

Galilean Nights Event ID: gn740

Number of telescopes: 6

Number of organisers: 5

Number of attendees: 500

Event Report:

“Galilean nights” in Vilnius, Lithuania were organized by five students/astronomy enthusiasts of VU FP SSA (Vilnius University Faculty of Physics Students’ Scientific Association, member of IAPS) together with amateur astronomers club “Albireo”, which provided minor funding (covered the costs of printing some photographs).

The event took place in Cathedral square. Two SkyWatcher Explorers, 2 Galileoscopes and 2 binoculars were set up with space-related posters and photos of Galilean discoveries on display.

The concept and idea was to invite passers-by to look through the telescopes (objects: Jupiter, the Moon, Ring nebula, Albireo (α Cyg)), compare the Galileoscope to a modern amateur telescope, explain the working principles of a telescope and listen to a short lecture about Galileo and his discoveries, thus emphasizing the immense work done by him, having in mind the historical context. By doing this, we expected to expand the knowledge of our audience about Galileo and his work, increase the awareness of astronomy-related activities in Lithuania. The event was advertised online (<http://technologijos.lt>, <http://balsas.lt>, <http://astro2009.astro.lt>).

It is estimated that about 500 people listened to the lectures and looked through the telescopes during the three evenings of the event. This relatively low number can be explained by bad weather conditions (Thursday, the 22nd – drizzle, Friday and Saturday - cloudy).

The weather is considered by our team to be the major drawback of the event. Due to the cloud coverage, the two Newtonian reflectors were pointed towards distant objects of the skyline, thus providing the viewers at least some kind of insight into the capabilities of a modern amateur telescope. Also, we did not think of the possibility to put up some kind of a banner of “Galilean nights”.

Despite this, the team holds the project a success. The opinion is based on the reaction of the listeners – they were showing increased interest and were keen to discuss and ask broader questions from various fields of astronomy, which were answered. The feedback was positive (comments in forums online; people asked whether it is possible to organize some sort of a star party with the team; many stated that such events are very important and praised the teams’ enthusiasm).

A discussion later was held by the team to self-evaluate and clear up the problems. The conclusions are stated in this report. The team is looking forward to host another event.