

Report of scientific activities: 2017 NAC

On 22–24 May 2017, the seventy-second Netherlands Astronomy Conference (NAC) took place in Nijmegen at the Van der Valk Hotel, Nijmegen Lent. There were 235 registered participants at the 2017 NAC, and these attendees consisted primarily of members of the Dutch and Belgian astronomical community. A full list of all the participants is given on the conference website at <http://www.astronomenclub.nl/conferentie/participants.php>.

The scientific program of the meeting is also given on the conference website at <http://www.astronomenclub.nl/conferentie/programme.php>. Over the three days of the conference, we had a large number of excellent talks and posters: 45 talks in plenary sessions, 50 talks in parallel sessions, and 51 posters. Of the 45 plenary talks, four came from invited speakers from abroad, seven were overview talks from speakers within the Dutch and Belgian astronomy community, and the remaining 34 were highlighting particularly exciting recent research results.

The four invited talks from speakers outside the Netherlands came from four internationally recognized speakers in their respective fields. Gerry Gilmore, Professor of Experimental Philosophy at the University of Cambridge opened the conference by describing recent results from the ESA Gaia mission. The second day of the conference began with Anna Scaife, Reader of Astrophysics and Head of the Interferometry Centre of Excellence at the University of Manchester describing her work on large-scale radio sources. Later that day, Catherine Heymans, Professor of Astrophysics, gave an overview of efforts to understand dark matter and large scale structure through weak gravitational lensing. Finally, Francis Halzen, Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Principal Investigator and co-Spokesperson for the IceCube Project gave a summary of the IceCube detector's search for extragalactic neutrinos.

Our seven invited speakers from within the Netherlands and Belgium were Conny Aerts, Pratika Dayal, Carsten Dominik, Jason Hessels, Elena Rossi, Patricia Schmidt, and Frans Snik. The remaining plenary speakers are listed in the scientific program on our conference website. Collectively, the plenary speakers covered a broad range of topics of interest to the Dutch astronomical community. We had four parallel sessions during the afternoon of the second day of the conference that allowed for more focused talks on specific topics in astronomy and astrophysics. Three of the sessions were devoted to results that were of particular interest to the respective three NOVA networks, and there was a fourth session which focused on public engagement and outreach in astronomy.

Aside from the many talks and speakers, there were several other events throughout the 2017 NAC that served as important scientific activities. There were several poster sessions throughout the meeting, which provoked lively discussion about the 51 excellent posters. The poster-prize committee had the difficult task of assigning awards to the top three posters in the sessions. A town-hall session gave NOVA, NWO, ASTRON, and SRON the opportunity to provide updates about ongoing and future activities in their respective agencies. Finally, we had an evening talk related to cognition, language, communication, and development on the first night, and a performance of music inspired by astronomical events and an engaging pub-quiz event on the second.

In summary, the 2017 NAC brought together much of the Dutch and Belgian astronomical community to keep current on the most exciting results in astronomy, and to formulate new ideas and research directions for the year to come. We look to the 2018 NAC next year with anticipation.