe's weirdest phenomena

The Euclid space telescope has captured millions of galaxies in astonishing detail

The European Space Agency's (ESA) Euclid space telescope mission has released its first survey images, offering a stunning glimpse into the vast cosmos.

The new pictures, taken in a 63-square-degree patch of sky – that's an area more than 300 times the size of the full Moon – reveal millions of galaxies in exquisite detail, alongside celestial phenomena such as gravitational lensing.

Predicted by physicist Albert Einstein over a century ago, gravitational lensing happens when massive objects like galaxies warp the fabric of space-time. This bends the light from the even more distant galaxies behind them, making far-off galaxies appear as glowing arcs around the closer ones.

Euclid captured 500 of these dramatic lensing events in just one week. By studying the shape and brightness of these arcs, scientists can map the hidden dark matter surrounding galaxies and even gather clues to find out what it's really made of.

Launched in July 2023, the telescope is designed to survey a third of the sky and will ultimately image 1.5 billion galaxies. A week of deep-field observations can identify as many as 26 million galaxies, with some being as far as 10.5 billion light-years away.

In October 2026, ESA will release Euclid's first cosmology dataset, incorporating a much larger survey area and more deep-field passes.

ESA/EUCLID/CONSORTIUM/NASA IMAGE PROCESSING BY M WALMSLEY/M HUERTAS-COMPANY/-C CUILANDRE