A LIGHT FOR SCIENCE

ESRF AND SOLEIL TO HOST THE INTERNATIONAL SYNCHROTRON INSTRUMENTATION MEETING

The two lightsources based in France, the ESRF in Grenoble, and SOLEIL in Paris, will welcome the next Synchrotron Radiation and Instrumentation (SRI) meeting, which will take place in 2012. The decision was announced at this year's SRI conference, which brought together 700 participants last September in Melbourne (Australia).

The international committee of directors of synchrotron sources worldwide voted for the ESRF and SOLEIL to organise the next SRI because of the scientific programme presented, the scholarships and tutorials offered for young scientists and the plan to involve industry and other lightsources more actively in the event.
Because of the joint collaboration, the meeting will take place in Lyon, a thriving French city in the heart of Europe in south-east France. The event is open to the participation of other European sources and some have already signed in for satellite workshops.

The ESRF stand during SRI 2009 in Australia. Credits: C. Habfast.

The ESRF Directors of Research discuss the future of the ESRF

After several months in office, Harald Reichert (HR) and Serge Pérez (SP), the new directors of research, discuss the challenges of the Upgrade programme and how they lead the science of the ESRF.

You have been in office for several months now. What are the most important issues?
SP: The Upgrade is really a driving force. We are working on the definition of partnerships. We use the Partnership for Structural Biology as a model, and we need to define new partnerships, for condensed matter, extreme conditions, paleontology and magnetism.
HR: Since our arrival, most of our tasks have been linked to the Upgrade programme. One of our duties is a space audit assessing how office and lab space can be shared.
What is your biggest challenge?
HR: We have to run the division and at the same time make many decisions for the Upgrade.
SP: At some point we will also face a change of culture at the ESRF, in our division.
HR: With the Upgrade, we have a plan for 7 years, and guidelines for use of the allocated budget. This is why we asked scientists to come up with the 31 conceptual design reports (CDRs) for the entire portfolio of public beamlines at the ESRF. All of this means that if someone has a new idea that is not covered by the CDRs during the next 7 years, we may pursue it, but we will have to cancel something else. We can't do everything that we plan to do in the next 7 years plus any new ideas that come up along the way.
SP: So we need to help scientists to find financial resources from other external sources.
HR: We may have to redefine the mission of beamlines and give them an orientation to new directions. This is difficult for scientists. No beamline will be closed, but it may change its mission. The strength of the ESRF is the highly specialised and unique beamlines.
SP: We also want to avoid duplication with national light sources, which push us to have very specialised stations that they can't offer.
HR: We do as much as we can to supply the best conditions for users and the community is not leaving us, which is a good sign.