

## OPTICON Executive Committee 3

Meeting held at ETH Zentrum Building, Room G50, Zürich, Switzerland

9 February 2005

<b>Present:</b>			
G Gilmore (Chair)	UCAM	S Lilly	SANW
J Andersen	NOTSA	G Monnet	ESO
W Boland (via telconf)	NOVA	B Nordstrom	EAS
J Davies	UK ATC	A Omont	INSU
S Howard (minutes)	UCAM	R Sirey	PPARC
A-M Lagrange	INSU	P Vettolani	INAF
<b>Apologies:</b>			
Rafael Rebolo	IAC		

### 1. Welcome

G Gilmore welcomed the Committee, especially A-M Lagrange who was attending her first OPTICON meeting. G Gilmore enquired as to whether contact had been made with H-W Rix. S Lilly confirmed that he had heard nothing from him.

**Action 1:** *GG to contact H-W Rix re: appointing a substitute to attend these meetings in his absence.*

### 2. Annual Report

G Gilmore went through the Annual Report, point by point. Although this report should be with the European Commission by next week, it is unlikely this will be achieved. A draft version of the report will be sent to the EU to try to identify any issues which can be resolved before the final version is complete. GG stated that he hoped the delay should not cause too much of a problem. It is caused by the lack of Financial Reports received from partners. SH circulated a spreadsheet of the current status of financial reports.

The main points that arose from this discussion on the Annual Report were as follows:

- With respect to the planned review of the Access Office, it was felt that someone appointed by the Executive Committee should be on the Review Panel of the Access Office due to the financial implications. W Boland was recommended for this position, which in principle he accepted.

**Action 2:** *W Boland to be added to the Review Panel.*

There was further discussion raised by J Andersen that the Committee should approve the Terms of Reference of the Review. Given the potential funding implications, the Committee should make sure that the review would address the appropriate issues.

**Action 3:** *JKD as Chairman for the Telescope Directors Forum to provide draft Terms of Reference to the Executive Committee.*

There was a discussion regarding the budget for the N6.3 enhancement activity. The Committee felt it was unclear how the OPTICON money was to be spent. J Davies advised that the budget was mostly for supporting experienced persons to attend the enhancement activities but there remained some doubts about the plans.

**Action 4:** *GG to ask for a detailed implementation plan from M Dennefeld for the next Board.*

- Concern was expressed regarding the management of JRA3. G Gilmore has expressed concern to this JRA about the lack of management in place and as such that

the future of the programme is precarious. Various suggestions were made as to how to deal with this:

- a) JRA3 to submit progress report every 3 months;
- b) JRA3 to be set specific deadlines and face financial penalties for failing to stick to these;
- c) JRA3 to have their expenditure “frozen”, so that they cannot commit to any major contracts and if they do, to be aware that the Committee will not honour these payments, and if they do commit to major contracts, to be aware that the Committee will not honour these payments.

These comments are not necessarily exclusive. It was decided that until the JRA3 co-ordinator shows a clear plan of the forthcoming activities, the JRA3 would not be allowed to commit large amounts of money. G Gilmore will pass on these comments at the JRA3 meeting.

**Action 5:** *GG to attend the JRA3 meeting on Monday 14 February in Heidelberg to voice the serious concerns of the Committee and to then report back to the Committee on progress and suggested actions. JA will also attend as participant in JRA3. [Action discharged: report circulated Thursday 17 February].*

- There was some confusion and unease over financial reporting. W Boland stated that no contribution from NOVA was included in the report, yet it had done much work and received a substantial amount of money in support of this JRA.

**Action 6:** *JKD to obtain report. [Action complete 3 March].*

J Davies presented a financial spreadsheet, detailing what each partner has requested for the next 18 months. G Gilmore conveyed concern over expenditure, stating that each partner should only plan to spend, over the first four years, 80% of their five-year budget and not 100%, so that there can still be some flexibility in spending in later years.

**Action 7:** *GG to send a message to all JRA and Network Leaders to ensure they know only to plan for spending 80% of his indicated budget over five years.*

In order for this message to remain consistent, G Gilmore will send a message to all JRAs and Network leaders giving ample warning of the planned review of budgets and programs. G Gilmore also informed the Committee that by approx. 1<sup>st</sup> May, a third of funds requested should be distributed for use over the next 18 months.

P Vettolani requested that the Annual Report to be more readily available.

**Action 8:** *JKD to arrange for Annual Report to be readily available (on website?), minus the financial reports.*

- G Gilmore covered audit certificates, explaining that he would not be requesting a change in the frequency of providing these, as it could mean that the EC would not make any cash advances for 12 months. J Davies asked if the way money is distributed should be changed, especially for partners who receive only small amounts – G Gilmore stated this would be covered at the next meeting and should be added to that agenda, as it is a major change in operation.
- G Gilmore also stated that there might be problems with travel costs; as the EC cannot pay VAT, individuals and institutes will be incurring extra costs. We may have to implement a per diem rate. R Sirey noted that PPARC were moving away from per diems.

### 3. Payment of telescope user fees

G Gilmore informed the Committee that Cambridge only has approx. ½ million Euros left to pay all urgent expenses, including telescope user fees, and there could be a delay of 3-4 months before the EC distributed more funding. As no telescope directors had manifested an

acute cash flow problem, he preferred that only a minor part of the user fees be paid early in the year.

He asked the Committee how they thought the funds should be distributed, as more is owed than is available. J Davies' suggestions were to pay all the "small" telescopes their fees or to pay all the "big" telescopes their proposed not actual expenditure, or a mixture of the two.

**Action 9:** *UCAM to pay the 1<sup>st</sup> 12-month anticipated, not actually incurred, fees for the following telescopes: NOT, THEMIS, SST, VTT, DOT, AAO. [Action discharged].*

#### 4. Status of OPTICON activities and group management/ Possible new members and member changes

- a) Change in the legal entity responsible for management at CAHA.
- b) Landessternwarte will cease to exist and be taken over by University of Heidelberg.
- c) IAA, Andalusia wishes to become a new partner. The Board must vote on this, but if the Committee is in support of IAA, the Board will be informed. It was agreed to await the outcome of the legal changes at CAHA, and then to consider the most suitable new partners, if any.

#### 5. Final financial outcome, FP5

G Gilmore explained the background to this overspend of the FP5 budget and proposed a distribution of the available funds. The only institutes who will lose out under this plan are UCAM, NOTSA, INSU and PPARC. R Sirey stated that she is still awaiting clarification from PPARC and cannot accept the reallocation of the approx. 11,000 Euros needed from PPARC until that is received. GG reassured the Committee that if money is claimed but not paid under one programme, it is perfectly legitimate to claim under another programme, provided a partner's local accounting and auditing rules allow this. All partners have to agree to distribution before it can go ahead. R Sirey will chase the issue again with her people and keep G Gilmore informed. With PPARC agreement, the distribution will go ahead.

#### 6. ELT Science Case status

G Gilmore asked Committee to let S Howard know if they would like to receive extra copies of this brochure. All members received one copy at the meeting. Several agencies stressed the importance of getting detailed scientific document and asked when this would become available; they were told that this was scheduled for July 2005. A Omont asked for a progress report on this publication. G Gilmore requested the Project Scientist provide a detailed near final draft of this document by later March for review.

**Action 10:** *GG to keep Committee informed of publication status of this document and attempt to make it sooner.*

It was decided that a formal review of this document by "non-advocates" should be organised before publication and distribution.

**Action 11:** *S Lilly to provide a suggested list of people to review this document, with input from partners.*

#### 7. Connections to other activities

A-M Lagrange explained ASTROnet, a proposed ERA-Net, involving funding agencies to further co-ordinate major development for astronomy in Europe. It is intended that ASTROnet will work in close collaboration with RadioNet and OPTICON.

**8. A.O.B.**

- 8.1** A Omont felt the Committee should formally endorse the recommendation by JKD for the future distribution of telescope access time – this was done.
- 8.2** G Gilmore asked the Committee if they felt that there should be a JRA3 review meeting in the spring or could this matter wait until the next Board meeting? J Andersen felt they should have three months in order to reorganise themselves and to submit a report – this was the general consensus.
- 8.3** The next Executive Committee meeting will be held at the beginning of September (Monday 5 is a suggested date – S Howard to contact the Committee re: availability. Location to be confirmed). The next full Board meeting is due in October/ November in Rome.
- 8.4** G Gilmore confirmed that a summary report will be submitted next week on JRA3 when the minutes of this meeting are circulated.
- 8.5** GG tasked with drafting a plan and schedule for reviewing all JRAs within the next month, so a decision can be taken at the next meeting.

**Action 12:** *GG to draft a review of all JRAs in the next month.*