

## The International Year of Astronomy 2009 in the Netherlands

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### Abstract

We briefly discuss public outreach and education ideas for IYA2009 at the national level and a project at the Kapteyn Astronomical Institute that focuses on the infrared Universe and also takes place in 2009.

### The Dutch national effort

A national website<sup>1</sup> has been established. The Dutch slogan for IYA2009 will be “*Het heelal, ontdek het zelf!*” and the logo is shown in Figure 1.

An incomplete list of the current ideas for activities in IYA2009 includes:

- educational projects with Galileoscopes in classrooms;
- a book on the history of Dutch astronomy;
- travel guide for astronomy related landmarks;
- commemorative postage stamps;
- a conference commemorating the invention of the telescope by Hans Lippershey;
- an “astro-forecast” following the weather forecast on national television.

The programme for 2009, which should be finalised late 2007, will probably be based on only a subset of the many ideas.

### *Discover the Invisible Universe at Kapteyn Astronomical Institute*

A group of staff and students from the Kapteyn Astronomical Institute at Groningen University have taken the opportunity offered by IYA2009 to promote basic knowledge about infrared astronomy in schools and among the general public. This will be done in collaboration with public outreach and communication officers at the university. The project slogan is *Discover the Invisible Universe*. The focus on infrared astronomy stems from two facts:

- (i) the Kapteyn Astronomical Institute has a long tradition in infrared astronomy, and
- (ii) 2009 will mark a new era for infrared astronomy with the launch of the Herschel and the Planck telescopes.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.jaarvandesterrenkunde.nl>

The two ESA telescopes will be launched together around mid-2008. Herschel, named after the discoverer of infrared light, will study the far infrared Universe from stars to distant galaxies. It contains the Heterodyne Instrument for the Far Infrared (HIFI) which was developed in Groningen by the Netherlands Institute for Space Research (SRON). Planck will focus on observations of the Cosmic Microwave Background.

Key elements of the outreach project will be:

- Public events in Dutch cities and visits to schools using the Discovery Truck – a mobile laboratory<sup>2</sup> belonging to the University of Groningen (see Figure 2). The truck will be used for classes, public lectures, hands-on experiments and demonstrations of infrared astronomy and technology hosted by an impersonator of the 18<sup>th</sup> century astronomer William Herschel. In addition a mobile planetarium and a 7-m air balloon in the shape of the Herschel telescope will be used during the events.
- A national infrared photo competition for secondary school pupils in collaboration with professional photographers which will be linked to:
  - A Miss and Mister Infrared-Universe election for secondary school pupils.
- An educational/informative website entitled the “Invisible Universe” in Dutch. The website will be based on the CoolCosmos site<sup>3</sup> which will be extended to a wider wavelength range. Dutch educational material on infrared astronomy will also be produced as part of the ESA/ESO astro-exercise series<sup>4</sup>. The website and educational materials may be extended at a later stage to other invisible wavelength ranges, such as the radio, given the Dutch-led LOFAR project (a novel low frequency radio array).
- Concerts with chamber music composed by the astronomer William Herschel himself.
- The efforts for the Invisible Universe in the International Year of Astronomy will be transformed into a permanent web-based knowledge base for astronomy in the invisible part of the electromagnetic spectrum after 2009. The material will be aimed at primary and secondary school levels.



Figure 1 –Dutch version of the logo for the International Year of Astronomy



Figure 2 – The Discovery Truck is a mobile laboratory belonging the University of Groningen for public outreach and education .

Movico

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rug.nl/fwn/nieuws/pr/rugdiscovery/index>

<sup>3</sup> <http://coolcosmos.ipac.caltech.edu>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.astroex.org>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.rug.nl/fwn/nieuws/pr/rugdiscovery/index>