ASTRONOMISCHE GESELLSCHAFT
founded as a society in 1863



Astronomische Gesellschaft
German Astronomical Society

https://www.astronomische-gesellschaft.org
@GermanAstroSoc

The Executive Committee

Jörn Wilms, Bamberg (President)
Eva Grebel, Heidelberg (Vicepresident)
Thomas Kraupe, Hamburg (Treasurer)
Klaus Reinsch, Göttingen (Secretary)
Janine Fohlmeister, Potsdam (Press Officer)
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Bamberg/Göttingen, November 2026

Newsletter 3/2026
to all members and friends of the German Astronomical Society (AG)

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Greetings from the President

Dear members and friends of the German Astronomical Society,

At our General Members' Assembly in Garching in September, you elected me as the new President of the German Astronomical Society (Astronomische Gesellschaft), along with Eva Grebel as the new Vice President and Markus Roth as a new member of the Executive Board. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone for this trust. I also extend my gratitude to the outgoing President, Stefanie Walch-Gassner, the outgoing Vice President, Volker Springel, and Julia Tjus, an outgoing member of the Executive Board. They all have provided fresh impetus to the German Astronomical Society over the past few years. Furthermore, Volker and his team were responsible for the seamless organization of our annual meeting. For this, too, I offer my sincere thanks.

The coming months and years will be highly significant for our Society and for German astronomy. New instruments in which Germany and Europe are involved – such as the ELT and the Square Kilometer Array – along with space-based surveys like Euclid and various smaller-scale instruments, will greatly enrich our research. Furthermore, the Cherenkov Telescope Array will be the first observatory accessible to the entire TeV astronomy community. With the establishment of the German Center for Astrophysics in Görlitz, Germany now has a national research center dedicated to astronomy – a development that will both enrich and transform our field. The term "space" has meanwhile also been incorporated into the official name of the "Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space", where our discipline is now prominently represented by Division R21, "Universe and Astrophysics." These are all very positive developments, demonstrating the high value that society and policymakers place on our research.

At the same time, however, we face significant challenges. Shifts in the global political landscape have led in Germany as well as elsewhere to a reallocation of resources away from basic research toward applied fields, while also restricting international collaboration. Already, the growth in budgets relevant to our work is failing to keep pace with inflation, which impacts both staffing levels and our capacity to contribute to observatories and space missions. Furthermore, the rapidly accelerating proliferation of satellites in low Earth orbit will increasingly compromise ground-based optical and radio astronomy in the coming years and, in a worst-case scenario, rendering it impossible. We must therefore communicate, even more effectively than we have to date, the importance of the night sky as a common heritage of all humanity, as well as the value of astronomy not only for fundamental research, but also as a driver of technological innovation.

Over the past few years, we astronomers within the Council of German Observatories – coordinated by Stefanie Walch-Gassner, Michael Kramer, and myself, and drawing on significant input from many of you – have revised the "Denkschrift Astronomie" (roadmap for astronomical research in the next decade). This document serves to present our field to political decision-makers. In the coming days, you will receive a separate email providing access to the current draft. We invite your comments, which we will incorporate during the final phase of the writing process. The roadmap is intended to outline our entire field – covering our core research priorities and technological developments, as well as the challenges

we face for the years ahead. It will be the task of all of us in the German Astronomical Society to bring these points into the public discourse. I am confident that, in doing so, we will succeed in continuing to communicate astronomy and astrophysics as a highly relevant, engaging, and vital scientific discipline, and I look forward to the years to come.

I hope to hear from many of you regarding the roadmap over the coming weeks,

Yours, Jörn Wilms

Caroline Herschel Medal 2027

Nominations are now open for the 2027 Caroline Herschel Medal, which recognises exceptional women astrophysicists in the UK and Germany.

The award celebrates individual excellence and the vital contributions of women to advancing our understanding of the universe. Jointly administered by the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) and the German Astronomical Society (Astronomische Gesellschaft, AG), it also honours the longstanding scientific collaboration between the two countries.

The medal recognises an established researcher for outstanding contributions to astrophysics through research or leadership. All women are encouraged to apply, and self-nominations are welcome.

The 2027 medal will be awarded to a researcher based in the UK, who will also receive a prize of £3,000.

Further information and an online form for nominations are available at:
https://www.astronomische-gesellschaft.de/en/News/nominations-open-for-the-2027-caroline-herschel-medal

The deadline for nominations is Tuesday, 1 December 2026.

The award ceremony is scheduled to take place in London in spring 2027.

Report 99th Ordinary Members' Assembly

The German Astronomical Society held its 99th Ordinary General Members' Assembly on September 8, 2026, during its international annual scientific conference, AG2026, at the Max Planck Institute for Astrophysics in Garching near Munich. 64 members attended the meeting in person, while an additional 6 members joined via the conference software, Zoom.

The President, Prof. Dr. Stefanie Walch-Gassner, opened the meeting at 5:45 p.m. and welcomed the participants. She then fulfilled the somber duty of commemorating those members who had passed away since the 98th General Assembly and invited the attendees to observe a minute of silence in their honor: Dr. habil. Frank W. Baier (Bergholz), Dr. Béla Arpad Balázs (Budapest), Dr. Bernhard du Mont (Konstanz), Prof. Dr. Hans Jörg Fahr (Bonn), Prof. Dr. Franz Kneer (Göttingen), Prof. Dr. Joachim Krautter (Neckargemünd), Dr. habil. Constanze la Dous (Regensburg), Dr. Klaus Lindner (Leipzig), Prof. Dr. Detlef Schönberner (Schwentinental/Raisdorf), Prof. Dr. Klaus Oswald Thielheim (Kiel), Dr. Hubertus Wöhl (Freiburg), and Prof. Dr. Hans Günter Wunner (Stuttgart). The German Astronomical Society will cherish their memory.

The President reported that the Executive Board has held monthly meetings via video conference, in addition to further video-conference meetings dedicated to preparing the annual meeting AG2026 and discussing the Society's awards.

At the suggestion of Joachim Wambsganss, the Executive Board has decided to name the AG's awards for astrophysical software and instrument development after prominent figures, renaming them the "Rudolf Kippenhahn Prize for Astrophysical Software" and the "Max Wolf Prize for Instrument Development," respectively.

It was also proposed to introduce a new "mid-career" award – the "Erika Böhm-Vitense Prize" – intended for individuals who have been working professionally in the field of astrophysics for approximately 10 to 20 years. The Executive Board will deliberate on this matter and present a proposal to the next General Members' Assembly for discussion and formal adoption.

The Executive Committee of the Council of German Observatories (Rat deutscher Sternwarten, RDS) has held regular meetings as needed to address specific topics. These discussions included, among other things, potential successors to the expiring framework program within the BMFTR's ErUM Pro funding line.

Furthermore, the President provided an update on the progress of a new roadmap (Denkschrift) being prepared by the AG and the RDS, under the leadership of Jörn Wilms, Michael Kramer, and Stefanie Walch-Gassner. The document is scheduled for completion in November 2026 and is set to be formally adopted during a special session of the RDS on December 14, 2026.

Vice President Prof. Dr. Volker Springel attended the business meetings of the European Astronomical Society (EAS) as a representative of the German Astronomical Society (AG). The topic of "Dark and Quiet Skies" continues to play a significant role in EAS discussions. At the EU level, the aim is to influence the forthcoming "Space Law Act" in a way that supports astronomy. The strategy for this involves providing policymakers with more quantitative data regarding the harm caused by satellite constellations and light pollution.

Treasurer Prof. Thomas Kraupe reported on membership developments. Since January 1, 2025, 62 individual members and 27 corporate members have joined. During this period, 10 members resigned, and 17 passed away. The memberships of 27 individuals were terminated due to significant outstanding membership fees. As of September 8, 2026, the AG has 888 members.

Following this, the Treasurer presented the financial report for the 2025 fiscal year. The increased costs associated with the expanded administrative office are – as planned – covered by the contributions from the new corporate members. It is essential that the AG's annual meetings in 2026 and 2027 (and beyond) at least break even.

The AG's financial position is to be further stabilized through prudent spending, optimized monitoring (including the use of cost centers), and the recruitment of new members – specifically additional "corporate members".

Upon the Treasurer's recommendation, it was decided to keep membership fees at their current level.

The Secretary, Dr. Klaus Reinsch, reported that the newsletters of the Society were distributed to all members at approximately four-month intervals. Volumes 107 and 108 of the "Mitteilungen der AG" (Communications of the AG) – containing the annual reports of the German astronomical institutes for 2023 and 2024 – were delivered to approximately 50 libraries and institutions at the end of 2024. Volume 109 (featuring the 2025 annual reports from 18 RDS institutes to date) is currently being prepared for printing. All volumes from number 87 onwards are also available online via the website of the AG.

The Press Officer, Dr. Janine Fohlmeister, provided an update on the press and public relations activities of the AG. On August 12, 2026, the third "Long Night of Astronomy" – funded by the BMFTR – took place. It was coordinated by the Stiftung Planetarium Berlin, with support from the Society of German-Speaking Planetariums (Gesellschaft Deutschsprachiger Planetarien), the German Association of Amateur Astronomers (Vereinigung der Sternfreunde), and the German Astronomical Society. The event, which saw the participation of numerous planetariums, public observatories, and astronomical institutes across Germany, reached over 100,000 people nationwide and garnered significant media attention.

In the board elections, **Prof. Dr. Jörn Wilms** (Bamberg) was elected as President, **Prof. Dr. Eva K. Grebel** (Heidelberg) as Vice President, and **Prof. Dr. Markus Roth** (Tautenburg) as additional board member.

The assembly expressed its gratitude to the outgoing board members – Prof. Dr. Stefanie Walch-Gassner, Prof. Dr. Volker Springel, and Prof. Dr. Julia Tjus – for their service and dedicated commitment to the interests of the AG.

Further reports were presented by the Education Committee, the Young Astronomical Society, the Commission for Light Pollution Protection, and the Working Group on the History of Astronomy.

The 100th General Members' Assembly is expected to take place on September 21, 2027, during the Astronomical Society's annual meeting in Heidelberg.

Announcement of the Awards of the AG 2027

The German Astronomical Society will offer the following awards in 2027.

Karl Schwarzschild Medal 2027

The German Astronomical Society recognises astronomers of outstanding scientific merrit by awarding the Karl Schwarzschild Medal and inviting the recipient to give the Karl Schwarzschild Lecture during the annual meeting of the AG. The award winner will be nominated by the AG's Executive Board.

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We invite members of the AG to submit nominations for the awards listed below to the President by **January 31, 2027**. Please provide these nominations in writing, accompanied by a compelling justification, a list of publications, and the academic curriculum vitae of the nominee. For all of these awards, we explicitly encourage the nomination of female candidates (mailto:praesident@astronomische-gesellschaft.de).

Ludwig Biermann Award 2027

The German Astronomical Society presents the Ludwig Biermann Award to an outstanding astronomer who, as a general rule, completed their PhD no more than six years ago. The award consists of a certificate and a cash prize of 3,000 €, intended to enable the recipient to undertake a research stay at an institution of their choice.

Doctoral Thesis Award 2027

The German Astronomical Society presents the Doctoral Thesis Award to a young astronomer for the best doctoral dissertation of the preceding calendar year. The award consists of a certificate and a cash prize of 1,000 €.

Max Wolf Prize for Instrument Development

The German Astronomical Society awards the Max Wolf Prize for Instrument Development for the design, development, construction, and/or significant enhancement of an astronomical instrument that has led to substantial progress in astrophysical research. The prize consists of a certificate and a monetary award of 3,000 €.

The Max Wolf Prize for Instrument Development is awarded biennially, alternating with the Rudolf Kippenhahn Prize for Astrophysical Software.

Details regarding these prizes can be found in the statutes of the awards:
https://www.astronomische-gesellschaft.de/en/activities/awards/

The board of the AG also welcomes suggestions of individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the interests and objectives of the AG and who should be appointed as **honorary members**.

Splinter Meetings and Plenary Speakers AG2027

The next annual meeting of the AG under the topic „Exploring the Universe across Space and Time" will be held from **20 to 24 September 2027 in Heidelberg**.

We kindly ask the members of the AG and the institutes of the RDS to submit **suggestions for splinter meetings and for plenary speakers until Januar 31, 2027**. Proposals for splinter meetings should be submitted online via the conference website: https://ag2027.astronomische-gesellschaft.de/ .

Membership of the IAU

Applications for individual and junior memberships of the IAU may be submitted until **December 15, 2026**.

For further information and an application form see:
https://www.iau.org/Iau/News/Ann2026/Call-New-IAU-Members-2027.aspx

Applications may be submitted by professional scientists who are engaged in astronomical research or work in an

associated field with a strong focus on astronomy and hold a PhD or equivalent qualification.

With kind regards,

Jörn Wilms, Klaus Reinsch
(for the Executive Committee)

Important dates 2026/27 at a glance

Nomination of candidates for the Caroline Herschel Medal	**1 December**
Application for IAU membership	**15 December**
Suggestions for plenary speakers and Splinter meetings during AG2027 in Heidelberg	**31 January**
Nomination of candidates for awards of the German Astronomical Society	**31 January**
Conference **AG2027** in Heidelberg	**20-24 September**

Bank accounts of the German Astronomical Society:

Membership fees and donations (specify reason for payment)
Account holder: Astronomische Gesellschaft
IBAN: DE91 4305 0001 0033 3410 41
BIC: WELADED1BOC

Payments to the **Working Group History of Astronomy**:
Please specify the reason for your payment.
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