

Meeting up at Summer School

More than 25 courses reach around 1,300 junior scientists



Exchanging ideas at the Summer School in Jena: Susann Fiedler (2nd from left), Leader of the Gielen-Leyendecker Research Group at the MPI for Research on Collective Goods, in conversation with course participants. A total of 11 lecturers and five speakers took part in the four-week School, which brings together both young and established legal experts, psychologists and economists.

Using the time between terms in summer to teach science: Max Planck Institutes from Hamburg to Munich offer courses explicitly for external participants.

With its origins at universities in the US, the principle of offering Summer Schools between terms has also established itself at Max Planck Institutes.

Although they aren't universities, these Schools offer a range of courses for young academics and provide insight into scientific research. This past summer, over 25 courses were offered, often organized by the International Max Planck Research Schools (IMPRS) dedicated to training doctoral students.

A survey at the institutes shows that these courses are attended by a total of nearly 1,300 young scientists. These include master's and doctoral students as well as postdocs, with a clear majority coming from external institutions. "We hold workshops and conferences throughout the year, but our International School is oriented mainly toward students and young visiting scientists," says Hans-Georg Libuda, IMPRS coordinator at the MPI for Solid State Research in Stuttgart. Their School has been taking place in summer or fall for the past 15 years now, with this year's three-day event focused on energy conversion. "As the participants range from master's students to postdocs, we offer both introductory lectures and in-depth workshops." For the Institute's own IMPRS doctoral students, the Summer School is part of the curriculum; a bit less than

Successful Kick-Off Symposium for Alumni and Active Members

While US universities maintain close links between former and active members of their institutions over the course of decades, this type of alumni culture is not that common in Germany. The MPG wants to do more in this area, which is why the Max Planck Alumni Association e.V. (MPAA) was founded with the support of Administrative Headquarters and under the guidance of six former Max Planck researchers. This summer, the inaugural Max Planck Symposium for Alumni and Early Career Researchers was held, with 200 participants from 30 countries in attendance. In his opening speech, Max Planck Vice President Ferdi Schüth emphasized how pleased the MPG is that the alumni network is actively run by former members.

Numerous alumni from science and industry gave speeches and provided insights into their career paths: Anke Post, alumna of the MPI of Psychiatry, traveled from the UK, where she now conducts

research for US pharmaceuticals group Eli Lilly. She defused prejudices regarding the pharmaceuticals industry and explained how similar it is to daily research work, particularly at companies with an academic approach. Sascha Brozek, alumnus of the MPI for Gravitational Physics, traveled to Berlin from Helsinki. As vice president of Kone, an elevator manufacturer, he not only succeeded in sharing his fascination for elevators, but also provided useful tips for entering professional life via the consulting business.

The three-day symposium also focused on the further development of the MPAA, and workshops were held on founding new companies and writing effective scholarship applications. The "Cultural Running Dinner" featuring cuisine from a wide range of countries rounded out the event, with all guests requested to come in their traditional national dress. Many guests duly obliged, and attire ranged from glittery saris to fine silk garments.

half of the expected 125 participants come from other institutions, adds Libuda. He is pleased that he has once again been able to attract high-caliber lecturers from such institutions as EPFL Lausanne and TU Vienna. Ten Max Planck scientists also took part in the tightly organized program, among them two Directors from the Stuttgart-based MPI.

The summer courses vary from institute to institute in terms of both duration and content. Each year since 2009, the MPI of Biochemistry in Martinsried, for example, has offered the MaxQuant Summer School, a special

course focusing on the use of its MaxQuant software in the field of proteomics research. This year around 160 external participants attended a five-day course in Oxford, headed by software developer Jürgen Cox. As at most Schools, a selection procedure is applied to determine in advance whether participants have the necessary background knowledge.

The Summer Schools held in 2016 by the MPI for Chemical Energy Conversion in the Gelsenkirchen Science Park – in cooperation with the Fritz Haber Institute of the MPG and the University of Mainz – have a broader

focus. Other Schools offer specialist programs for small groups. One example is the Earth System and Climate Modeling School, organized by the MPI for Meteorology in Hamburg with various European partner institutes. Comprising three weeks of lectures and workshops, the third such school for around 30 doctoral students focusing on climate and Earth system research took place at the University of Helsinki. Also on the agenda was a joint excursion: after all, the Schools are aimed not only at broadening participants' knowledge, but also at facilitating new contacts.

Ambassadors for Open Access Provide Practical Tips

The MPI in Magdeburg recently devoted an afternoon entirely to the subject of free access to scientific knowledge

The invited speakers offered facts and opinions from a variety of perspectives. By way of introduction, Kristina Reinhold, Head Librarian at the MPI, explained the basic concepts and forms of Open Access (OA). Jon Tennant, a doctoral student at Imperial College, London, then gave a report from the junior researcher perspective. His strong views, such as "Open Access wins all arguments, all the time," led to a lively discussion that continued into the coffee break.

Next, Kai Geschuhn of the Max Planck Digital Library spoke about the new international "OA2020" initiative, which the Max Planck Society is pursuing together with other research organizations. The goal is to achieve a large-scale reorientation of those scientific journals that are currently published by subscription. Supported by current studies, Geschuhn showed that, with the funds expended on subscriptions today, it would be possible to effect a complete transformation to OA. Rather than subscribing to traditional journals as in the past, it would then be a case of paying the one-time publication costs per article.

In conclusion, local Open Access ambassadors Jan Heiland and Robert Flassig reported on the effects of closed and open access in the day-to-day lives of researchers. The afternoon proved a source of great satisfaction to the audience, which comprised around 30 members of the MPI, covering the entire spectrum from master's students to Directors. The workshop was one of a series of similar

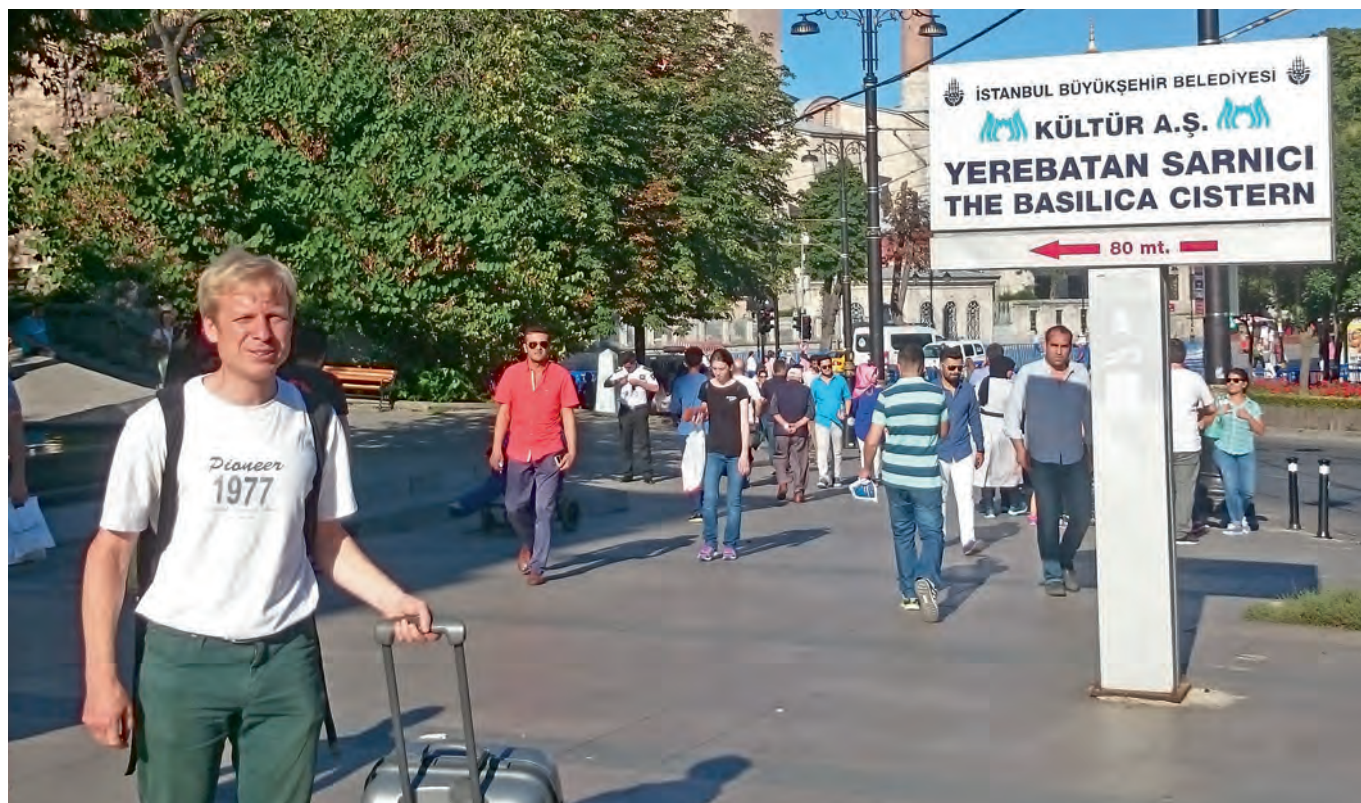


Workshop organizers: Head Librarian Kristina Reinhold and postdocs Jan Heiland and Robert J. Flassig (from left)

events at various institutes, another of which will take place shortly before the end of the year at the MPI for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig.

Much Uncertainty Still Remains

A scientist from Jena reports on how he experienced the attempted coup in Turkey while on a business trip to Istanbul



An uneasy feeling: Ingo Schöning in Sultanahmet Square in the old city of Istanbul. The day after this photo was taken, an attempted coup was launched.

Ingo Schöning doesn't come across as one who is easily perturbed. However, when, after receiving a call on his mobile from a worried neighbor, the post-doc from the MPI for Biogeochemistry in Jena read the Internet reports on the attempted military coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, he "suddenly felt very uneasy." Unaware of the events, he had spent the evening of July 15 strolling through the old city with a doctoral student who was also intending to take part in the EUROSOIL conference in Istanbul. Now he found himself reading about the blockade of the Bosphorus Bridge and tanks at the airport. He was unable to sleep for the noise of aircraft.

When he and his colleague ventured out onto the street the next morning, the city was initially as if deserted, until more and more cars appeared on the

streets with horns blaring and national flags flying, proclaiming Erdoğan's victory over the rebels. In view of the dramatic situation, the organizers abruptly postponed the conference. The next step was to take the first possible flight home, which "fortunately passed without incident."

A PLEA FOR RESEARCH FREEDOM

After the first few days, in which the newspapers were filled with reports of fatalities and mass arrests, the wave of restrictions imposed by the government in the wake of the coup began to reach the international science community.

The call by Turkey's Council of Higher Education ordering members of academic staff to return home and banning academics from travelling abroad

presented a conundrum for administrators at several MPIs. They contacted their Turkish research colleagues to ask how they could help. President Stratmann publicly criticized this restriction of research freedom, and made it clear that the MPG "supports Turkish researchers at its institutes in this difficult situation." The Turkish demands for scientists to return have since been relativized.

The international EUROSOIL conference for which Ingo Schöning had traveled to Istanbul is now set to take place in October. The scientist is not sure whether he will be attending. Absent colleagues could excessively reduce the value of the meeting; on the other hand, the exchange with Turkish scientists is now all the more important. And once again, uncertainty prevails.