

**December 2019**

**Dear members of SAG-SAS sections,**

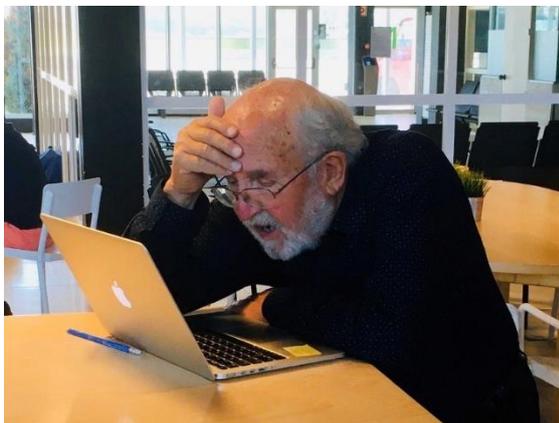
**Dear friends of SAG-SAS,**

In recent weeks, the topic of "exoplanets" has been at the top of the news of astronomy in Switzerland. The Nobel Prize was awarded to the discoverers of the first exoplanet, the Swiss population was able to name an exoplanet and its star, and now the launch of the satellite Cheops for the study of exoplanets has been successful! Reason enough to address these events here as well.

In addition, the SAG-SAS has also run a lot and we have just as much ahead of us. This is also to be reported here.

## **1. Nobel Prize in Physics 2019**

Many of us had hoped for years that the groundbreaking discovery of the first exoplanet would be awarded the Nobel Prize, and this year hardly anyone expected it. As the picture shows, Michel Mayor was completely surprised by the communication from Sweden!



The SAG-SAS congratulates Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz on this very important award for astronomy in Switzerland. We are particularly pleased that Michel Mayor, as Honorary President of our Geneva Section, is also part of the SAG-SAS!

## **2. Project "nameexoplanet"**

On December 17, the names of more than 110 exoplanets and their stars were announced at a press conference in Paris. As part of the 100th anniversary of the International Astronomical Union (IAU100), more than 110 countries organized national campaigns that encouraged the direct participation of more than 780,000 people worldwide to propose and select the names for the exoplanet and its star assigned to them.

As part of this campaign, the SAG-SAS has collected a total of 1472 proposals from the public, evaluated them and put out the best 12 proposals online in a public vote. The audit was carried out by a committee of amateur and professional astronomers from Switzerland. The explorer, Michel Mayor, was also actively involved in the committee. The criteria were defined and prioritized by the astronomical youth group Lucerne in accordance with the guidelines of the IAU. The same youth group has already proposed the name for the first exoplanet Dimidium (51 Pegasi b) in 2015.

The best proposals were then submitted to the IAU and the latter decided on the proposal of the school class L3a of the Cantonal School Menzingen (ZG). The exoplanet "HD 130322 b" now officially bears the name **Eiger**, the star around which it orbits, is called **Mönch** and is located in the constellation Virgo (**Jungfrau**). Thus, the well-known Swiss mountains, Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, are now also united in the sky and thus immortalize a piece of Switzerland at the firmament.



Under the leadership of Stefan Meister, a very active committee organized the naming in Switzerland. As usual with such processes, the great work is carried out unnoticed by the public in the background. Therefore, a big thank you to all the members of the committee. For more information, see: <https://sag-sas.ch/> and <https://nameexoplanet.ch/>.

### 3. Launch of the CHEOPS Space Telescope

The Swiss Space Telescope CHEOPS began its journey into space on December 18 aboard a Soyuz rocket from the European Space Station in Kourou, French Guiana.

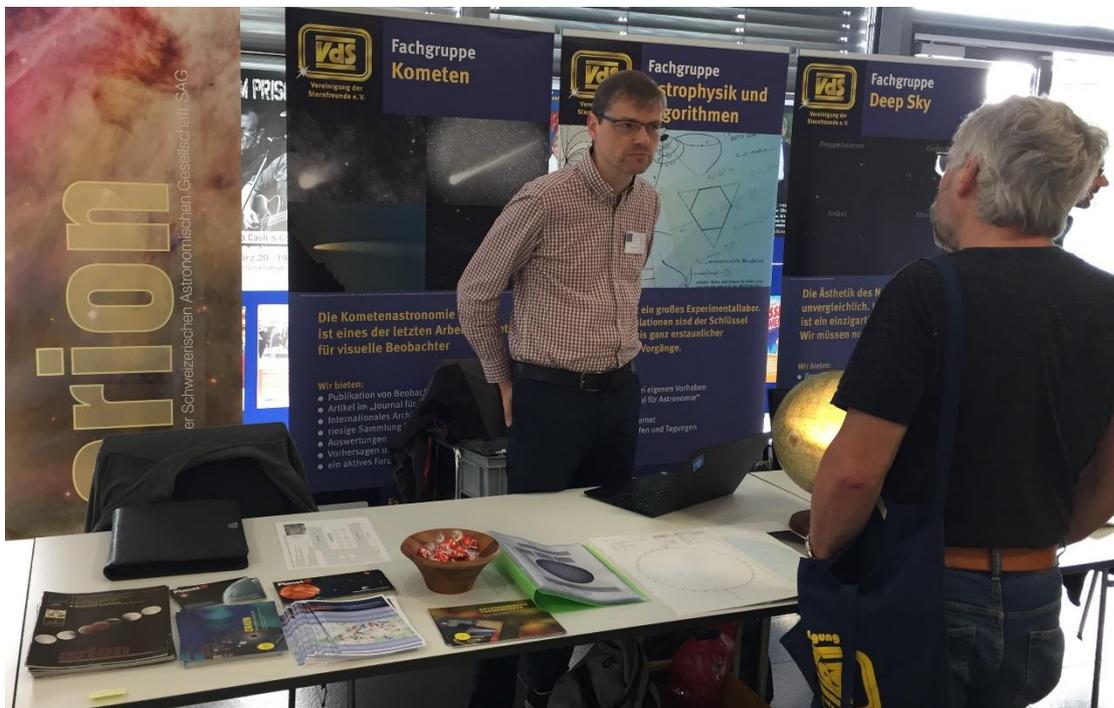
CHEOPS (short for CHAracterising ExOPlanet Satellite) consists of a space telescope developed and assembled by the University of Bern in collaboration with the University of Geneva and a satellite platform that carries the telescope. CHEOPS, operated by the University of Geneva, is the first mission under the joint leadership of Switzerland and the European Space Agency (ESA).

The mission is designed to study exoplanets and will observe stars known to orbit planets around them.

#### 4. Events involving SAG-SAS



Stand of SAG-SAS and ORIONmedien GmbH at the astronomy fair AME2019 in Villingen-Schwenningen. Every year, this trade fair allows us to deepen our contacts with our colleagues from Germany, but also with the many trade participants from Switzerland, and the products of ORIONmedien GmbH can also be presented and offered.



With a small delegation we also participated in this year's general assembly of the VdS in Neunburg vorm Walde in Bavaria. At a joint stand with a VdS section we presented the SAG-SAS and ORIONmedien GmbH to the VdS members. Our contacts with the VdS are quite close and we follow

the current VdS projects closely. We have many topics in common, such as the promotion of young members, the objective for the contents of the association magazine, the decreasing willingness to volunteer and, in general, an increasing ageing of the members.

## **5. Mutation in SAG-SAS members**

The Alpine Astrovillage (47 AAV), which had set up a new location in Luzein (GR) only this year, has already left the SAG-SAS and abandoned its activity in the field of astronomy. The owner couple moves back to the USA and is again dedicated to medical research.

## **6. Replacement of laser pointers for astronomical presentations**

Already in the last newsletter we pointed out about possibilities for replacing laser pointers in astronomical tours, now that these are banned in Switzerland. It is becoming apparent that various high-performance LED lamps can already be used to a large extent and it is to be expected that the development will continue here as well. The SAG-SAS website provides up-to-date test reports.

And a warning: compliance with the ban on laser pointers is strictly controlled in certain areas. For example, an amateur astronomer who was not informed of the ban reported that criminal proceedings had been opened against him after customs confiscated a laser pointer he had ordered abroad!

## **7. Presidential Conference 2019**

The PC 2019 had to be moved to Rümlang at short notice and could be carried out under the best conditions thanks to the great efforts of Heinz Rauch and Beat Meier. The main areas of presentations concerned the activities of the sections, the work on the website, the development of social media appearances, youth work and the development of finances. In the general discussion, the future of ORION was then a major topic.



After lunch, Beat Meier explained the facilities and operation of the Rümlang observatory.



## 8. Future of the magazine ORION

Since our call in the last newsletter, we have received some feedback in the SAG forum with ideas about the future of ORION. Further opinions and proposals were received via e-mail and in direct discussions, and at the Presidential Conference on 9 November, ORION was again a central topic. We all know how difficult the situation is for print media today, and another successful future of ORION will only be possible if we succeed in adapting the magazine optimally to today's requirements. The ORIONmedien GmbH has therefore decided to start the expansion of the ORION editorial team to three editors. Thomas Baer has been the sole editor for several years and the necessary adjustments cannot be made by him alone. The SAG-SAS Board is therefore very active in the search for people who are interested and willing to work in a paid part-time position in the future editorial team. Employment conditions and assignment can be adapted as far as possible to the ideas and possibilities of the new editors. Interested parties should contact the President for a non-binding interview ([christian.wernli@sag-sas.ch](mailto:christian.wernli@sag-sas.ch)). Of course, we are also very happy to receive hints about possible candidates.

We are very interested in continuing the decades-long successful history of ORION and hope for a good future with an expanded editorial team (yet to be found). The ORION has already survived many difficult situations and so we believe in a good solution.

We are also in the process of looking back at the history of ORION. A few days ago, we signed the contract for the digitization of all ORION issues with the ETH Library. After completion of this project, all contributions ever printed in ORION issues will be freely searchable and accessible. Always, the last two years remain excluded.

## **9. Preparation of the 2020 Assembly of Delegates**

On 4 April, we will hold the next delegates' meeting at the Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz in Brugg. After several years of interruption, an astronomy conference for all SAG-SAS members is planned for the first time. Most of the day will be dedicated to events for all SAG-SAS members and the companies operating in Switzerland in the field of amateur astronomy will present their products. The SAG-SAS specialist groups will present themselves very prominently and explain their activities.

From February 2020, further information about this event will be available on the SAG-SAS website and on this page, it will also be possible to register as a conference participant. As usual, the delegates entitled to vote are then registered by the section presidents. For the delegates, the formal assembly will take place later in the afternoon.

For the upcoming holidays, I wish everyone a quiet and enjoyable time and many opportunities to dedicate themselves to exciting astronomy.

With warm greetings and best wishes,

Christian Wernli  
SAG-SAS President