

A String of Exhibitions

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As part of its remit, ESO shares its endeavours and the discoveries made by its telescopes with as many of the general public as possible, particularly in the ESO member states. Press releases and publications are part of this communication, but as often as possible we try to take the message more directly to the public. For many years ESO has participated in exhibitions geared both to the general public and professional scientists. This year was no exception and ESO participated in a string of exhibitions in many countries.

An important event this year was JENAM, the Joint European and National Astronomy Meeting, which is organised annually in one of the European countries, jointly by the European Astronomical Society and the national astronomical society. This year, JENAM took place in Yerevan, Armenia, allowing many to discover a unique culture and country. ESO was present at this European astronomical event, also with an exhibition (see Figure 1).

In mid-2007, a French version of the ESO exhibition went on a real 'tour de France', travelling from Meursault to Paris, then to Meudon. At the end of May, the city of Meursault in Burgundy was renamed for five days 'Meursault les Etoiles', as it featured many astronomical activities for schools and the general public. In June, ESO participated for the third time in the European Research and Innovation Exhibition, held in Paris, an event that attracted about 25 000 visitors (see Figure 2). This year, ESO joined partners with three astronomical institutes from Paris that develop instruments together with ESO or make use of ESO telescopes: the Paris Observatory; the Institut d'Astrophysique; and CEA/Saclay. Staff from these institutes manned the ESO stand and interacted with the public. Many were former ESO staff and they shared their knowledge with visible pleasure. They also helped moderate the daily videoconferences that took place with Paranal, with Olivier Hainaut on the other end of the line. Later, in October, the ESO exhibition was featured at the Meudon site of the Paris Observatory



Figure 1: The ESO exhibition stand at the JENAM conference in Yerevan, Armenia was a focal point.



Figure 2: Henri Boffin (ESO) giving an interview to France 24 TV at the Salon Européen de la Recherche et de l'Innovation.

during Science Week. About 1 000 school children attended, while on the Sunday, 1 600 members of the general public visited.

France was not the only country visited of course, and ESO was also present at meetings in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. In Switzerland, ESO participated in the first Swiss Astronomy day, which took place on the 20th of

September on the Üetliberg near Zurich (see Figure 3). One of the organisers, Ms. Barbara Burtscher, had won the Specially Donated EIROforum/ESO Prize at the 16th European Young Scientists Contest in 2004. Her reward was a trip to Paranal. The September event in Zurich featured Bruno Leibundgut as one of the speakers. Bruno also moderated several videoconferences with Paranal, this time with Thomas Szeifert. The event attracted some 1 500 visitors.

In Germany, ESO had a stand during the 80th Annual Scientific Meeting of the 'Astronomische Gesellschaft' (AG), which also hosted the 5th biennial Workshop on Astroparticle Physics. This event, where ESO's Director General presented the ASTRONET Science Vision, took place in Würzburg on 24–28 September and was attended by some 300 participants.

Finally, in the Netherlands, ESO was present with an information stand at the International Festival for Astronomy (IFA) that took place near Utrecht. This three-day event, which focuses on senior high school students and beyond, was organised by the Dutch Youth Working Group for Astronomy and the Royal Netherlands Society for Meteorology and Astronomy. Amongst many other interesting sessions, the winners of the Catch a Star 2007 competition, Jan Mestan and Jan Kotek from the Czech republic, gave a presentation of their trip to the Paranal Observatory.



Figure 3: Former ESA astronaut Claude Nicollier talking with Ed Janssen (ESO) in front of the ESO stand on the 1st Swiss astronomy day.

Distinguished Visitors to Paranal

Henri Boffin
Claus Madsen
(ESO)

As part of his first official trip to Brazil and Chile, the European Science and Research Commissioner, Janez Potočnik, visited the ESO Paranal Observatory on 27 November. The Commissioner was accompanied by, among others, Jaime Pérez Vidal, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission (EC) to Chile, Mary Minch and Cornelia Nauen, respectively Director and Principal Administrator of International Scientific Cooperation for the EC, and Hervé Peró, Head of EC Unit Research Infrastructures.

Figure 1: EC Commissioner Janez Potočnik at the Control-Console of the VLT.

