

ESO Participates in Germany's Girls' Day Activities

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On 14 April 2011, ESO took part in the Germany-wide Girls' Day activities^{1,2}, in which technical enterprises, universities and research organisations arranged open days for girls, to give female school students an insight into scientific and technological professions and to encourage more of them to choose such careers in the future.

The ESO Girls' Day event, An Introduction to the Work of the European Southern Observatory, was organised by the Human Resources department, with participation from volunteers across the organisation and support from the education and Public Outreach Department. Spaces were soon fully booked, and about 50 students attended the event at ESO Headquarters in Garching. The girls, aged between 11 and 16, came from schools in Munich and the surrounding area.

In the morning, after being welcomed to ESO, the students were shown a film

about the adventure of working at the Very Large Telescope, and could appreciate the unfamiliar landscape of the Atacama Desert and the state-of-the-art facilities on Cerro Paranal. This introduction was followed by presentations on astronomy and the observatory sites, and on careers at ESO.

After lunch, the students split into four groups, to visit different parts of ESO Headquarters. They saw the activities in the optical and electronics laboratories, and the work of the draughtspersons, as well as having another chance to meet some of the astronomers and PhD students at ESO. Throughout the tour they had the opportunity to ask many questions about working at ESO.

Having seen the VLT in the morning's film, the students then had the next best experience to visiting it themselves: a live video-link to both Paranal and the ESO offices in Santiago, where astronomers were available for a question-and-answer session. Seeing the mountaintop at Paranal in real-time, with a giant VLT Unit Telescope moving in the background, was a thrilling experience for the students. The volunteers at the other end of the intercontinental video-link kept the

audience informed and entertained in equal measure, thanks to their lively and engaging answers, and it was only limited time that prevented the discussion lasting even longer.

With this "visit" to ESO's flagship site in Chile, the Girls' Day came to an end. Thanks are due to all the staff members who kindly volunteered to speak to the girls and show them around. We hope that the students will remember the experience for a long time, and that it will inspire some of them to pursue careers in science and technology. They may even enter the field of astronomy, in which case perhaps we will have the chance to welcome them back to ESO in the future.

Links

- ¹ Girls' Day in Germany: <http://www.girls-day.de/>
² English information about Girls' Day in Germany: http://www.girls-day.de/English_Information



Announcement of the ESO Workshop

Ten Years of VLTI: From First Fringes to Core Science

24–27 October 2011, ESO Headquarters, Garching, Germany

The Very Large Telescope Interferometer (VLTI) saw first fringes in 2001 with a very simple but powerful instrument known as VINCI. Since then, the VLTI, with the instruments AMBER and MIDI, has become a major contributor to a number of important research domains in contemporary astrophysics, from the nature of rocky objects in the Solar System, to the nuclear regions of active galaxies, in addition to detailed investigations of stars and their close environment. The VLTI is the first optical interferometer to be implemented as a common

user facility. At the VLTI, optical interferometry has evolved from an initial experimental phase, devoted mainly to technology demonstration, to the current phase where astronomers do not need to be "black-belt" interferometrists to use the instruments and extract valuable scientific information about their favourite targets.

There are three themes to the conference. The first is to travel along the road of the VLTI over the last ten years, celebrating its scientific achievements and

the successful partnership between ESO and the international interferometric community. Turning the VLTI into a *bona fide* common user facility has required enormous efforts from scientists and engineers at ESO and in the community; the close collaboration between ESO and its user community was essential to this success.

The second theme is to visit the science that the VLTI will be doing in the era of the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) and the James Webb