

Education, Culture and Science. About 60 science journalists from across the EU attended, together with coordinators of the various astronomical projects supported by the EC, including RadioNet, OPTICON, EUROPLANET, ILIAS, the ELT Design Study, the SKA Design Study, the ALMA Enhancement Programme and VO-TECH. ESO displayed an information stand, which was well visited and appreciated by both the participants and the media.

A few days later, from July 11–14 ESO had an exhibition at the University of Berne, in connection with “EPS 13”. (see page 60). At the end of the conference, on July 15, an Open Day on Physics and Society was co-organised with the Swiss Academy of Sciences and the Swiss Physical Society. In the context of a joint EIROforum presentation, ESO participated by means of a live video conference with ESO Paranal, moderated by Barbara Vonarburg, well-known Swiss science journalist and Rolf Landua from CERN.

ESO staff astronomer Thomas Szeifert answers questions at the EPS 13 Open House videoconference at the University of Berne.



Photos: E. Janssen, ESO (2)



Prof. Jean-Philippe Ansernet, President of the Swiss Physical Society, Prof. Martin Huber, outgoing President of the European Physical Society, Dr. C. Rossel, Conference coordinator, and Dr. Ingrid Kissling-Näf, Director of the Swiss Academy of Sciences at the EPS 13 Conference venue.

Public Information and Education in Chile

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One of the initiatives of ESO in Chile is the strengthening of the links with Chilean and Latin American media, to provide the information needed to educate the public in Latin America on the latest advancements in astronomy and astrophysics.

This initiative has produced a considerable increase in the media coverage of

ESO science activities, as described in Figure 1, which shows the evolution in the number of media publications in Chile on recent achievements at ESO.

Certainly, the active involvement of the La Silla Paranal Observatory in the global observation campaign of Comet 9P/Tempel 1 was an excellent opportunity to further promote this strategy in a multi-approach way. A dedicated website in Spanish language (<http://www.impacto->

[profundo.cl](http://www.impacto-profundo.cl)) was released in advance to emphasise the contribution of the La Silla Paranal Observatory to the long-term monitoring campaign of Comet 9P/Tempel 1. This website, that included general information about comets, became an important reference in the Spanish language for the public and journalists who covered the event.

ESO also joined the Chilean Ministry of Education to organise a national educa-

tional videoconference (see Figure 2) that linked Paranal with young students in 18 different cities along the country, from Arica (in the Northern extreme of the country) to Punta Arenas (in the Chilean Patagonia, at the very end of the South American continent). Thanks to this joint initiative with Chilean authorities, enthusiastic secondary students could learn about VLT capabilities.

In parallel to this educational activity, a series of press events at ESO Vitacura were offered, with the valuable support of Comet 9P/Tempel 1 observers. The outcome was a large number of reports and news stories, where observers at Paranal and La Silla played an important role as primary sources of information for editors and journalists. Not all the reports were of extreme quality, and precisely one of the challenges for the future is to promote in the region best practices in science journalism and communication of astronomy for the general public.

A week after the most intensive part of the observing programme of Comet 9P/Tempel 1 had ended, the main national TV network in the country, in conjunction with ESO, presented a 50-minute documentary. This special chapter showed the excitement behind Comet 9P/Tempel 1 observations, along with some basic principles of modern observation of the sky. In its first projection by TV, about half a million people watched the documentary (Source: Time-Ibope).

A complementary approach to this media strategy has been the presence of ESO in public events and exhibitions, as the Public Affairs Department of ESO in Garching has done for many years in Europe.

Last June, ESO was present at EXPONOR, the most relevant industrial convention in northern Chile, held every two years (see Figure 3). Based in Antofagasta, it is attended by thousands of visitors, who are the natural neighbours of Paranal and ALMA.

ESO Media Coverage in Chile 2004–2005

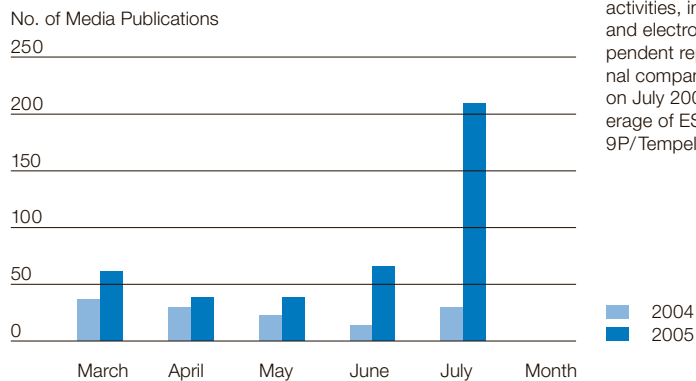


Figure 1: This graph shows the evolution of media coverage in Chile of ESO activities, including TV, radio, written and electronic media, based on independent reports provided by the external company Litoral Press. The peak on July 2005 is due to the media coverage of ESO observations of Comet 9P/Tempel 1 and Deep Impact.



Figure 2: National videoconference on Comets and Deep Impact, jointly organised by ESO and the Chilean Ministry of Education. After a motivating introduction given by astronomers located in Santiago and Paranal, students in 18 different Chilean cities had the opportunity to ask their questions about Comets and the Solar System, a few days before impact.



Figure 3: Representing ESO/ALMA, Jörg Eschwey, Manager of Site Development at Chajnantor, and Roberto Tamai, Head of Engineering of the La Silla Paranal Observatory, receive the award to the best exhibition during Exponor 2005 (the main industrial convention in Antofagasta, capital of Region II, where Paranal and Chajnantor are located). Scale models of the VLT and ALMA, documentaries in Spanish version and informative panels were part of the ESO-ALMA exhibition.

For the future, more exhibitions in public events are expected, most of them in collaboration with the Chilean Ministry of Education. In the long run, this will mean an increase on the public awareness of ESO's commitment with Chile and its people, sharing a cultural identity with the community and contributing to the promotion of a science culture and a better understanding of the Universe.