

Star biographies in the Alps

This year's Alpbach Summer School will focus on the theme "The Birth, Life and Death of Stars". Alpbach, a village in the Austrian Alps, enjoys a long tradition of Summer Schools with in-depth lessons on aspects of space science and space technology for European graduates, post-graduate students, young scientists and engineers. The purpose is to foster the practical application of knowledge, develop organisational and team working skills and encourage creativity. Four teams of 15 participants each will compete for the best project, a scientific mission study related to the theme of stellar life cycles, judged by an independent jury composed of some of Europe's leading space science experts.

The School will take place from 27 July to 5 August 2004. The Summer School is organised by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT) and the Austrian Space Agency (ASA) and sponsored by the European Space Agency (ESA) and the national space authorities of its member states.

Astrophysics is undergoing a revolution in understanding, driven by developments in ground-based and space-based measurements by space observatories such as XMM-Newton, Integral, the Infrared Space

Observatory, the Hubble Space Telescope and many future missions. The Summer School lectures will inform students in detail about the scientific advances made, the science goals of planned missions and the technical details of the missions, spacecraft and payloads. The Summer School takes place at a time when ESA and other agencies tackle the "big questions" and try to find answers to them. Students of the Alpbach Summer School should regard themselves as part of this process. Using the lectures and other sources of information they can identify a specific scientific goal and develop a mission concept, spacecraft and payload to address it. The mission proposals will also be considered in the framework of ongoing planning exercises for the future European space science programme.

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