

News January 2026

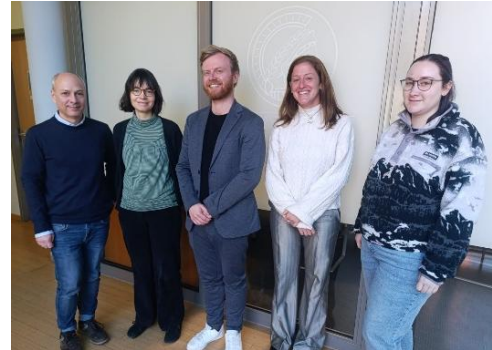
Meeting International Department of the MPG and visit to Institutes

The Latin American Representation of the Max Planck Society participated in the meeting of the Department of International Relations, held on January 14 and 15 in Munich. The meeting brought together Representations of the MPG for different regions of the world and provided a key opportunity to exchange experiences, best practices, and regional approaches to international scientific cooperation.

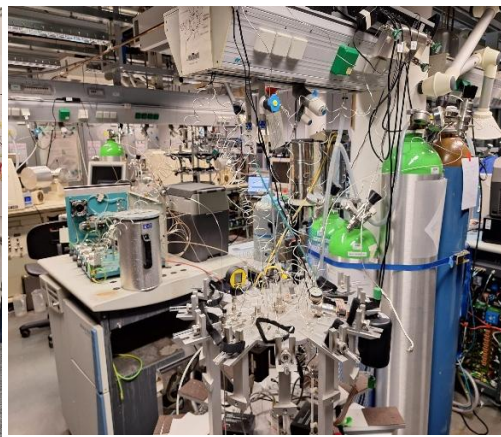
Discussions focused on strategies and mechanisms to consolidate existing collaborative activities, as well as on ways to expand and diversify the Society's global cooperation formats. Particular attention was given to the challenges posed by the current international geopolitical context—marked by rapid change and increasing complexity—and to the need to build resilient and sustainable scientific networks.

In the context of this institutional visit, the Representation for Latin America also visited several Max Planck Institutes with strong and ongoing collaboration with the region: the Max Planck Institute for Multidisciplinary Sciences, the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, the Max Planck Institute for Geoanthropology, and the Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry. These Institutes are engaged in joint research projects with Latin American partners across a wide range of disciplines.

Meetings were held with Directors, Science Coordinators and Group Leaders, involved in collaborations with Latin America, including researchers associated with flagship initiatives such as the ATTO Observatory, IBioBA (Buenos Aires Institute of Biomedicine – Partner Institute of the Max Planck Society), and the Max Planck Laboratory of Structural Biology, Chemistry, and Molecular Biophysics in Rosario. The visit also included exchanges with Latin American researchers currently



Meeting with researchers who work in collaboration projects with Brazil @MPI of Chemical Ecology



Pic. 1: Prof. Christian Griesinger showing the facilities @MPI of Multidisciplinary Sciences; Pic 2: Facilities at the MPI of Biogeochemistry; Pic 3: Greenhouse @MPI of Chemical Ecology

undertaking research stays as well as doctoral and postdoctoral programs at the Institutes. The objectives of these activities were twofold: to disseminate and deepen knowledge of existing instruments for cooperation with Latin America while exploring new opportunities for collaboration, and to identify the interests, needs, and expectations of the Institutes regarding joint work with the region. In this way, the visit contributed to strengthening the role of the Representation for Latin America as key in facilitating, articulating, and reinforcing scientific relations between the Max Planck Society and its partners in Latin America.

Successful Scientific Mobilization Protects Paranal Observatory

In a significant positive development for global astronomy, AES Andes has announced the suspension of the INNA industrial project, which had been planned just a few kilometres from ESO's Paranal Observatory in northern Chile. The project – intended for the production of hydrogen and ammonia – posed a serious threat to one of the world's most important astronomical sites.

The proposed complex raised major concerns within the Chilean and international scientific community, as studies showed it could have caused substantial light pollution, dust emissions and micro-vibrations, severely affecting the performance of highly sensitive telescopes. In response, universities, research institutions and scientists mobilised strongly throughout 2025, warning of irreversible damage to Paranal's uniquely dark and stable skies.

The Max Planck Society actively joined these efforts. Reinhard Genzel, who has been closely involved in research at Paranal for many years, was among the prominent voices calling for the relocation of the project. He and nearly 30 leading international astronomers addressed an open letter to the Chilean authorities, underlining the risks to long-term scientific programmes – including the GRAVITY+ project led by the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics.

On 23 January 2026, AES Andes officially announced that the INNA project would not go ahead, a decision welcomed by the Chilean government as “positive for Chile and for science”. This outcome represents a major success for coordinated scientific advocacy and helps safeguard Paranal's exceptional observing conditions, which are essential for frontier research in astrophysics.

While this decision is an important victory, it also highlights the ongoing vulnerability of globally unique research infrastructures. Continued vigilance and strong international cooperation will remain crucial to ensure the long-term protection of astronomical observatories in northern Chile.

Participation of group leaders as authors and co-authors in publications

[Seasonal changes in the physiology and metabolism of grapevine latent buds, Journal of Experimental Botany, 2026; eraf547, https://doi.org/10.1093/jxb/eraf547](https://doi.org/10.1093/jxb/eraf547) - Dr. Santiago Signorelli, Tandem group Leader “Multi-omics approaches to contribute to the understanding of fundamental questions in plant biology and agriculture”

A new study led by Santiago Signorelli together with international collaborators – including Regina Feil and John E. Lunn from the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Plant Physiology – has been published in *Journal of Experimental Botany*.

The research sheds light on how grapevine (*Vitis vinifera*) buds respond to seasonal cues at the physiological and metabolic levels. By tracking changes in respiration, sugar metabolism and cellular activity throughout the year, the team identified three distinct phases of bud dormancy:

1. Para-dormancy (early summer): active metabolism with high energy-related molecules.
2. Endo-dormancy (late summer to autumn): deepest dormancy with reduced respiration and shifts in sugar composition.
3. Eco-dormancy (winter to spring): renewed metabolic activity, sugar mobilization and cell cycle reactivation, preparing buds for growth.

Importantly, just before buds break dormancy, the accumulation of sugar-phosphates was observed, suggesting a key biochemical trigger for bud burst – a finding that enhances our understanding of perennial plant development and has implications for viticulture and other perennial crops.