IRAM Array Now Operational

On 5 September, Hubert Curien the French Minister for Research and Technology formally handed over to IRAM, the joint Franco-German Institute for RadioAstronomy at Millimetre wavelengths, its second observatory. This is located at an altitude of 2550 m on the Plateau de Bure, 90 km south of Grenoble and comprises an array of three 15 m mobile radio telescopes. These will be able to operate either alone or in conjunction with the 30 m radiotelescope at IRAM's other observatory at Pico Valeta in the south of Spain.

The range of wavelengths that can be received extends from 3–0.8 mm. Base line for the array is variable up to 288 m in the E-W direction and 160 m N-S. A special feature of the design of the telescopes is the extensive use of carbon fibre composites.