

## HTRA-IV: Era of Extremely Large Telescopes

5–7 May 2010, Aghios Nikolaos, Crete, Greece

The goal of the fourth High Time Resolution Astrophysics (HTRA) workshop is to explore the current and future state of observations of all different types of astronomical sources featuring variability at the second and/or subsecond time scales. The three-day workshop has been planned to offer the community the opportunity to present contributions in different thematic areas covering science, instrumentation and future observing facilities. Selected science topics include: isolated neutron stars; X-ray binaries; white dwarfs and ultra-compact binary systems; stellar oscillations; flare stars; extragalactic transients (GRBs); and planet transits/occultations. Contributions in other science topics related to the field of HTRA are equally welcome.

The focus of the HTRA-IV workshop is on optical studies in all of the above science areas. In particular, the major emphasis will be on optical observations and on the potential of HTRA with the next generation of Extremely Large Telescopes (like the European Extremely Large Telescope, the Thirty Meter Telescope and the Giant Magellan Telescope) to make discoveries beyond our current state of knowledge and expectations. However, the workshop will also focus on multi-wavelength HTRA studies (radio, X-rays and gamma rays) both with present

(XMM, CHANDRA, FERMI) and future (e.g., IKO and SKA) observing facilities.

The purpose is to create a unique opportunity for interaction between the HTRA community and the wider astronomical community. This will stimulate discussions on the exploitation of the scientific potential of future facilities, on the development of their instrumentation, and on a number of technical and engineering aspects related to their design and operation.

Invited speakers include: Felix Aharonian (Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies), Werner Becker (Max-Planck-Institut für extraterrestrische Physik), Tomaso Belloni (INAF–Astronomical Observatory of Brera, Merate), Vik Dhillon (University of Sheffield), Isobel Hook (University of Oxford), Michael Kramer (Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics), George Pavlov (Penn State University), Ron Remillard (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Andrea Richichi (ESO) and Jürgen Schmitt (Hamburg Observatory).

Scientific Organising Committee: Cesare Barbieri (University of Padova, Dept. of Astronomy), Giovanni Bonanno (INAF–Astronomical Observatory, Catania), Vik Dhillon (University of Sheffield), Dainis Dravins (Lund Observatory),



Gottfried Kanbach (Max-Planck-Institut für extraterrestrische Physik), Nikos Kylafis (University of Crete, FORTH), Tom Marsh (University of Warwick), Roberto Mignani (University College London–Mullard Space Science Laboratory), Andy Shearer (National University of Ireland, Galway), Aga Slowikowska (Institute of Astronomy, University of Zielona Gora).

The workshop is organised as part of the OPTICON-funded European Network for High Time Resolution Astrophysics with the European Extremely Large Telescope (E-ELT).

Details and registration information can be found at <http://www.htra.ie/>.

## Beyond 2009: ESO at the Closing Ceremony of the International Year of Astronomy

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The International Year of Astronomy (IYA 2009) officially closed with a ceremony held at the University of Padova where Galileo Galilei taught physics. A brief description of the ceremony and the contribution of ESO are presented.

On 9 and 10 January 2010 the International Year of Astronomy (IYA 2009) reached its official close with a ceremony that took place in Padova, Italy, in the Aula Magna of the University of Padova, where Galileo Galilei taught experimental physics and astronomy between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century (see the image on the Astronomical News section page).



As a celebration of Galileo's first observations of the skies through a telescope and of the subsequent 400 years of discoveries, the IYA2009 was launched by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) under the theme "The Universe, Yours to Discover". After a long year, rich both in global projects and grass-roots initiatives, the organisers of the event gathered from all over the world to recount some of the multitude of experiences collected during this amazing venture that brought astronomers, amateurs and the general public together in 148 countries worldwide.

Around 280 people attended the closing ceremony, including eminent scientists from the Italian and international astronomical communities. Among the many astronomers present at the event was

Franco Pacini from the Observatory of Arcetri, originator of the year of astronomy concept back in 2002. He pointed out the potential of astronomy as a truly global scientific discipline that unites researchers in the quest for answers to some of the most fundamental questions that humankind has ever asked.

Former ESO Director General Catherine Cesarsky, Chair of the IYA2009 Working Group and IAU President during most of IYA2009, reviewed the steps made in the organisation of what turned out to be the largest network ever built in science. "Over the past 12 months we have seen astronomy enter the public's imagination and inspire people to ask the grandest questions," she said. "The International Year of Astronomy 2009 has been an unforgettable journey and I am pleased to see that many of the projects will continue."

Figure 1. Chart from iya1001 Press Release. This diagram shows a selection of the projects taking place during the International Year of Astronomy, highlighting the huge diversity of activities, programmes and initiatives that characterised this unique venture.

The ceremony featured a massive retrospective of many projects and activities conducted throughout the year (see Figure 1), from the great success of global events such as 100 Hours of Astronomy and From Earth to the Universe, to the creative effort of prodigious initiatives that have come from individual countries. The highlights were presented by the key organisational figures of IYA2009, including Pedro Russo and Lars Lindberg Christensen from the IYA2009 Secretariat at ESO Headquarters, as well as by some of the national Single Points of Contacts (SPoCs) who reported on the activities organised in several developing countries.

In the spirit of the theme of the ceremony, bearing the ambitious title, *Beyond 2009*, this survey of past activities and events was not intended as a nostalgic collection of memories, but instead as a solid base for future enterprises in public outreach of astronomy and science in general (see the logo in Figure 2). Many of the projects of IYA2009 will continue in the following years either unchanged or in a slightly changed form; several other initiatives significantly helped to pave the way for a network of researchers and educators focused on the communication of astronomy, especially in developing countries where a strong astronomical community is not yet present.

#### ESO's presence at the ceremony

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 has been a global celebration of the four centuries of revolutionary discoveries achieved through the use of the telescope. Ever since Galileo's very first observations of the sky with a more powerful tool than the human eye, the in-

struments used by astronomers have changed and evolved ceaselessly. Looking further, Roberto Gilmozzi from ESO gave an extensive overview of astronomy after the IYA2009, focussing on the telescopes of tomorrow and particularly on the European Extremely Large Telescope (E-ELT) which will become "the world's biggest eye on the sky". Along with a description of the main science drivers that led to the concept of extremely large telescopes, such as the search for Earth-like exoplanets and for the first stars and galaxies that formed in the Universe, Gilmozzi's talk highlighted how telescopes have grown in dimensions ever since Galileo's time and how the E-ELT, with its 42-metre primary mirror, would be a natural extension of this time-honoured tradition. The revolutionary design of this outstanding observatory and the timeline of the projects were also presented, followed by a look at the distant future, and the possible projects astronomers are planning even beyond the ELTs.

Although the main part of IYA2009 is over, it leaves an important legacy for

the worldwide astronomical community including an impressive network for the future with ESO education and public outreach at its focal point.



Figure 2. Beyond IYA Logo. The logo of Beyond IYA, the signature that labels the legacy projects continuing after 2009.

## In Memoriam Karin Horn-Hansen

Tim de Zeeuw<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ESO

Karin Hansen, as she was known at ESO, was born in Lyngby in Denmark and began work in the Personnel Department in July 1991 where she was involved in the recruitment process and health insurance. In 1993 she moved to Finance Services and in 1997 became secretary to the Head of Administration. She moved to the Office of the Director General in September 2007 where she continued to act as the contact point at ESO for all

matters related to Council. Karin was known for her excellent performance, complete reliability and high motivation, carrying out the complex and demanding tasks in support of Council, the Finance Committee and senior management, always maintaining excellent relationships with her internal and external contacts. She was diagnosed with a serious illness in mid-2008, but seemed to recover and returned to ESO part-time in the spring of 2009 and was married in June. Unfortunately the illness returned, and Karin passed away peacefully on 29 December 2009. She was a remarkable person, and will be remembered with great affection by many.

