

OPTICON I3 Executive Committee Meeting 1

Meeting held at 'het Pand', University of Ghent, Ghent, Belgium

2nd April 2004

Present:			
J Andersen	NOTSA	G Monnet	ESO
E Bakker	Leiden	B Nordstrom	EAS
S Brierley (minutes)	UKATC	A Omont	IAP
J Burgos	IAC	A Quirrenbach	Leiden
J Davies	UKATC	R Sirey	PPARC
G Gilmore (chair)	IoA	J Strasser	ESO
N Hubin	ESO	G Vettolani	INAF
P Kern	Grenoble	S Wagner	LSW
S Lilly	SANW		

JRA and Network PIs, and national and ESO Coordinators, had been invited to attend by the Chair, under Rule 2.7.

N Hubin said it was important for the JRA coordinators to attend these meetings because they are able to find out what else is happening across OPTICON and interact with the other JRAs and the Key Technology working group.

Agenda items

1. Approve minutes of last meeting
2. Adopt Rules of Procedure
3. Summarise status of contract
4. Budget status – financial tables
5. JRA Review
6. Implementation of the network budgets
7. Discussion regarding the next Executive Committee meetings

1. Approve minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting zero had been approved after the last meeting.

2. Adopt Rules of Procedure

The Conflict of Interest item (Board Meeting 1st April: Action 3 on R Sirey) was agreed to be resolved with the same text as adopted by the Board. The revised Rules of Procedure are attached to the minutes. The Executive Committee adopted the revised Rules of Procedure.

3. Contract status

a) Reporting procedures.

G Gilmore commented that there is a highly technical point regarding audit certificates which are accepted as legally binding by the EC. The issue and

complexity concerns who performs the audits and when? G Gilmore does not have the answer at present: no one seems to have yet made a decision. In particular, it does not clarify in the contract for which period the certificate should be provided. However, a contractor who receives above €750,000 in a single year has to provide an audit certificate each year. This probably only affects ESO and INSU. The certificates also need to be provided within 45 days at the end of the OPTICON reporting year. G Gilmore is unsure if INSU are able to do this easily. ESO auditing requirements are described explicitly in the Contract Annexes.

There will be a mid-term review of the contract happening after two years so we should assume that in two years some detailed auditing will happen.

b. Contract issues: As noted by N Hubin in the Board meeting, a late change in EC requirements forced the OPTICON matched funding to be exactly equal to EC funds. The project is designed with a larger agreed national contribution. It is unclear if there is any longer a legal requirement on national agencies to deliver their full promised resource. There is a moral requirement, and some packages will fail unless promised resources are indeed delivered.: No action yet required, but a watching brief.

R Sirey indicated that the EU FP6 website has a guide to financial issues, although G Gilmore noted that the EC does not seem to follow these rules in detail.

c. Spending profile.

Our spending profile is front loaded. The EC retains c.15% until the final reports are received. There is likely to be a very limited cash flow in the last 18 months of the contract, but correspondingly little difficulty in the first 2 years.

d. Status of Swiss partners' funding

In the initial proposal the intention was that the Swiss partners asked for no money but would receive funding directly from Berne. Unfortunately, there was an error in the proposal as OPTICON asked for money for one of the Swiss partners for the Magic programme: this element was deleted by the referees, but has somewhat confused the situation. However, when Switzerland joined FP6, the Swiss sent the money to Brussels but apparently it will take a minimum of 6 months to transfer the money within the EU into the infrastructures programme before there is any chance of re-allocating it to OPTICON. We should assume there will be no money for 12 months but continue to strive to get the funding restored by some means or other.

The main implication of this is that N5 Interferometry and JRA5 Smart Focal Planes are impacted.

4. Budget status and financial tables

J Davies distributed a number of Financial tables, summarising the budget allocation by JRA and by country, based on the detailed budget analyses undertaken by each JRA at and after its Kick-Off meeting. G Gilmore noted that none of the JRA budgets have any contingency. Although extremely regrettable, and not best management practise, the EC does not allow contingency. We should assume the detailed Financial breakdown in the last couple of years of the contract are internally negotiable.

J Davies and G Gilmore pointed out that the tables also showed a notional breakdown of network numbers, which are still indicative..

5. JRA Review

G Gilmore stated that it was vital that enough information is received from the JRAs to know that the implementation is satisfactorily and to know if a budget should go up or down.

W Boland suggested a plan based on NOVA's methodology: OPTICON could set up a review committee. Every 6 months written reports will be requested 3 weeks in advance from the PI's. At the review committee the PIs could make a presentation if one was felt necessary. The review committee would then present to the Board meeting the outcome of the review.

N Hubin stressed that the project should be careful with the number of reports being asked for bearing in mind that the reports also have to be provided for the Board Meeting.

G Gilmore stated there would be an Annual Report to the EC every January which would be very top level, not highly technical.

G Monnet suggested an alternative scheme where there might be two observers of each JRA who will receive the reports first and report to the Executive Committee. If these "watchdogs" do not see any problem the JRA leaders do not need to go to the Board and Executive Committee meetings for more detailed review.

This process ensures that Executive Committee members are directly involved in regular review, thus meeting the responsibilities of the Executive to be responsible, while minimising duplicate reporting loads on the JRAs. About one-half of executive committee members would have to be involved in this process.

F Zerbi asked who takes the responsibility to see if the reporting from contractors to the JRA leaders is genuine. It was mentioned that the Agency inside each country which receives the money from OPTICON are the ones who are legally responsible for its reporting.

R Sirey asked how it was proposed to cover the deliverables that are written in the contract. G Monnet stated it must be made very clear at the Progress meetings/Review meetings so you know where you are with deliverables. P Kern commented there should be a Board delegate at these Review meetings.

G Vettolani commented that rotation of observers between different JRAs should be implemented regularly.

J Andersen commented that we should be clear that there should be a technical, scientific and in-depth JRA review which should happen before the Executive Committee meeting. He also commented that if the Executive Committee is going to make decisions then we must decide that the Review will happen before the Executive Committee meeting and there will be a presentation to the Board.

G Gilmore stated the proposal put forward:

Two people, at least one an Executive Committee member, will be appointed for each JRA. These representatives will attend the regular JRA whole-project meetings, expected at 9-monthly intervals, and report back to the Executive Committee on the management and progress of each JRA. This process will be reviewed after 18 months.

He asked the Executive Committee whether this plan was going to be agreed in principle.

R Sirey stated she would like to see a detailed proposal and/or implementation plan.

G Monnet commented that the 18 months reporting period was crucial. He suggests the plan is implemented but that we walk before we run. Subsequently, we can look at G Vettolani's suggestion of the rotation of the observers.

The Executive Committee unanimously voted to adopt this proposal.

G Gilmore asked each of the Executive Committee member to draw up a list of nominated people, avoiding conflicts of interest, and send this to himself within the next week.

Action 1 All: Forward list of nominated people for JRA committees to G Gilmore by 12 April 2004

There was discussion regarding G Monnet's Work Package Manager's financial reporting requirement, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. R Sirey will add an addendum regarding the spend profile. The Committee voted to adopt this addendum.

Work Package operational responsibility process

All commitments related to a Work Package are reported – e.g. on a bi-monthly basis – to the corresponding Work Package Manager. Above an agreed-upon ceiling, prior approval of the Work Package Manager is required.

All payments require prior approval of the Work Package Manager.

Prior approval must be sought for any commitment which would have the cumulative effect of exceeding the delegated budget profile.

G Gilmore will inform all JRA leads they must follow this process.

6. Implementation of the network budgets

There was discussion regarding the complications of managing the budgets e.g. travel budgets and whether they should be implemented centrally or nationally.

Most network leaders want to control their own budgets. They feel that the scheme of central national banks is impractical and bureaucratic. Instead they would like the network budgets devolved to a convenient local agency who will hold the whole network budget. This was

accepted in principle by the board. New tables will be implemented so that money can be distributed in due course.

Action 3 J Davies: Draw up new financial tables to reflect the Network activities' budgetary control

Regarding the NUVA workpackage in NA2, G Gilmore stated that a more detailed proposal was required before the budget or the spend profile could be changed from the present plan.

7. Discussion regarding the next Executive Committee meeting

It was decided to hold the meeting on Tuesday 21st September in Leiden.