# AstroMundus – 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle

## Erasmus Mundus Masters Course in Astronomy & Astrophysics Editions 1&2

One year after the publication of the first call for applications that invited talented students of any nationality to apply for participation in the course, the first AstroMundus course edition started in September 2010. A total of 19 students were enrolled in AstroMundus Edition 1. All of them received scholarships fully funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Union.

AstroMundus Edition 2 started in September 2011 and counted 10 participant students, all of which were awarded Erasmus Mundus scholarships. Further, the Erasmus Mundus programme provided a number of grants for visiting scholars, that allowed AstroMundus to enrich the programme through scholar exchanges within the Consortium and by inviting renown experts from other countries to give specialised, dedicated lectures as part of the curriculum of the Master course.







### The First AstroMundus Retreat – Asiago Astrophysical Observatory 2011

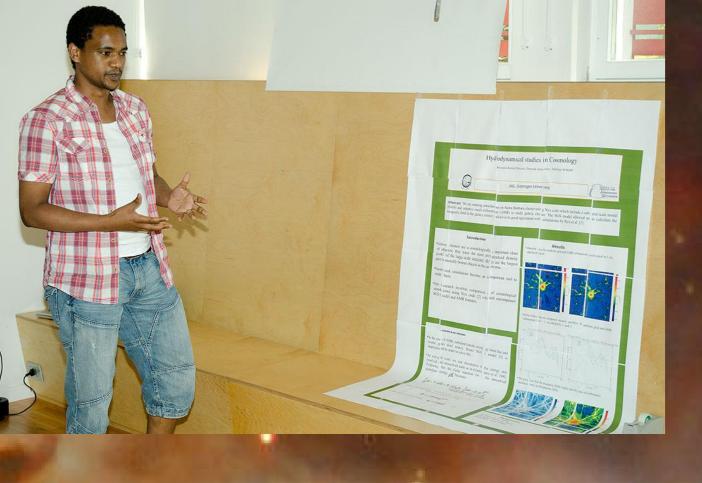
One of the most important events of each course edition is the annual AstroMundus Retreat, when all enrolled students, programme committees and a number of lecturers and researchers from all partner institutions gather for a 3-day meeting at one of the Consortium locations. The very first AstroMundus Retreat was hosted by the University of Padova at the Astrophysical Observatory of Asiago in summer 2011, at the end of the second semester of the first course edition. In this occasion, students attended presentations on possible thesis topics given by members of all Consortium Universities. Further, they had a supervised data-analysis hands-on session where they split in small groups, each one working on a stand-alone short project. The Retreat ended with the student presentations of the results they obtained in these short projects.



#### AstroMundus Retreat 2012 – Asiago Astrophysical Observatory Edition 1 thesis presentations and Best Master Thesis award



The second AstroMundus Retreat, hosted again by the Asiago Astrophysical Observatory, was another very important event. For the first time, two student cohorts could meet together at one location and share their views and experiences within the programme. Edition 2 students could enjoy a supervised dataanalysis hands-on session similar to the previous cohort and were presented with potential thesis topics. The first set of close to completion - AstroMundus Master thesis projects was presented by Edition 1 students to their peers and to the Consortium staff. All participants were impressed by the high quality of the work presented by the students.









At the end of Edition 1, a committee of three astrophysics professors evaluated all Master theses, with the goal of selecting the best thesis of the course edition.

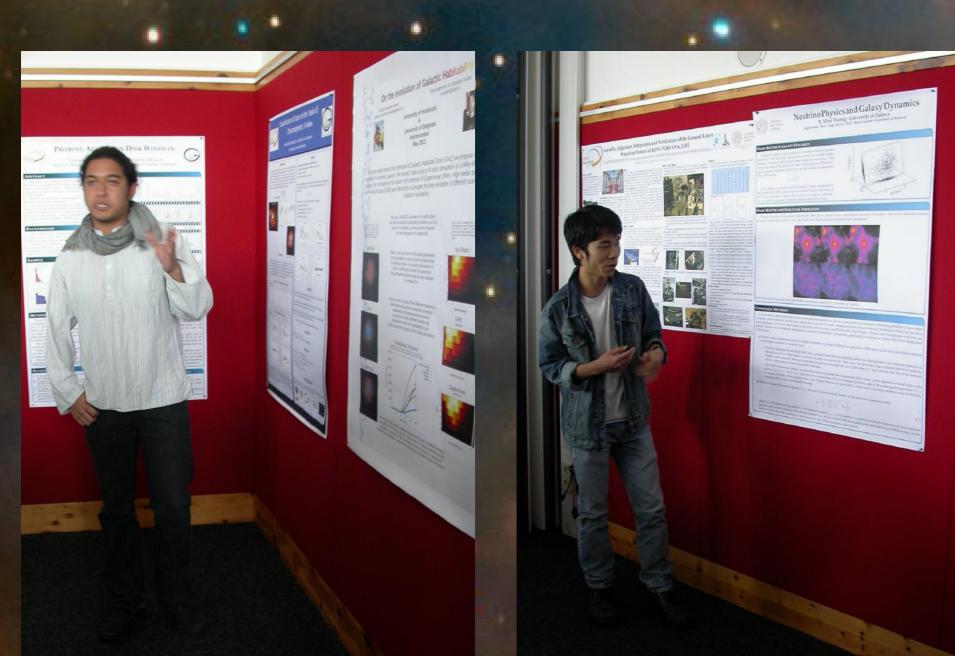
The prize for the Best Master Thesis of Edition 1 was awarded to Payaswini Saikia for her thesis "The UV and optical spectral properties of a sample of broad line AGNs", jointly supervised by Prof. L. Popović, University of Belgrade, and Prof. W. Kollatschny, University of Göttingen.

After returning to India for an internship, Payaswini obtained a PhD position at the Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands and is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the New York University in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates



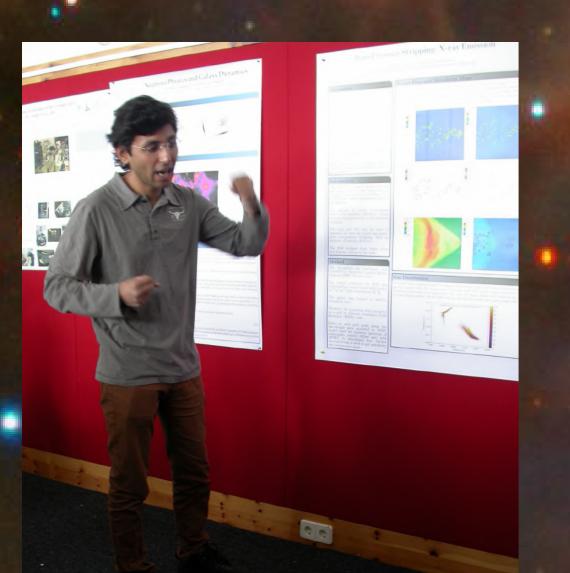


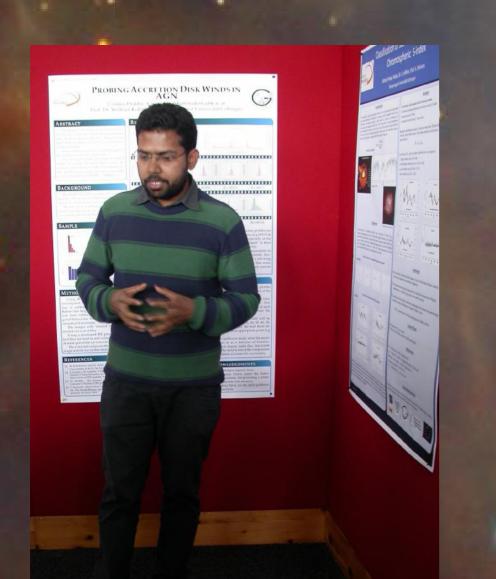
### AstroMundus Retreat 2013 – Obergurgl University Center Edition 2 thesis presentations and Best Master Thesis award









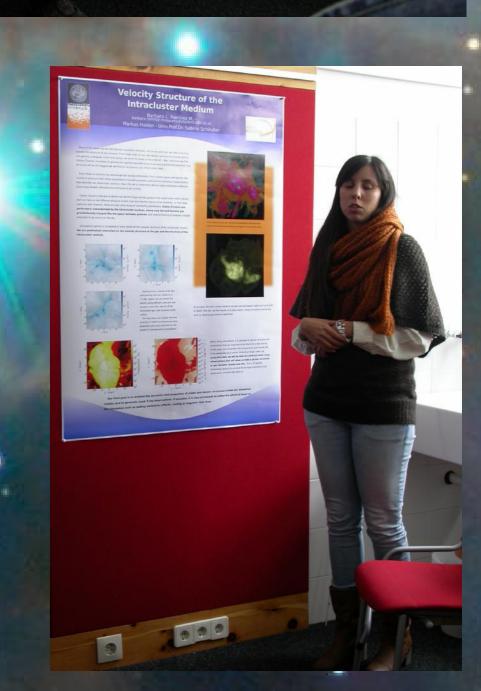


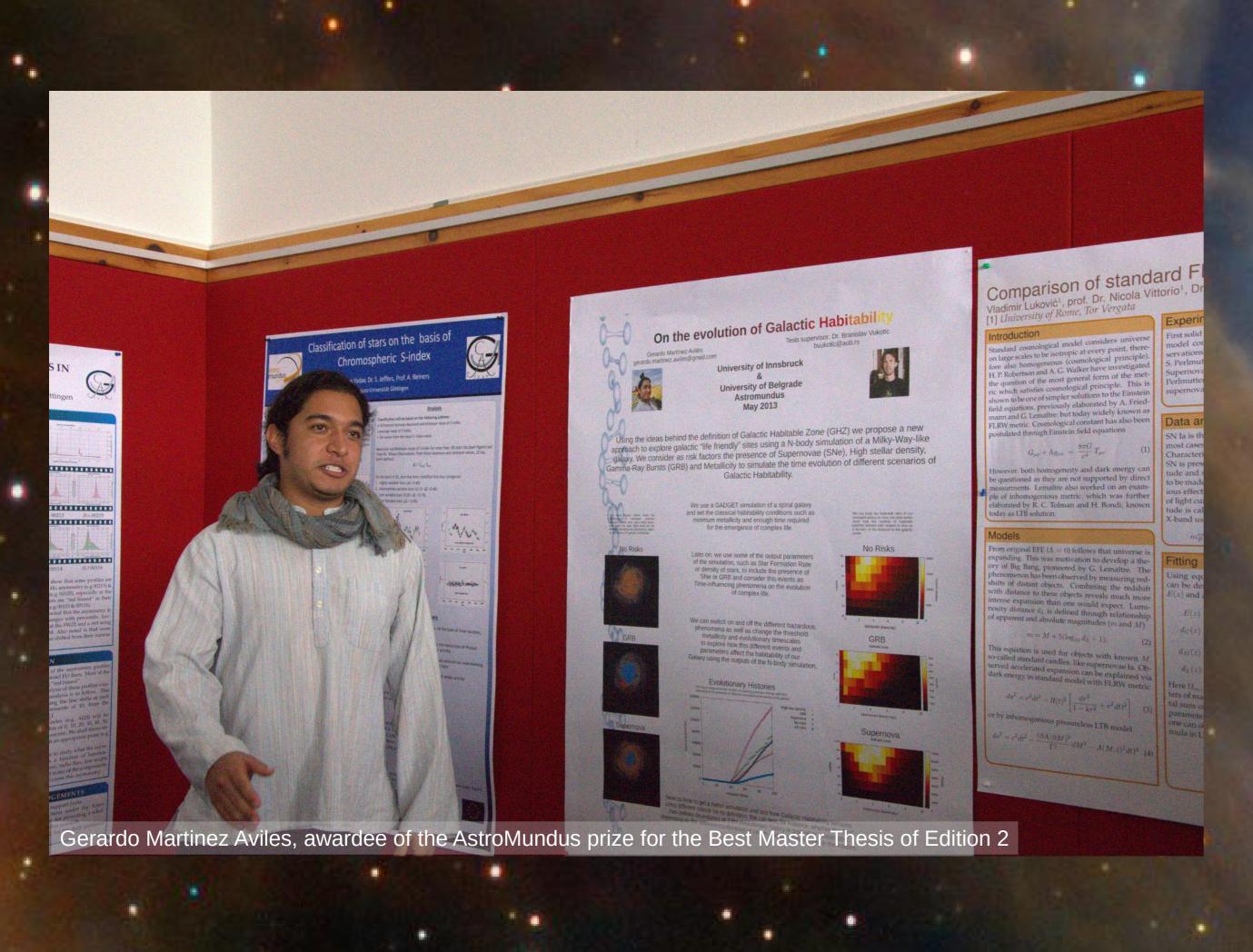












The AstroMundus Retreat 2013 took place in a new location, the Obergurgl University Center (University of Innsbruck) on the Austrian Alps. It saw the participation of Edition 2 and Edition 3 students, as well as staff members of all AstroMundus partners. Edition 2 students gave poster presentation of their ongoing Master thesis projects and discussed them with the staff and with the new cohort of students. Their theses spanned a wide range of topics including observations, numerical simulations and theoretical astrophysics, ranging from the effects of the Sun on Earth's atmosphere, through the habitability of exoplanets, the activity of solar-type stars, particle physics and cosmology, RAM-pressure stripping in galaxies, to the application of adaptive optics to large telescopes. The AstroMundus prize for the Best Master Thesis of Edition 2 was awarded to Gerardo Martinez Aviles. His thesis "On the Evolution of Galactic Habitability" was jointly supervised by Dr. Vuketić (University of Belgrade) and Prof. Schindler (University of Innsbruck). After a period in Mexico, his home country, Gerardo moved to the University of Nice, France, as a PhD student within an Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate programme.



















