

Paranal observatory as a showcase of European cooperation



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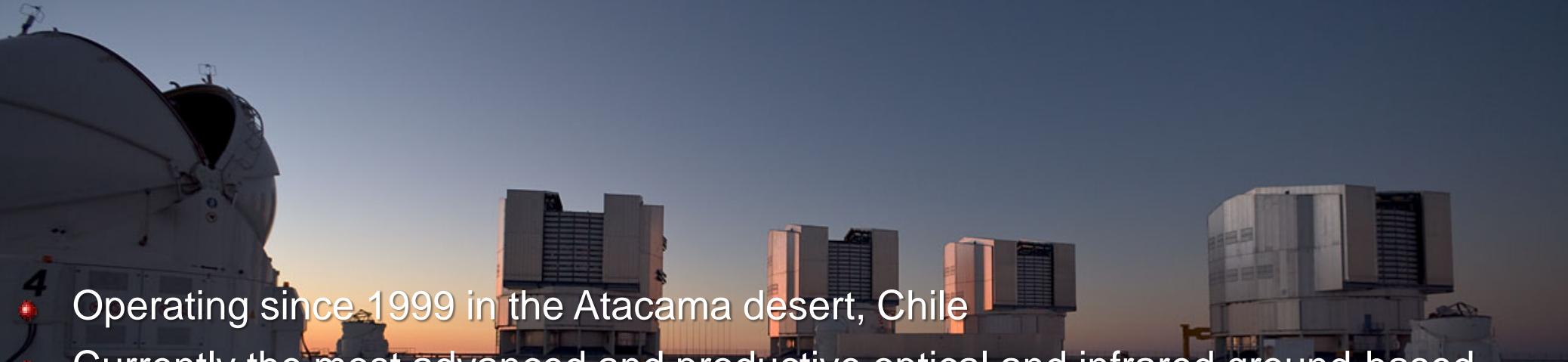
ESO basic facts

Founded in 1962, with the main mission of providing its member states world-class facilities that individual European countries could not afford

- A multi-site organization:
 - Headquarters in Garching, near Munich, Germany
 - Four sites in Chile, including three observatories
 - 14+2 member states at present, plus Chile with a special status as host state
 - Serving the astronomical community in the member states and the rest of the world



Paranal observatory



- Operating since 1999 in the Atacama desert, Chile
- Currently the most advanced and productive optical and infrared ground-based facility in the world
- Hosting the Very Large Telescope (VLT), 4 telescopes each of 8.2m, with very advanced instrumentation
- The European Extremely Large Telescope, the largest in the world when entering operations in the mid-2020s, to be built on Armazones, near Paranal

An excellent facility to showcase Europe's achievements in science –and gain political support for it

Context and constraints

Advantages

- Remote location means a captive audience: two days of undistracted attention
- Astronomy is a non-threatening, non-ideological science with huge public appeal
- Icon of international cooperation that embassies are proud to show
- Several messages transmitted at once: forefront science, high tech, environment (light pollution!)
- Exotic location attracts also figures of public relevance

Disadvantages

- Remote location –requires a dedicated effort to visit it
- A European facility outside Europe
- “What for?” Astronomy is a “useless” science
- The colonial overtones...

ESO's target groups in Chile



• Media and the public (of course!!)

ESO's target groups in Chile



- Ambassadors of ESO member states: our partners in making us better known to their decision makers

- Ambassadors of prospective member states: strong allies in promoting ESO membership, with the right connections in their home countries



ESO's target groups in Chile



- Member state decision makers: gaining visibility and support in the member states, showing their contribution at a global level

ESO's target groups in Chile



- *Host state decision makers*: building up local political support for our activities, building alliances to promote international standing of the country



ESO's target groups in Chile



- *Chilean academy*: advocacy for ESO coming from inside the country
- *Industry and private sector from member states*: awareness that ESO can serve them as a showcase of their activities, in a socially well accepted science
- *Chilean industry*: building alliances on social responsibility programmes, addressing environmental concerns

ESO's target groups in Chile



- Public figures in general: appealed by the singularity of the place, makes ESO known and appreciated beyond our usual circles

Communicating ESO in its host country

- Media and the public Europeans not always aware of Chilean reality: preconceptions play a role
- ESO's presence brings great advantages to the host state:
 - ~70 M€ per year spent in Chile
 - Job opportunities for Chilean nationals in all areas of ESO's tasks
 - Access to front-line technologies
 - Development of own scientific capabilities
 - 10% guaranteed time for Chilean scientists at all ESO facilities
 - Contribution to image of Chile as a technologically developed country
 - In exchange for tax advantages, government support for ESO activities in the country
- Sensitivity to North-South matters subsists in collective identity
 - Preconceptions play a role in the Chilean public too
 - Foreign observatories are easy targets for manipulation in domestic political strife, with very limited capacity to defend themselves
 - Need to work on a positive image to maintain public and government support

Conclusions

- *Paranal observatory is a visible symbol of intraeuropean and intercontinental cooperation*
- *The singularity of Paranal is both a challenge and an opportunity*
- *Use natural allies in advertising our facilities and our mission*
- *Be very sensitive to intercultural matters*
- *Establish, maintain and enlarge good links with Chilean communities, public opinion, decision makers, government*

Conclusions

Build upon key messages targeted to each group

- Astronomy is inspiring, and a formidable education tool.
- Astronomy is a driver of technology
- Astronomy is environment-friendly (light pollution!)
- Astronomy offers a ground for international cooperation
- Visibility/investment ratio extremely favorable for astronomy
- ESO is a great example of European cooperation
- ESO is a great example of cooperation between Europe and South America
- Chile has greatly benefitted from ESO's presence, and ESO has benefitted from Chile's hosting ("growing together")

