

Gearing up for LCWS 07

"The most important skill of any secretary is to know the experts. You don't have to be able to do everything yourself, but you have to know who to ask!" Ramona Matthes is a secretary at DESY and together with two colleagues and a couple of scientists form the core of the local organising committee for the Linear Collider Workshop and GDE meeting that will take place at DESY from 30 May to 4 June 2007. In physicists' terms it is far too early to even think about this meeting, but in administrative terms the organising team did well to start in August last year – organising a meeting for up to 800 people isn't done in a couple of weeks, and there are many major and minor things that all have to work once the hordes of participants arrive. With three GDE meetings each year and many others at the side, every region of the ILC has learnt this, sometimes the hard way.

Even in a large city like Hamburg, housing more than 700 people conveniently and not too expensively isn't easy. "We had to book 30 hotels more or less all across town, and you couldn't imagine how hard it was to find a venue for the conference dinner," says Ingrid Nikodem. Iris Kerkhoff adds: "Of course it had to fulfil a few important criteria – it needed to house all participants and their accompanying persons, it had to be nice and original, and it wasn't allowed to cost a fortune." The organising team is happy to report that this impossible-sounding dinner venue has been found, but they won't give away any details. You'll just have to attend the meeting to find out...

Another problem were the sessions themselves. The largest conference room on the DESY campus starts to burst when more than 350 people try to get in. There is one larger hall which looked very attractive at first, at least to the scientists on the committee. That was until Ramona Matthes pointed out that one little detail was missing: enough toilets for everybody! "We would have had to set up mobile loo units, and we all know what fun they are to go to," she grins. It turns out that DESY security even has rules for this – having a certain number of people requires a certain number of facilities. Good news on this front, too: a huge tent will be set up with plenty of "infrastructure" all around.

This tent, however, caused further headaches. Will it be too hot in summer? Will it be dark enough for presentations to be readable? Will the acoustics be acceptable? How will DESY traffic flow when there's a big tent in the middle of a car park? Like at any lab, there are experts for all of these questions at DESY, and the three secretaries know them all. The IT department has even purchased new equipment to ensure that the wireless internet connection is up to (top) speed for demanding scientists. The canteen has been warned well ahead of time so that they can prepare their kitchen and themselves for 800 extra mouths to feed for a week. "You can't think of everything and you have to stay flexible... but at the moment we think we've covered the most important areas," the team says with confidence.

After a first burst of organising activity they are entering a quieter phase these weeks. Registration starts in a week or two, and after a while detailed questions and requests will first trickle and later pour in. How to get from a to b, how to get a visa, who to support financially, how to pay the conference fee, how to cancel the six rooms you booked by accident or where to get the best Labskaus in Hamburg – all these they will try to answer [on the website](#). But they expect to do nothing but LCWS business for almost a month before the meeting – still well ahead of those scientists who finish their presentations the day before the meeting...

-- Barbara Warmbein



All these drivers will have to find new places to park their cars when a big tent will go up on the parking lot at DESY for LCWS 07.