

OPTICON Executive Committee 7

Meeting held in Thessaloniki

9 October 2006

Present:			
G Gilmore (Chair)	UCAM	S Howard (minutes)	UCAM
J Andersen	NOTSA	B Nordstrom	EAS
P Benvenuti	INAF	A Omont	INSU
W Boland	NOVA	R Rebolo	IAC
J Davies	UK ATC/ OPTICON Project Scientist	J Seiradakis	GNCA
R Gredel	MPIA	R Sirey	PPARC
Apologies:		Absent:	
O. von der Luehe	KIS	G Monnet	ESO
A-M Lagrange	INSU	P Vettolani	INAF
J Bergeron	INSU		

1. J. Seiradakis welcomed the Committee.
 - 1.1 The current status of AstroNet was added to the agenda.
 - 1.2 G. Gilmore expressed uncertainty regarding AstroNet's joint activities with OPTICON and RadioNet, as described in their contract, reiterating that the roadmap for infrastructures was a critical aspect.

Action 1: *J. Andersen to provide a detailed presentation on the AstroNet science case vision and roadmap implementation plans, in so far as they require involvement from Opticon, at the Board meeting on 20 October 2006. **Done***

Action 2: *W. Boland formally to invite Mike Bode to the Board meeting to discuss AstroNet. **Done***

Action 3: *JKD to post the dates of the AstroNet science vision meeting on the OPTICON website (23-25 January 2007.) **Done***

2. Status of Annual Report

SH gave a brief update on the current status. The technical report was accepted over the phone by Maria Carvahlo-Dias on Thursday 5 October. If the financial report amendments are accepted, the next tranche of funding should be received in November; again this is much later than hoped, but this is caused by the late first iteration of the report and is accentuated by the "closure" of Europe over the summer months.

The major concern relates to INSU, and the two major problems are:

- Where is the money going and on what is it being spent?
- Work is being seriously delayed as researchers are not receiving their funds or believe there is less funding than actually available, so this a severe local level problem.

A Omont will assist with OPTICON in the absence of A-M Lagrange and will set up close contact with PIs in the labs. He will speak to the acting Director to obtain support in assisting the smooth running of OPTICON reporting and Elisabeth Kohler (new admin person at INSU) will be put into contact with GG and SH.

UPS-IAS-Orsay is in an anomalous position, being the only French lab as a full partner rather than being administered by INSU. There was a unanimous vote to remove UPS/Orsay as a formal partner. Instead their activities, which will be unaffected, should be kept inside the "INSU umbrella". This is a purely administrative change to correct an anomaly.

Action 4: GG to arrange for the relevant contract amendment to be sent to the EC to remove UPS/Orsay as a separate partner, following Board (and UPS) approval.

2.1 Mid-Term Review

A letter from the European Commission was circulated, stating that a special report for our Mid-Term Review is now no longer required. A panel will be set up to read the OPTICON Annual Reports for Periods 1-3 and the contract itself, and has the option to attend an OPTICON Board meeting in 2007 if desired. Annual Report 3 needs to be both timely and to provide an overview to date.

3. Transition from FP6 to FP7

JKD gave a summary of the JRA financial position; the main concern is JRA4, where real spend is uncertain. If the planned under-spend for Networking continues, approx. ½ million Euros could be available; Access is oversubscribed in general. If the contractual time is not delivered, it is possible to reallocate some telescope time to other telescopes.

Action 5 JKD to circulate a summary financial spreadsheet for the Board meeting in Heidelberg. **Done**

The budget situation should be clearer by the next Executive meeting in early-mid March 2007.

4. FP7 and status of call for proposals

4.1 Design Studies

GG informed the Executive that the ESFRI "shopping list" is to be published on 17 October, and priority will be given to those astronomy projects listed. It is expected that 5-10MEuros will be allocated for each large facility and the closing date will be Spring 2007.

4.2 I3's

The duration of FP7 will be 7 years, rather than the current 5 years, so in effect, this means a decrease in funding. There will be no AC contractors, only FC, with the EC refunding 70-80% of eligible costs.

5. OPTICON FP7 proposals

GG explained that FP7 needs to have the same structure as FP6 (JRAs, Networks, Access). Our EC program officers have privately advised the Executive that at this stage, OPTICON should request approx. 30MEuros.

Following the meeting in Edinburgh in June, a call for proposals to participate in FP7 was widely circulated – a small number of proposals was received, in addition to those presentations made at the ATC meeting, mostly from current OPTICON partners.

GG explained that the EGaps proposal will probably not be followed up as being too close to research, NTEsa will be put in touch with KTN and Durham.

Action 6 GG to contact Durham University re: overlap with new IAC proposal, and JKD to contact NTE to put them in touch with KTN.

A letter was also received from UCM (Madrid) who wish to join as a contractor and manage the UV Network.

General point: when the revised proposals are received, they must be accompanied by supporting letters from their funding agencies.

The proposals were summarised and then discussed in some detail.

5.1 Adaptive Optics

This is a top priority for astronomy and is clearly critical for Europe. The Executive agreed that:

- this proposal needs more focus and must be capped at a feasible funding level;
 - it must have the right balance of national partners.
- It should identify what would be unique from the OPTICON contribution in FP7.

5.2 Fast Detectors

This proposal has the same priority as AO; these 2 proposals should be placed above all others. It should be balanced with AO.

5.3 Interferometry

The tone of the discussion at the Executive was that the budget should be significantly lower. It was agreed that there should also be more focus, that this JRA must identify an active PI, and that there should be a clear distinction between this proposal and the on-going ESO VLTI Instrument Design Studies. A Omont noted that this has been one of the most successful Network activities in FP6.

5.4 High-Time Resolution

On the plus side the contract looks promising, but on the negative side, it is focusing strongly on a small science community. The general consensus was that this proposal is not viable as a separate JRA, but aspects should be integrated on a smaller scale into detector development activities. There could be some proposed duplications of effort on controller development, which OPTICON would need to control.

Action 7 *JRA4 representative to be put in contact with JRA2 re: HTRA by GG/JKD.*

5.5 Smart Focal Planes

This is a continuation of the design study for instrumentation and technology developments. The general consensus was that this proposal should be more focused (it is currently far too over-ambitious) and there is a lot of duplication with detectors. Also, the proposal requests far too much funding – a more detailed proposal should be put forward to the Executive indicating an approximate budget to work within.

5.6 New Materials

This is a continuation of the current JRA6, which has done very well to-date and is not requesting an increase in budget. The Executive would like to see more partners involved in this JRA (should this only be a European activity?). Potentially, this work has a wider implication on society than just astronomy. It was suggested that this could be merged at a reporting level with Smart Focal Planes.

5.7 Solar Astronomy

The Executive felt that the Solar Community had made a convincing case that it is desirable to keep Solar Astronomy within OPTICON. The proposed technical activities can be integrated into other JRAs. The proposal is modest and they are involved in Access and Adaptive Optics.

5.8 Hardware Developments (FPGA)

This proposal was not supported as an isolated proposal – aspects can be included in the Adaptive Optics and/ or Fast Detectors JRAs. See action 6 above.

5.9 Lucky Imaging

This proposal was not supported, as being too close to science applications, and being too far from our strategic priorities.

Action 8 *JKD to speak to JRA2 re: Lucky Imaging possibilities. .*

Action 9 *GG to check with the EC regarding the rules of funding existing systems.*

5.10 FP7 Network Plans

This would be much the same as now.

- NUVA want to become a partner,
- HTRA should be asked to develop their proposal as only a Network not a JRA,
- KTN should develop their proposal,
- FASE should be converted into a Steering Committee rather than implementation, so a more realistic proposal is needed,
- Enhancement is led by Michel Dennefeld and is considered highly valuable. This could be substantially expanded and ways need to be found to achieve this,

Action 10 *JKD to discuss with Michel Dennefeld what he requires for this project.*

- Outreach should cover all of astronomy, not just OPTICON, but should co-ordinate outreach leaders to implement the activity,

Action 11 *Dan Hillier to discuss this with Outreach contacts.*

- Proposal tools – this was not considered to be a good idea by the Executive; a more detailed proposal with evidence there is a real interest and need is required.

Action 12 *JKD to obtain a more specific proposal from Alan Bridger, and a letter of intent explaining why the customer will not build future systems themselves.*

- Synergy – a specific proposal must be developed with a dedicated PI and without this no further action will be taken.

Action 13 *A Omont to contact J-L Puget to obtain names of those who could co-ordinate this.*

5.11 Site Characterisation

This is a concept for a new Network, to allow communication across the international site characterisation community.

5.12 Access Programme

The subject of the Access programme will be covered at the Board meeting on 20 October 2006 in Heidelberg; there are no assumptions on the detailed implementation of the programme. However, it was noted that OPTICON must have an Access programme and the current one is a great success. The proposal could be slightly more structured and aggressive. There should be an incentive for new developments in Access and showing that progress made in FP6 which could be carried over into FP7 would add to its value.

Action 14 *JKD to discuss the presentation of the Access Programme at the Board meeting with B Nordstrom and J Burgos. DONE*

6. Photonics FP7 proposal

This will be discussed fully at the next Executive meeting in March 2007.

Action 15 *GG to ask Photonics to develop their consortium further to justify FP7 participation.*

7. Funding of South African partnership in OPTICON

This agenda item is only for information. GG explained that there is a global programme to better establish links between Europe and Africa. An SA representative may well begin to attend OPTICON meetings over the next year, and was funded by us to attend the ATC meeting.

8. CAHA and IAA

R Gredel briefly clarified the situation: the new Director does not have full power of attorney as yet, so cannot sign official papers, so R Gredel will continue to sign the papers for FP6. GG then explained that a formal contract amendment would need to be sent to the EC to include the new legal entity as a full Opticon FP6 partner. This was approved one year ago. It was suggested that IAA may wish to join FP6 as an observer.

Action 16 *GG to contact IAA to ask if they would be interested in 'observing' OPTICON until the end of FP6. They could then be involved in the preparation of FP7.*

9. "Today is the Future": EC event

This event has been 'reconfigured', so OPTICON may or may not be involved.

10. Next meeting

The next Executive meeting will be the last chance to assess any changes to the distribution of FP6 funding. The Exec should take this opportunity to optimise the FP6-FP7 transition. GG advised that this meeting should probably take place in early-mid March, as most of the financial reports should be complete by this time. The next Executive meeting will take place in Venice.

Action 17 *SH/ GG to contact a representative in Italy re: local organisation of this meeting.*

GG noted that this was B Nordstrom's last Executive meeting and thanked her for all her efforts and contributions; GG thanked J Seiradakis for organising this meeting.

End of meeting