

Celebrating ESO's 40th Anniversary

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ESO has always been a forward-looking organization, focussed on present and future programmes and projects. In its 40th year, this is as true as ever, as ESO keeps its eyes on implementing the VLTI, initiating the development of the second-generation instrumentation for the VLT and, of course, embarking on Phase II of the ALMA project, for which the ESO Council gave the green light at its mid-year meeting in London. Still, a 40th anniversary warrants a look at the decades passed and a reflection on the role and achievements of the organization during a period of time in which our science has progressed tremendously. That ESO has achieved its goals is undisputed, providing evidence of the wisdom of those astronomers who gathered in Leiden in early 1954 to formulate the need for this organization and justifying the trust displayed by the five countries, which were the original signatories to the 1962 convention that formed the legal base for ESO.

There were many milestones on ESO's road to success. Not surprisingly, many of them were recalled – and retold – during the various celebrations in September and October this year, described in the Anniversary issue of *The Messenger*, as well as, undoubtedly, in numerous conversations among members of the ESO 'family', be it former or present staff, members of committees or Council – or users in the scientific community.

Rather than organizing a single, high-profile central celebration event, ESO opted for a series of events, beginning with the official visit on 9



Dr. Uwe Thomas addressing an invited audience during his visit to the ESO Headquarters on 9 September.

September by Dr. Uwe Thomas, Secretary of State for education and research of the German Federal Government. Speeches by Dr. Thomas, Prof. Ralf Bender (LMU), Prof. Wolfgang Hillebrandt (MPA), ESO's Director General and Dr. Arno Freytag, President of the ESO Council, were followed by a screening of a (pre-premiere) version of the anniversary film 'Europe Reaches for the Stars – Forty Years ESO'. Also, the anniversary book 'Geheimnisvolles Universum – Europas Astronomen entschleiern das Weltall' by German science journalist Dirk Lorenzen was shown for the first time with hand-

bound copies presented to Dr. Thomas, Dr. Freytag, Mr. Manfred Solbrig, the Mayor of Garching, and to ESO's Director General.

On 14 October, a joint celebration by the Garching staff and the ESO Council took place, with speeches by ESO's Council President, the Director General and Claudio Cumani, Chairman of the ESO International Staff Association. The event was 'broadcast' via ESO's video-conference system. The anniversary film was shown to the entire staff, both in Garching and at simultaneous anniversary parties in Santiago, at La Silla and Paranal.

As mentioned in the last issue of *The Messenger*, ESO's anniversary is also a public event. Perhaps most visible is the new planetarium show, produced by the Association des planétariums de langue française (APLF) in collaboration with ESO. It is entitled 'Mysteries of the Southern Sky' and will become available in French, German, English, Dutch, Spanish and possibly other languages. Until now, about 40 planetaria in France and seven other countries have signed up and will stage the show in the coming weeks and months.

The formal premiere took place on 11 October at the Cité de l'Espace in Toulouse. The premiere event for an invited audience encompassed scientific talks by Drs. Françoise Combes and Marc Lachieze-Rey and an evening reception accompanied by live Latin American tunes.

Meanwhile, the ESO anniversary film is available on a three-language DVD (English, French, German), as well as



The newly refurbished auditorium in Garching was packed during the anniversary celebration on 14 October.



ESO's Director General addressing the invited audience at the premiere of the planetarium show in Toulouse.



In spite of the decidedly unpleasant weather in Garching on 14 October, good catering contributed to the convivial atmosphere in the party tent, as about 250 people gathered for the dinner for staff and Council.

in single-language versions on VHS tapes. Among other places, the DVD will be widely available through those planetaria staging the ESO show.

Finally, the CD-ROM (in English) entitled '3D Atlas of the Universe', is now

scheduled for early December. The CD-ROM, which is produced in a collaboration between ESO, USM (Munich) and Planetary Visions (University College, London), includes video clips, photos and texts about ESO as well as

some of the most spectacular astronomical images based on observations at La Silla and Paranal combined with advanced 3D simulation software. It will be commercially available all over Europe.

Breaking the Ground for the European Research Area – The Conference 'European Research 2002'

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In the days November 11–13, about 9000 scientists, science administrators and policy makers gathered in Brussels to attend the Launch Conference for the '6th Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demon-

stration activities' – or for short, 'FP-6'. While most participants came from the member states of the European Union, candidate countries and associated states, the meeting was in fact attended by people from 65 countries, demonstrating the wide scope and the

importance of the process set in motion to create the European Research Area. Some 50 TV teams and 230 journalists from the print media covered the event, which *El País*, the leading Spanish newspaper, described as 'The Science Summit in Brussels'. The strong media interest bears witness to the fact that science and technology (and with them, also education) are playing an increasingly important and visible role in the public sphere and that the organization and execution of research, as well as the exploitation of scientific results, are assuming importance in the mainstream political debate.

Winds of Change

The background for the strong participation to the meeting is certainly to be found in the notion of a change of the political climate in Europe with respect to science and technology. The Lisbon declaration by the European Council in March 2000, stated that the EU should 'become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. It was re-



The ESO stand formed a part of the EIROforum area.