sky. This is the secret. Years ago a group of astronomers had a dream … a desire that, maybe, looked much bigger than themselves. Many people gave a piece of their life for that … many of them were enthusiastic … maybe some were not … many of them were nice and funny … maybe some were not … many of them were devoted … and others maybe were not. But the desire became a reality. This is being human … fulfilling a desire that is so big that it flies way above the individual capabilities of those who realise it. Let's be honest: the astronomical community is a funny one … people looking at galaxies at redshift 10 000, waiting for that photon coming every ten days, with the aim of discovering the origin of life … and we do not have any idea of how the Solar System was born. But you are there, the Sun goes down, the stars are coming: there's silence … there is no cause for alarm … it's time to do science.

External Fellows at ESO

In addition to the ESO fellowships, a number of external fellows are hosted at ESO and a profile of one of these fellows is presented.

Yiannis Tsamis

It is customary for these profiles to begin with personal recollections. In honour of this tradition, I submit that my links to ESO can be traced back to the early 1980s when, seated on my grandma's lap at home in Greece, I was watching Carl Sagan on our new colour TV set cruising through the Cosmos on a makeshift starship. "E-ELT's home is only a few microparsecs beyond that yellow dwarf star, some billion ewros into the future", I clearly heard him pronounce. Well, there is an element of truth in it though, as then there were no health warnings, conveniently, about the corruptive power of TV on a child's tender soul. An "E-ELT" was perhaps E.T. misspelled and the "ewro", well that's actually "euro" in Maltese according to Wikipedia. Perhaps the euro (or rather the Greek rendering, ευρώ) will become a standard unit in economochaotics theory come the 22nd century.

My more tangible links with ESO can be traced back to winter 2006 when I came to stay as a visitor for two freezing months to work with Jeremy Walsh on VLT FLAMES data of planetary nebulae. I was at the time a postdoc at University College London and I knew Jeremy from his visit to Meudon during my Gruber Fellowship there in 2004. ESO seemed to me to be definitely different from other academic environments. There was an unlimited supply of free cappuccino to give any high street café a run for its money, an endless list of quality seminars each week, and a formidable array of experts and visitors willing to debate the latest developments in astronomical instrumentation and data analysis. The fact that the place is situated right next to the beer capital of Europe is of course an added bonus: because sometimes astronomy is thirsty work, as was demonstrated in the lively 10 pm discussion sessions at the conference "Mapping Oxygen in the Universe" in Tenerife this May!

At ESO everybody also speaks the language that the papers are written in, which makes it all the easier to blend in no matter where you come from. I had my sights set on Garching since then and applied for an ESO Fellowship, but failed. But failing doesn't matter one bit as long as you succeed in the end, and so we asked Bruno Leibundgut in the spring of 2008 whether ESO would consider me as a candidate for a Marie Curie intra-European (IEF) fellowship. ESO was involved in other FP7 projects, but had not hosted an IEF before. My proposal was some twenty pages long (as these things usually are), and was evaluated and ranked by independent experts along with many others throughout Europe.

Yiannis Tsamis

When the positive results came out (thank you FP7!), I had only just moved to a position at the Instituto de Astrofísica de Andalucía (IAA) in Granada on a Gran Telescopio Canarias (GTC) Consolider grant to work with Pepe Vílchez, and then parenthood followed soon after. Our young family's time in Granada was great and I would have stayed at the IAA, if the chance to move to ESO on a personal grant had not arisen. It was a difficult moment because the IAA is a wonderful place and the Spanish colleagues are truly excellent and had been very welcoming. I delayed the start of the IEF as much as I could and this gave me time to establish lasting links, and to become involved in Spanish-led projects such as

the MEGARA integral field spectrograph to be installed on the 10-metre GTC.

For my research I have been making good use of ESO's VLT to study protoplanetary discs (the theme of my Marie Curie fellowship), planetary nebulae and blue compact galaxies in the nearby Universe. I investigate the chemical composition of these sources through their emission lines, observed by integral field spectrographs such as FLAMES or VIMOS. It all seems so far removed from the reach of the 4.5-inch telescope I still keep back home and with which I used to split ε Lyrae or observe the scars of Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter in 1994 from downtown Thessaloniki. Munich is really an excellent place to live in and work. Holding my fellowship at ESO has given me leave to spend considerable time away, suiting the needs of our family (thanks to the flexible IEF rules), a generous travel allowance (NASA Ames near San Francisco and Morelia in Mexico are next in line), all the while benefiting from the remarkably stimulating environment. The people who work here are lucky and I guess they know it; they should cherish it in these testing times. Becoming involved with ESO has been a truly positive experience. Χίλια ευχαριστώ/*mille grazie* to Alessandro and Silvia for putting up with their personal astronomer. Thanks and all the best, to all ESO staff too.

Announcement of the Conference

The First Year of ALMA Science

12–15 December 2012, Hotel Cumbres Patagónicas, Puerto Varas, Chile

The Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) Early Science operations started at the end of September 2011. Over one hundred high profile science projects have been identified as high priority for execution. The first exciting scientific results from Science Verification datasets and Cycle 0 observations have begun to appear in refereed journals since the beginning of 2012. By the end of this year, the ALMA users community will be in a position to review the first science results produced by this new and unique facility.

The conference will include all the ALMA science topics covered by Early Science observations, from Solar System bodies to objects in our own Galaxy, from the local to the high redshift Universe. While the conference will obviously be focused on ALMA observational results, presentations and discussions on related theoretical implications and predictions will be included, as well as relevant complementary data from other major facilities. The conference will also be an ideal venue to discuss the scientific priorities for the upgrades to the ALMA development plan in the context of the first results from Early Science.

To allow more ALMA users to propose contributions based on results from their Cycle 0 projects, we have selected a late deadline for abstract contributions of 27 October 2012.

Important deadlines:
- Registration opens: 1 June 2012
- Abstract deadline: 27 October 2012
- Contributed talk selection: 16 November 2012

The conference website is:
http://www.almasc.org/2012

More details are also available by email:
asc2012@alma.cl

The conference is co-sponsored by the Joint ALMA Observatory and the ALMA partners (ESO, NAOJ and NRAO), with additional support provided by the EC-FP7 Radionet3 project.

ESO/S. Guisard (www.eso.org/~sguisard)