

Report on the

2009 ESO Fellows Symposium

held at ESO Garching, Germany, 8–10 June 2009

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The fourth ESO Fellows Symposium took place in Garching from 8–10 June 2009. This year's symposium brought together 28 ESO Fellows from Chile and Germany to meet their colleagues from across the ocean, discuss their research and provide feedback on ESO's Fellowship programme. This year's symposium also included training workshops to enhance the practical skills of ESO Fellows in today's competitive job market.

Like many international organisations, ESO has a geographically distributed staff separated by thousands of kilometres. Regular scientific exchanges between ESO offices in Germany and Chile are essential to bridge physical and cultural differences, and to ensure that the two sites work together as a coherent organisation. The ESO Fellows Symposia

are an important component of this effort, bringing together Fellows from Chile and Germany to share their research, stimulate new scientific collaborations, build personal connections and discuss issues of common interest. These biennial gatherings originated from a desire, expressed by past Fellows, to have a more unified Fellowship programme.

The 2009 Fellows Symposium took place at ESO Headquarters in Garching. During the three-day event, each Fellow gave a 20-minute overview of his or her current research interests and activities. These presentations covered many areas of modern astrophysics — both observational and theoretical — and spanned the electromagnetic spectrum from gamma rays to radio waves. A number of staff astronomers, students and visitors from ESO Garching also attended the talks, curious to learn more about the Fellows' research. Many of these talks were followed by numerous questions from interested participants.

An important new component of this year's symposium was the inclusion of training workshops to aid the career

development of ESO Fellows. These workshops, led by experts from outside ESO and organised with the help of ESO's Human Resources department, focused on three important areas: job interview skills; time management strategies; and techniques for giving effective presentations. The information and insights gleaned from these training sessions, which included opportunities to practice what was learned, will undoubtedly prove useful for Fellows as they compete for jobs and pursue careers at observatories, universities or elsewhere in the future.

Social interactions have always been a key part of the ESO Fellows Symposia, and this year was no exception. Coffee breaks and lunches provided opportunities for Fellows to get to know each other better in an informal setting, and the highlight was an enjoyable Symposium dinner at the famous Ratskeller restaurant, located on Marienplatz in the heart of Munich. As the evening finished and the final goodbyes were said, thoughts were turning already to the next ESO Fellows Symposium, which should take place in Santiago in 2011.



Participants at the 2009 ESO Fellows Symposium in Garching.