The school was attended by 39 participants representing astronomy Masters and PhD students, and also several young postdoctoral researchers, mainly from EU Member States, supported by OPTICON. Additionally, nine students received support from the Czech Republic from local funding schemes. Moreover, IAU grants allowed the participation of seven non-EU students, from Armenia, Egypt, Iran and Ukraine. In total, 17 states were represented.

Programme

The school opened on 1 September 2015 with a speech from the Deputy Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, Robert Plaga, followed by welcoming speeches from the organising institutions. The Czech vice-president of the ESO Council, Jan Palouš, gave a lecture about the Czech road to becoming an ESO member.

The summer school took place in Brno, Czech Republic, on the modern campus of Masaryk University between 31 August and 12 September 2015. Over the course of two weeks, the campus lecture hall witnessed a series of education sessions presenting the modern observatories of Europe, be it ESO, La Palma, Observatoire de Haute Province (OHP), Calar Alto, Pic du Midi or other facilities, along with their instrumentation and the most recent scientific highlights, ranging from the theoretical background to modelling and astrophysical interpretation. The school was organised under the auspices of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, and the presence of the Czech Ambassador to Chile enhanced the recognition of the event.

Astronomical Institute of Czech Academy of Sciences, Ondřejov, Czech Republic
Institut d’Astrophysique de Paris, France
Department of Theoretical Physics and Astrophysics, Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic

The Astronomical Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences organised, jointly with its local partners from Masaryk University, and international partners OPTICON, ESO and the IAU, a two-week practical training course in astronomy for young researchers. The summer school is briefly summarised: lectures covered a wide range of theoretical and observational topics and the emphasis of the practical work was on the analysis of archival data.

Introduction

The Czech Republic is an active but relatively young ESO Member State, having joined in 2007. Therefore, it is extremely important to broaden the expertise of young Czech astronomers with regard to the newest available instrumentation and observing facilities. In 2014, the first workshop with this goal, entitled “Seven Years in Chile: The Accomplishments and Goals of Czech Astronomers at ESO”, brought together Czech researchers at Villa Lanna in Prague (see Kabath et al., 2014). It was decided that the next step would be the organisation of a summer school, potentially with international participation.

In early 2015, the Optical Infrared Coordination Network (OPTICON) agreed to join forces and to co-organise an event within the traditional framework of the Network of European Observatories in the North (NEON) schools, aimed at the education of early-stage researchers in astronomy. Usually, the format of OPTICON schools comprises observing, archival data analysis or awareness-raising courses. The latter topics were chosen, with a special focus on a hands-on approach to archival data, together with presentations of other European telescopes accessible via the OPTICON Access programme. Finally, to broaden participation even further, the help of International Astronomical Union (IAU) was also obtained, within the International School for Young Astronomers (ISYA) scheme (sponsored by the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters), to sponsor the participation of a few more students from outside the European Union.

The summer school took place in Brno, Czech Republic, on the modern campus of Masaryk University between 31 August and 12 September 2015. The school was attended by 39 participants representing astronomy Masters and PhD students, and also several young postdoctoral researchers, mainly from EU Member States, supported by OPTICON. Additionally, nine students received support from the Czech Republic from local funding schemes. Moreover, IAU grants allowed the participation of seven non-EU students, from Armenia, Egypt, Iran and Ukraine. In total, 17 states were represented.
Some of the Kawka and Ernst Paunzen. Students had ESO’s operational procedures, Adela by Czech colleagues with experience in simulation exercise were organised an Observing Programmes Committee. Finally, a proposal-writing session and constructive discussion. presented, giving rise to a very lively and prospects for young researchers were was shared with students and the career experience of established astronomers. In addition, during a career session, the students had a chance to foster new friendships and collaborations and interacted informally with experienced researchers. Furthermore, the picturesque region of Moravia was also presented.

Social events played an integral role in the school as well, including an opening reception in the campus hotel Campea, a guided tour through the historical city of Brno, and an afternoon organised by the Center of Technology Transfer of Masaryk University with cooperation of high-tech companies (Moravian Instruments). Students had a chance to foster new friendships and collaborations and interacted informally with experienced researchers. Furthermore, the picturesque region of Moravia was also presented.

On 11 September, the school ended with conference-style presentations of the student projects. The presentations of the results were of excellent quality, given the fact that the students had had a relatively short time for project work. In the evening a farewell dinner took place, again at Hotel Campea. The formal and informal feedback obtained from the participants was clearly positive, with new ideas generated for improvement of future events.

We believe that this kind of summer school is of enormous importance and impact for early-stage researchers, especially because it is not always easy to acquire hands-on experience with the most modern telescopes and instruments. We are happy to acknowledge the contributions of the lecturers and tutors, as well as significant financial support from ESO, OPTICON, the IAU, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and, last but not least, our local host Masaryk University. Hopefully, this summer school marks an important milestone for modern Czech astronomy and will also contribute to the competitiveness of European students in astronomy, for whom it was a unique astronomy education event of its kind.

All presentations, as well as the student project contributions from the last day of the school, can be found on the school website and on the OPTICON website.

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References


Links

1 OPTICON: http://www.iap.fr/opticon/