

Danish Minister visits ESO Chile

Gonzalo Argandoña, Felix Mirabel (ESO)

On October 21, the Danish Minister for Education, Mr. Bertel Haarder, paid a visit to ESO in Santiago, accompanied by a small entourage including the Danish Ambassador to Chile, Anita Hugau.

Mr. Haarder, who had visited La Silla 15 years ago, was received by the ESO Representative in Chile, Felix Mirabel, and Claus Madsen, Head of the ESO Public Affairs Department. The guests were also introduced to two Danish fellows who currently work at ESO in Chile, Lise Christensen and Thomas Dall.

During the meeting, the minister was briefed on the current science operations in Chile, the relationship between ESO and Chile, the status of the ALMA project as well as on the progress regarding ESO's ELT plans.

The discussion also covered ESO's many-sided educational outreach activities, both in Chile and in Europe and how these initiatives can play a role in a larger effort to stimulate interest in the natural sciences amongst young people.

At the ESO office in Santiago, Bertel Haarder (Danish Minister of Education) talks to Lise Christensen. At the back, Claus Madsen, Felix Mirabel and Mrs. Haarder.



Photo: I. Lemus, ESO

The Danish Minister was particularly interested in science educational projects promoted by ESO in Chile and Europe. The picture shows children at the 2005 Fair of Physics that took place in October in Santiago, as part of the celebrations of the Chilean National Science and Technology Week.



Photo: G. Argandoña, ESO

Science on Stage 2005

Douglas Pierce-Price, Henri Boffin, Claus Madsen (ESO)

“Science on Stage”, the European Science Teaching Festival, is a major educational outreach programme for science teachers. It aims to identify and foster innovation within formal science education by means of exchange of best practice, workshops and seminars involving educators from all over Europe.

Almost five hundred science educators from twenty-seven countries met in November at CERN, Geneva, for “Science on Stage” (SOS). The delegates had been selected through elaborate national procedures involving contests and national “festivals” in which participants were invited to present their ideas and projects.

The SOS programme and indeed the European Science Teaching Festival is arranged by the EIROforum, of which ESO is a member, and was developed from the successful “Physics on Stage” events.

An inspiring programme of presentations and workshops, and a lively fair where delegates could demonstrate exciting experiments and teaching projects, allowed educators to share techniques and take new ideas back to their schools across Europe.

This dedicated initiative for teachers, which is co-funded by the European Commission, aims to promote innovative science teaching in the formal education system. The event has gathered increasing support from education authorities, learned societies, and industry in

many of the participating countries, which are clearly keen to ensure that their educational systems maximise the benefits from taking part in the programme.

Henri Boffin and Douglas Pierce-Price from ESO presented workshops for teachers on the ALMA Interdisciplinary Teaching Project and an introduction to Gamma-Ray Bursts, respectively.

In another workshop, delegates learnt about and discussed the new European journal for science teachers, "Science in School". This journal is based at the EMBL and published by the EIROforum. It will be launched in spring 2006 and published quarterly. It is part of the NUCLEUS project funded by the European Commission.

An international jury presented "European Science Teaching Awards" to the best projects at the fair, in a ceremony attended by Jean-Michel Baer, the Director of Science and Society in the EC Directorate General for Research. The four general awards, together with individual awards from each of the seven EIROforum organisations, had a total value of 17 000 €.

ESO's prize was awarded to the "Einstein Year Library Project", by Mandy Curtis, from the United Kingdom. The general prizes were won by Catherine Garcia-Maisonnier of France for "Building a Weather Balloon at School" (1st prize), Wim Peeters of Belgium for "Physics is Cool! – the Box of Experiments" (2nd prize), Jerzy Jarosz and Aneta Szczgielska of Poland for "The Cardiovascular System" (3rd prize), and Tobias Kirschbaum of Germany for "Tracing Earthquakes (Chinese Seismograph)" (4th prize). The

other EIROforum prizes went to Maria Joao Carvalho of Portugal for "Lichen and Water Quality" (CERN), Eilish McLoughlin *et al.* of Ireland for "Teaching Science as a Process" (EFDA/JET), Evanthia Papanikolau of Greece for "DNA Helix" (EMBL), Agota Lang of Hungary for "Neurode, or Garfield the Lazy Cat" (ESA), Gianluca Farisi of Italy for "Humanism and Science" (ESRF), and Nanna Kristensen of Denmark for "Jewellery is chemistry" (ILL).

The next Science on Stage event will take place in Grenoble in April 2007.

Festival participants enjoy the magic of chemistry on stage.



Photo: H. Boffin, ESO

ESO at CER 2005

Claus Madsen (ESO)

On November 14–15, the Brussels Exhibition Centre (Heysel) was the home of a major international conference on science communication with the title "Communicating European Research" (CER 2005).

The conference was officially opened with speeches by Commissioner Dr. Janez Potočnik (Commissioner for Science and Research) and Commissioner Viviane Reding (Commissioner for Information Society and Media), with former Commis-

sioner Philippe Busquin, now a prominent member of the European Parliament, chairing the session.

Over the two days, about 2 100 participants from 56 countries, including more than 200 journalists, discussed all aspects of public science communication, including science education, informal science learning, science festivals and media work. The conference also saw the launch of the "Communiqué Initiative", a first step towards creating a European Media Centre for science.

ESO participated through the EIROforum partnership, that acted as organisers of two sessions – one on formal science education and one on media work. ESA and ESO were also represented in a lively panel discussion on communication of astronomy and space science. Finally, EIROforum had a major information stand in the exhibition area.

The conference offered ample opportunity for stimulating exchanges, not just between European scientists and media experts but also with participants from overseas, including the US and China. It