



# EUROPEAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY **NEWSLETTER**

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## EDITORIAL

By the time this newsletter has arrived in your mailbox the 2009 International Year of Astronomy will have passed. Throughout the year, numerous activities took place in Europe, and all over the globe, to celebrate this event by educating the general public on the wonders of astronomy. The EAS solicited proposals for public outreach activities and sponsored four such projects. One project, «Astrophotography exhibition: a journey through the Universe» took place in Austria, one in Portugal with the title «From Earth to the Universe in Portugal», one in Spain under the name «Tales of the Stars», and one in Ukraine entitled «The first Ukrainian Internet Telescope». Brief reports on those are presented in this issue.

In the current newsletter we also continue the theme of presenting the 24 National Societies who are affiliated with

EAS to our members. This effort commenced with the description of four societies in Newsletter 35, which was published in June 2008. Thanks to the contributions of colleagues from the corresponding national societies you will find a brief description on the Hellenic Astronomical Society, and the Royal Astronomical Society. More will continue in the next issue. This is a first small step to familiarize us with the organizational structure under which astronomers across Europe take decisions, which affect the development of science in their countries. Hopefully this knowledge will contribute to the enhancement of interaction and collaboration among astronomers in Europe and beyond.

Vassilis Charmandaris  
University of Crete,  
Greece

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues and EAS members,

We are approaching the end of a remarkable year. On suggestion of the International Astronomical Union the year 2009 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Astronomy. The aim of the IYA2009 was to stimulate worldwide interest, especially among young people, in astronomy and science under the central theme, «The Universe, Yours to Discover». 148 of the 192 member states (77%!) of the United Nations had installed National Nodes who contributed to the IYA 2009. Many events took place during the whole year, both on a global scale such as the Cornerstone projects organised by the IAU and on local scales organized by the National Nodes and very many astronomical institutions all over the world. We are proud that the European Astronomical Society could contribute to the IYA 2009 as an Organizational Associate and that we also supported a number of national projects. Of course, the most direct impression I could get from all the local events organised at my home institute Landessternwarte Heidelberg and at the other institutions here in Heidelberg. I am sure that the IYA 2009 was very successful in achieving its goals and that it had indeed a very big impact on the public visibility of astronomy both in our local area and on a worldwide scale.



I think it is very important that we keep this impact upright and that we continue our activities even if the IYA will have finished by the end of 2009. One should always keep in mind that the relation to the public is of crucial importance for us. Our science is essentially basic science; unlike the applied sciences we cannot obtain an immediate return. So astronomy has to be financed by public means, i.e. by the state and hence by the taxpayer of each state. As we all know astronomy is not a cheap science, costs for big observational projects such as new satellites or the new generation of 40-meter class telescopes can easily exceed one billion Euros. Very often critical voices doubt the justification to spend such immense sums for basic science. I think it is not only worthwhile but also crucial for the progress of science in general. The universe is the largest laboratory we have; in the universe we are able to study the most extreme states of matter, from extremely tenuous to extremely dense. For the progress of mankind basic research is indispensable and without basic research applied research would soon die out. Therefore, it is our duty and one of our most important tasks to be active and approach the public and the taxpayer in order to make clear why we carry out our science and explain the importance of the results we have obtained from our research with the big observational facilities. Based on my personal experience that should not be too difficult, since the public is generally very much interested in astronomical topics. For instance, as we know from surveys, astronomy attracts many young people to natural sciences at the university, even if they do not follow a career as professional astronomers. So I would really like to urge all of us to continue the efforts in public outreach also beyond the IYA 2009.

The preparations for JENAM 2010, which will take place from September 6-10, 2010, in Lisbon, Portugal are well under way. The meeting will be jointly organized by the Sociedade Portuguesa de Astronomia and the EAS. The co-chairs of the scientific organizing committee are Andre Moitinho (SPA), who also chairs the LOC, and Jan Palous (EAS). I am very thankful that after 2002 our Portuguese colleagues are willing to organize another JENAM in Portugal, the second one during the first decade of this millennium. This also shows the impressive advancement of astronomy in Portugal during the last three decades and I hope that our JENAM will help to further support astronomy in Portugal.

Some of you might be surprised that we have the same general motto "European Week of Astronomy and Space Science" as at the last JENAM 2009 in Hertfordshire, UK. However, the EAS Council has decided to use this motto for all future JENAMs in order to strengthen the European aspect of the JENAM meetings. As I already mentioned in my last message I think that the European aspect was very important for the big success of the Hertfordshire meeting. I very much hope that the attendance in Lisbon next year will be comparable to that one in Hertfordshire. I am very much looking forward to meeting many of you in September 2010 in Lisbon.

Joachim Krautter  
President of EAS

## VIKTOR AMBARTSUMIAN INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

The newly established "Viktor Ambartsumian Prize" is one of the important awards in astronomy/astrophysics and related sciences. It is being awarded to outstanding scientists having significant contribution in physical-mathematical sciences from any country and nationality. The Prize totals USD 500,000 and is being awarded once each two years, starting with 2010.

To apply for the Prize, a work may be presented by an author or authors' group (not more than 3 persons). The cash award is being equally shared between the winners, and a diploma, a medal and a certificate are being awarded to each winner. The nomination deadline for the first Viktor Ambartsumian Prize is March 18, 2010. The decisions will be made before July 18, 2010 and the Award ceremony will take place on September 18, 2010.

For more information pertaining to the nomination eligibility and other details, visit the official webpage at <http://vapriize.sci.am> or contact the scientific secretary of Viktor Ambartsumian prize committee, Dr. A. M. Mickaelian, at +374-91-195914, or [aregmick@aras.am](mailto:aregmick@aras.am)

## YOUNG ASTROPHYSICISTS' PRIZES

Commission 19 (Astrophysics) of the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics plans to present two young scientists' prizes in astrophysics for 2009 and 2010 at the 25th Texas Symposium on Relativistic Astrophysics in Heidelberg in December 2010. Each prize will consist of 1000 euros, a medal, and probably an invitation to speak at the conference. Criteria are: 1. Outstanding contributions by the individual, and 2. Fewer than 8 years of post-PhD research by December 2009 (for the 2009 prize) or by December 2010 (for the 2010 prize). Interruptions of military service, family emergencies, etc (but not teaching) are allowed.

A nomination package consists of: 1. A letter from the nominator outlining the reasons for the nomination, 2. A complete CV and list of publications, 3. Two supporting letters, at least one of which must come from someone not at the nominee's institution and not a mentor or significant collaborator. Self-nominations are not permitted, but a candidate could ask a mentor or colleague to provide a nomination.

Nomination packages should be sent either electronically to the chair of Commission 19, Victoria Fonseca ([fonseca@gae.ucm.edu](mailto:fonseca@gae.ucm.edu)) or as paper to the selection committee chair Virginia Trimble (Physics Dept, Univ. of California, Irvine CA 92697 USA) so as to arrive by 1 June 2010. The winners will be selected and notified over the next few weeks.

Prof. Virginia Trimble  
Univ. of California,  
Irvine

## NEWS FROM OPTICON

Late last year we learned that OPTICON would receive a grant from the EC for 10 million Euro to cover the period 2009 to 2012. Although this was a savage cut from the 15 million Euro requested in the proposal the OPTICON executive was able to preserve most of the planned activities, all be it with cutbacks and at reduced levels of support in most areas. Due to the adjustments of the work packages, and a desire to reduce administrative costs, the number of formal partners shrank from 47 in FP6 to 22 in FP7. However this does not mean that the OPTICON community is smaller, since many of the activities, especially trans-national Access and networking, remain open to everyone. So, for the next few years OPTICON will continue with a programme that builds on its successes in FP6 and which looks rather similar in general outline to our FP6 activities. Full details of the membership, management and activities of OPTICON in FP7 can be found at our new look web-site, which retains its old address of [www.astro-opticon.org](http://www.astro-opticon.org)

In FP7 OPTICON will support 6 technology development projects rather similar in concept to the JRAs which were carried out in FP6. These will be described in more detail in a future article once they are well underway and have some results to present.

There are also a number of networking activities bringing together groups across Europe with common interests so that they can develop integrated plans for the future. Several of these groups and activities are new.

The solar community have formed an OPTICON supported network called EAST, the European Association of Solar Telescopes. The main objective of the EAST consortium is to align the European solar community behind an agreed roadmap for the development of an advanced European Solar Telescope. This new world class facility will enhance, and in some cases replace, the existing solar facilities in Tenerife. A step in this direction has been that all solar observing supported under the OPTICON Trans-National Access programme, together with the time on solar telescopes which forms part of the Canaries Observatories International Time Programme are being allocated by a single panel.

The formation of a common solar Time Allocation Committee, or TAC, represents an important step towards closer integration of the solar facilities within the OPTICON FP7 framework. The night-time telescopes in OPTICON's Trans-National Access programme are also moving towards even greater integration and coordination. As part of this move, from semester 2010B the funding for the programme will be pooled, and the proposals for OPTICON time at all the telescopes will be reviewed together by a single Time Allocation Committee. This TAC will comprise of 7 scientists of international standing, covering a range of scientific fields and drawn from different countries. This is to ensure network-wide competition and uniform review criteria for all proposals, wherever they come from and wherever they are seeking time. Nominations

for TAC members will be invited from the time allocation committees of the telescopes involved in the programme so that the overall standard of the OPTICON proposals can be calibrated against those sent to national TACs.

*This is an important change to the way Trans-National access has been supported in the past and users who have had support under FP5 and FP6 should check the OPTICON website in the new year to understand the new procedures. The OPTICON call will most likely open on 1 February 2010 and close on the 28th of that month. Note that international proposals may still be accepted by some telescopes in the network but such proposals will not be eligible for Travel support under the OPTICON programme.*

To support this new process a common, web-based proposal submission tool called Northstar will be used for all telescopes. Northstar was developed by ASTRON in the Netherlands, originally for Radio Telescopes and is being adopted, with OPTICON support, for use on optical and infrared telescopes. Versions of Northstar are already in use on some telescopes, including UKIRT, the OHP and TBL telescopes and for Dutch users of the ING. A prototype of the OPTICON version, which allows multi telescope proposals, will be released for beta-testing very soon. If you like to familiarise yourself with this tool, and help in the beta-testing, please contact the OPTICON Project Scientist, John Davies using the address [john.davies@stfc.ac.uk](mailto:john.davies@stfc.ac.uk) or visit the OPTICON website.

A European Telescope Strategy Review Committee has been set up jointly by OPTICON and ASTRONET to consider how Europe's existing suite of 2-4 m telescopes can be matched to the needs of the next decade and to the ASTRONET science vision. This panel has met several times and conducted a web-based consultation over the summer. To assist the panel with its information gathering OPTICON organised a session on Europe's medium sized telescopes at the 2009 JENAM. This was well attended and the presentations are posted at the JENAM website at <http://star.herts.ac.uk/ewass/sessS.html> and can be accessed via the OPTICON webpage.

A related activity, spearheaded by Michel Dennefeld of Paris, is intended to raise awareness of the sorts of front line scientific topics likely to win telescope time on major European telescopes. The idea is to introduce to new communities both the range of facilities open to them and how they can join the mainstream of researchers using these facilities. The first such conference was held in Bulgaria in October, soon after a traditional NEON observational school held at the Rhozen Observatory. Further NEON schools and at least one more of these conferences will be held in the coming years of FP7.

So the future for OPTICON remains bright. We expect a further infrastructures call from the EC sometime in the next year or two which will allow us to bid for funds to continue our activities until the end of FP7. When the details of this call become clear, the OPTICON board will invite suggestions from the community for activities which could form a part of this new proposal.

For more information on the project, or to request a visit for discussions on how you can become involved feel free to contact

the project scientist John Davies ([john.davies@stfc.ac.uk](mailto:john.davies@stfc.ac.uk)) or the PI, Prof Gerard ‘Gerry’ Gilmore ([gil@ast.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gil@ast.cam.ac.uk))

## EURO-VO NEWS



The European Virtual Observatory (EURO-VO) is undertaking a series of activities in order to make

the European astronomers aware of the numerous possibilities opened to them by the Virtual Observatory (VO) tools, services and infrastructure.

The ESO VO day, held at ESO-Garching on September 15, 2009, was an initiative of the EURO-VO facility Centre, hosted at ESO, aiming at introducing ESO astronomers to the VO world. The workshop included introductory tutorials given by EURO-VO scientists and a series of hands-on exercises. For details see: <http://www.euro-vo.org/pub/fc/esovoday.html>

In a similar effort, a one and a half day hands-on workshop was organized by the Spanish VO in Granada, on October 27-28, 2009. After a short introduction to the tools, the more than 30 participants were asked to carry out a series of use cases specially developed to give the users the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the VO tools and services. For the detailed programme, see:

[http://svo.laeff.inta.es/modules.php?op=modload&name=phpWiki&file=index&pagename=Meetings-SVO\\_thematic\\_network\\_First\\_Hands-on](http://svo.laeff.inta.es/modules.php?op=modload&name=phpWiki&file=index&pagename=Meetings-SVO_thematic_network_First_Hands-on)

The Geneva observatory in collaboration with the EURO-VO is organising the Swiss VO day, to take place on January 21, 2010, in Geneva. The workshop will host about 30 Swiss astronomers and will follow the same format as the ESO and Spanish VO days, namely short introductory talks and hands-on sessions.

The Euro VO-AIDA project, INAF-OATs in collaboration with INAF-SI (VObs.it) and other INAF structures and Italian University, organize for the Italian community in several INAF structures, a day and a half log workshops devote to the VO. The aim is to expose astronomers to the variety of VO tools and services available today with a particular care on Italian VO experiences and tools. The «VO-day ... in Tour» officially started from Trieste on 30 Nov-1 Dec, with several future dates already fixed. A preliminary page of this initiative can be found at <http://wwwwas.oats.inaf.it/voday>

The second EURO-VO AIDA hands-on workshop will take place in Strasbourg, France on January 25-28, 2010, and will be open to PhD students and young post-docs. The participants will be asked to come with their science cases, that they will then address along with VO experts assigned from the

EURO-VO consortium. For the full announcement see: <http://cdsweb.u-strasbg.fr/aidahandson2010>

A research initiative announced earlier this year to carry out projects using the VO tools and infrastructure in the framework of the EURO-VO AIDA (Astronomical Infrastructure for Data Access) received a total of 14 proposals from European groups. The newly appointed EURO-VO Science Advisory Committee (SAC; <http://www.euro-vo.org/pub/fc/sac.html>) ranked the proposals based on their scientific content and the EURO-VO AIDA partners evaluated them for their technical feasibility. The PIs of the four best ranked proposals were invited for a face-to-face meeting in order to better access their needs. Support will be allocated for a maximum of 12 months, starting December 1st, 2009.

The EURO-VO workshop «Publishing data in the VO» was held on 22-26 June 2009 at ESAC, Villafranca, with 40 participants from various European data centres (see [http://www.sciops.esa.int/index.php?project=CONFERENCE&page=AIDA\\_VOWS2009](http://www.sciops.esa.int/index.php?project=CONFERENCE&page=AIDA_VOWS2009)) The workshop is geared towards data centres and large projects to acquire the knowledge and experience necessary to allow them to become «publishers» in the VO.

The EURO-VO web pages (<http://www.euro-vo.org/pub/>) are always kept updated with links to tools, services, news and events. A growing list of scientific workflows is also available through these pages:

<http://www.euro-vo.org/pub/fc/workflows.html>

Announcements are circulated via the EURO-VO mailing list, with more than 480 subscribed members. To join, go to [http://help.euro-vo.org/esupport/index.php?\\_m=news&\\_a=view](http://help.euro-vo.org/esupport/index.php?_m=news&_a=view) and type your e-mail address in the «Subscribe» field.

**Evanthia Hatziminaoglou**  
on behalf of the EURO-  
VO Facility Centre

## IYA 2009 SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES

### ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE UNIVERSE

This is a brief report of the “Astrophotography exhibition: A journey through the Universe”, which took place in Austria and it was sponsored by the EAS.

Those astronomers among us, who are frequently engaged in public relation work, are very well aware of the impact of photographs or illustrations of objects in the sky, since these can satisfy both the need for knowledge and the quest for prettiness. Posters with astronomical themes are, above all because of their longevity, prime examples for that. Both at the Institute of Astronomy in Vienna and the Institute of Astro- and Particle Physics in Innsbruck two different poster series have been created.



In Vienna, the subjects of the series were as follows: evolution of astronomy and its current state of research. Starting with the development of the telescope and its later usage for the discovery of important astronomical bodies and processes, the posters invite their viewers to a journey through the Universe, beginning in our solar system (planets, comets, moons, meteorites) to the depths of space (star-forming regions, circuit of matter, galaxies).

The posters were first shown at the event «100 hours of Astronomy» in April 2009 (National History Museum of Vienna). Later, they were shown in Vienna's Energy House during the exhibition Glances at the Night Sky, in the assembly hall of the University of Vienna, in the circular hall of the Main Buildings of the Observatory in Vienna - and will be exhibited from December 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 to almost end of January 2010 in the French Cultural Institute in Vienna.

In Innsbruck, the subjects of the series was as follows: primarily results of supercomputer simulations performed at the institute as well as images of a few objects discovered at the institute and other objects where members of the institute participated in studies of them. These oversize posters exist in two identical editions: The posters of one edition were finally given away to various opinion leaders in politics and economy, but also to schools. The posters of the other edition were (and are) used for i) the opening event of the International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) in January 2009 Innsbruck, which consisted of an evening of music and entertainment (poetry) plus scientific lecture plus the poster exhibition of the posters mentioned above ii) Exhibition of these posters during a press conference on the occasion of the IYA2009; iii) exhibition of a part of these posters during the Long Night of Scientific Research at the University of Innsbruck, and iv) in the periods in between the events, the posters were – and are – shown continuously in the seminar room of the institute. There, for both visitors of our regular Long Night of Astronomy, for other visitors of our guided tours etc. and, above all, for students these posters serve as intriguing illustrative material. The posters will also be displayed there at least up to mid 2010.

**Prof. Ronald Weinberger**  
Institut für Astro-U.  
Teilchenphysik,  
Austria

## FROM EARTH TO THE UNIVERSE IN PORTUGAL

The Sociedade Portuguesa de Astronomia applied and received financial support from the European Astronomical Society, in order to implement in Portugal the project “From Earth to the Universe” (FETTU). This was an exhibition prepared by an international committee and a IYA2009 cornerstone Project. The project was the culmination of two years of planning and it was implemented in two parts. One took place in the island of Madeira and the other in mainland Portugal.

The Madeira part consisted of selecting four shopping centers where large-scale astrophotography expositions would be presented for a week. In most cases the week-long exhibition also included: a) one diurnal and one nocturnal observing session, b) a projection of an Astronomical Documentary, commented live by a professional astronomer, and c) a talk on astronomy for the general public. These activities were received with enthusiasm by the public of Madeira and were in addition to the ~200 events that scheduled to take place in the island for the IYA2009.

In mainland Portugal the support of EAS was complemented by national funds from the Ministry of Science and Technology, and 100 sets of large printouts of 11 different images were produced. These were displayed in various cities either outdoors, or inside public institutions as well as metro stations. A picture of such a display can be seen in the attached photo.



A detailed report on these activities as well as a wealth of additional public outreach information can be found at the dedicated web site of the event at: <http://www.fromearthtotheuniverse.org/>

Based on the reports to the EAS of:

**Pedro Augusto**  
Regional Coordinator  
for the IYA2009 activities at Madeira  
**Laurindo Sobrinho, Ilídio Andrade**  
Relevant collaborators  
for the IYA2009 activities at Madeira

**Joao Fernandes,**  
National IYA Single Point of Contact

## TALES OF THE STARS

Universe Awareness (UNAWA) is an international programme that aims to inspire young children in underprivileged environments with the scale and beauty of the universe. The goals

of the programme are to broaden children's minds, awaken their curiosity in science, demonstrate the power of rational thought and stimulate tolerance and world citizenship. The motivation behind this simple idea is that in today's world of divides, children in the most underprivileged environments are the most vulnerable. We reach out to children aged four to ten, as the perspective astronomy gives can broaden these young formative minds.

Through astronomical stories, songs, simple observations and hands-on activities children begin to learn about the universe. As chair of UNawe in Spain and the "UNawe en español" website ([www.csic.es/unawe](http://www.csic.es/unawe)), I thought that collecting different astronomical legends from the various cultures of the Spanish-speaking world would give children an interesting and multicultural view of the sky. Our common culture is hispanic but we also come from diverse civilisations and societies. It is enriching for children to be acquainted with the traditional stories of other children like themselves. This book is the outcome of this idea.

The authors of the book come from different countries and each represents a culture. I wanted to include a variety of legends from Greek and Roman mythology to pre-Hispanic cultures in America. Astronomy is inherently an international discipline so it was easy for me to contact my astronomer friends from different countries. In the end, contributors come from Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, Salvador, Tunisia and Spain. Thanks to them we now have a collection indigenous astronomical tales from the Amazon, from Andean people, Mexicas, Cubes, Mayas and Aztecs, from Christian tradition, Greek and Roman mythology and Arabic legends. This book is by far an incomplete set of stories, and many more tales are waiting to be published in perhaps a second tome.

The structure of the book is simple. There are 13 tales. Each covers 2 pages and is beautifully illustrated. Alongside the legend, there is a short text giving the scientific explanation of the astronomical object featured in the story. From variable stars to cosmology, legends from the past and present reveal the intimate relationship between the people of the Earth and the sky. The scientific explanation gives the reader the opportunity to learn a bit more about the astronomical topic in the tale. The reader can also give more or less scientific detail according to the age of the children and, why not, decide to investigate the topic further in other books or on the internet. Hopefully they will all discover that astronomy is cool!

The original book was written in Spanish in 2008 with the support of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). The same year the book was translated and published in Catalan (an official language in Spain). In 2009 it was published in Arabic, in Gallego (another official language in Spain) and in English thanks to a special IYA2009 grant from the EAS. A Dutch translation is planned for 2010.

This year UNawe-Spain has put together another book in Spanish. It is entitled "Forgotten Astronomers" and describes

the life of less known astronomers from Spanish-speaking countries whose activities helped to develop astronomy in their country.

Rosa M. Ros  
Editor of Tales of Stars

### ASTRONOMY SCHOOL ONLINE-LESSONS WITH THE KYIV INTERNET TELESCOPE

In order to celebrate the International Year Astronomy, the Ukrainian Astronomical Association organized a project entitled «Astronomy Lessons with Online-Observations». This project was based on the support of the European Astronomical Society and the Kyiv City State Administration. The data and facilities were obtained with Kyiv-Internet-Telescope (KIT) mounted at the Main Astronomical Observatory (MAO) of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine with the participation of the Astronomical Observatory of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

The goals of the project were: a) to provide online astronomy lessons for secondary schools and in particular for the pupils of 11th grade, who have a compulsory "Astronomy" course; b) to organize on-site seminars in order to train teachers and pupils in using the KIT, as well as to develop on-line methodological seminars through the dedicated web site; c) to conduct systematic observations of celestial objects with purely educational goals, d) to establish contacts with other international groups hosting robotic telescopes in order to enable joint international Internet-telescopes lessons for pupils (i.e. «Look at the sky above your country and the country of your friends«).

For the first three lessons during the autumn of 2009 the following astronomical topics were proposed and realized: 1) Ukrainian Native Astronomy, which had as a goal to familiarize the Ukrainian pupils with the names and locations of the constellations on the sky, as well as to teach them about the history of the Ukrainian native names of some constellations); 2) Moon nomenclature, which aimed to familiarize the Ukrainian pupils with the most prominent details of the Moon surface as well as to introduce the Moon craters and mountains, some of which have names of famous Ukrainian scientists and geographic objects; 3) Comets-visitants, that is those who were visible during the autumn 2009. The active participants of these lessons were pupils of the Ukrainian physical-mathematical lyceum of the Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, those of the Kyiv Ukrainian language advanced study specialized school 260, as well as those of the Technical lyceum of the Shevchenko urban district of Kyiv.

For more information on the description of this project, methodology of these lessons, as well as the first results and forum, please, visit the web site of the project at: <http://astronomy2009.com.ua/astronomy-online>.

Taking into consideration that this project was very successful, the UAA decided to continue along the same lines and prepare more thematical “Astronomy online-lessons with KIT”. The topics selected are the following: “Studying the activity of comets”; “Searching for new asteroids, detection of NEOs, space debris”; “Fast photometric and spectral variability of different types of variable stars and centers of active galaxies”; “Astroseismology”; “Remote operated long-term stellar flare monitoring”; “Follow-up observations of optical counterparts of GRBs”; “Search for newly discovered Novae and Supernovae”; “Solar system planets and satellite of planets” as well as lessons to based on results from space missions. The UAA decided also to realize this project on a regular basis and starting in 2010, to expand it for all Ukrainian schools under the support of the Ministry for Education and Science of Ukraine. Under this new scheme we are planning to complement the KIT-observations with observations obtained within the framework of the Faulkes Telescope project at the Tzec Maun Observatory, as well as theslescopes in New Mexico and Australia, enabling the Ukrainian pupils to «Look at the sky above your country and the country of your friends».

**Irina Vavilova**  
Head of AstroInformatics Lab,  
MAO NASU  
Chief of the National Committee  
for IAY-2009

## THE EAS AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

### THE HELLENIC ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The Hellenic Astronomical Society (Hel.A.S.) was officially founded in 1993, and is the major organization of professional astronomers in Greece. According to its constitution it has three major goals: a) To help in the development and the advancement of the science of Astronomy in Greece b) To inform in a professional an responsible manner the public in Greece on all matters related to Astronomy and c) To support the research of all its members.

The Society currently numbers 240 members, two thirds of which live in Greece. There are three types of membership to the Society. The Ordinary members, nearly 75% of the total, who are required to have a PhD in Astrophysics or a related field, the Junior members, 20% of the total, who are typically graduate students in Astronomy, and the Associate members, who are individuals that do not fulfil the criteria for the previous categories, but are deeply interested in helping the goals of Hel.A.S. According to its Constitution, the Governing Council of Hel.A.S. consists of a President, six (6) members and three (3) auditors. The Council is elected for a two-year term and an individual cannot serve in it for more than two consecutive terms. The candidates for the Council must be Ordinary members, who live permanently in Greece during the term of their candidacy. The first President of the Society,

Professor and Academician George Contopoulos holds the title of Honorary President.

Even though the Society has a brief history, it has already reached a level of organizational maturity. This is best demonstrated by the fact that it has been organizing a high quality international meeting every two years. The most recent 9th Conference of Hel.A.S. was held in Athens in September 2009, and was attended by more than 150 participants. The principal source of revenue of the Society is from the annual membership fee of the members.

The Society publishes twice a year the “Hipparchos” newsletter, which is distributed to all members, as well as to major University libraries in Greece. Hipparchos is published in English and it contains several review Astronomy articles written by selected members, as well as summaries from activities, such as conferences and workshops, that take place in Greece. All members also receive a monthly electronic newsletter with various Astronomy news and they are listed in the online directory of web page of the Society. Hel.A.S. sponsors a national high school competition in astronomy, and funds graduate students who wish to attend the Conferences of the Society. The Society encourages public outreach activities of its members and was the driving force behind a series of activities that took place during the 2009 International Year of Astronomy.

Over the past decade the President of the Society also serves in the council who advises the Greek Government on issues that relate to Astronomy, Astrophysics and Space physics policy.

Full details of the activities of Hel.A.S. can be found on its web site at [www.helas.gr](http://www.helas.gr)

**Professor Kanaris Tsinganos**  
University of Athens  
President of the Hellenic  
Astronomical Society

### THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The Royal Astronomical Society was founded in 1820 to promote the study of astronomy and geophysics (A&G) which in more recent times has grown to include solar and solar-terrestrial physics, planetary sciences and the ‘new astronomies’, such as astro-particle physics and astrobiology. It comprises nearly 3,300 Fellows and Associates (Honorary Fellows), of whom 1/3 are based in some 70 overseas countries; 21% are under the age of 40 and 40% are more than 60; approximately 11% of the total membership is female. It is entirely funded by contributions from its members, gifts and from the income generated by its activities, largely from its scientific journals. The control of the Society rests with the General Meeting of Fellows. The RAS Council normally meets 6 times during the year and its function is to direct, on behalf of the Society, all the affairs and business of the Society between General Meetings. 5 members of Council (‘Officers’) are responsible for leading on

strategic planning, organizing scientific meetings and formulating RAS policy for the consideration of Council. Council appoints committees (Publications Management, Editorial, Education, Higher Education, Finance, Membership, Library, House, Astronomical Heritage, Women in Astronomy and Geophysics, Awards) to forward its objectives. The Council also appoints the Executive Secretary to whom it delegates responsibility for day to day running of the Society and for providing leadership, strategic direction and management in liaison with the officers. In addition to the Executive Secretary there were 12 other full time staff members including the Accountant, Membership Secretary, Librarian and Editorial Office Manager plus a part-time policy/press officer and a part-time editor of *Astronomy and Geophysics (A&G)*.

The Society has formal associations with a number of organizations having shared interests, or offering benefits to RAS members, and has less formal arrangements with several other bodies. Besides its affiliation to the EAS, it is the UK national member organization of the International Astronomical Union, publishes the *Geophysical Journal International* in conjunction with the *Deutsche Geophysikalische Gesellschaft*, cooperates with analogue organizations like the Institute of Physics and is represented on pan-science bodies like the UK Science Council and the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.

The RAS exists to advance, and to record the history of, our understanding of the Earth, the solar system, the galaxies and the nature of the universe. It does this by promoting Astronomy and Geophysics, interdisciplinary sciences that encompass, and further, physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, engineering and computer science to answer deep questions about the origin and fate of the cosmos, and man's place in it. In particular, the RAS organizes meetings (both in its own premises in Burlington House London and elsewhere in the UK), publishes books and journals (*Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, *Geophysical Journal International* and *Astronomy & Geophysics*), awards grants, prizes and medals, maintains a comprehensive library (including an important collection of rare books and manuscripts) and supports the professional activities of its members, both teachers and researchers. In recent years this has involved producing submissions and reports to influence public policy and government expenditure as it affects astronomy and geophysics. The RAS does not itself fund (small travel and a post-doctoral scholarship apart) or undertake teaching or research, which is the task, largely, of educational institutions, funding agencies and research councils. Members (styled Fellows) of the Society are professional scientists, based in the UK and overseas, together with students, advanced amateurs and historians of astronomy. This broad membership allows the RAS to represent the interests of the community to the Government as well as to other national and international bodies. Application for membership of the Society is welcomed from anyone over the age of 18 with a serious interest in astronomy or geophysics.

Full details of the activities of the RAS can be found on its web site at [www.ras.org.uk](http://www.ras.org.uk)

### European Astronomical Society

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