The CTAC 2019B
Reflections from Palermo

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Outline

- The CTAC process – how it works
  - ➔ As input for discussion, Radionet people
- Radionet/OPTICON common TAC?
  - ➔ separately, together, small telescopes?
- CCE – what needs to be done?
  - ➔ training, training, training
- Other pressing action items
  - ➔ what is really TNA ?

The magnificent seven

Annelies Mortier
Cambridge

John Davies
Edinburgh

Helene Roussel
Paris

Roi Alonso
La Laguna

Laura Affer
Palermo

Jochen Heidt
Heidelberg

Renata Minkeviciute
Vilnius

CTAC – the process

Timeline

- Prerequisite:

  Outcome should be known before the national TACs meet

- Typically:

  T0: Call for proposal issued
  T+4 weeks: Deadline
  T+12 weeks: CTAC-meeting (telescopes notified)
  T+15 weeks: Comments sent out

Preparation of meeting – careful process

- After deadline propos sorted out by John (compliant checks) + made available to CTAC
- John & chair assign primary/secondary assessors for each proposal
- Lists sent out to CTAC for check of conflicts + resort if necessary
- Primary assessors name potential external scientific referees + John asks (painful process)
- John asks observatories for technical assessment
  ➔ reviews are available for CTAC as they come in (quite some ext. ref. do not)
- CTAC members are expected to review all proposals (equally well)
- ...have to put in their grades 1-2 days prior to meeting, grades from 1-5, in steps of 0.5
  ➔ blind review, grades of others are unknown before the meeting
- John prepares a preliminary ranking, goes to chair

The meeting itself

- Strictly confidential (closed session), ALL proposals are discussed
- Discuss proposals along categories (from top to bottom in the past)
- Once done review the outcome, check availability of telescope time, verify ranking using renormalized grades
- If everybody is happy (normally yes), meeting is closed
- Done within one day, including post-meeting round-table discussion

Except Palermo ➔ 2 days !!!

After the meeting

- Primary assessor has to sent comments to chair based on
  a) own assessment, the secondary and the discussion
  b) the comments by external and technical reviewer
- Chair makes preliminary comment sheet, which is iterated among the CTAC, ranking of proposals is done in 3 blocks:
  accepted, rejected but not far from cutoff, rejected & far off
- PIs notified and comments sent out (quite some)
- (Report from CTAC-meeting distributed)

➔ Given the permanently high interest by community TNA is not only highly attractive but we need to and do a good and careful job!

Of course, there is always room for improvement

Palermo meeting: April 29/30 2019

Two full days between Sunday and May 1st, because:

- 6 members only, more work for everybody
- 63 proposals, overbooking 5.5 !!!!!
  (reduced to 3.5 afterwards by assigning more money)
- Discussion on MTR, implementation of recommendations, CEE in particular
- Large number of politically/technically difficult proposals
- TDF – ideas for pilot 2020+

CEE is an abbreviation for structurally less privileged countries

Some statistics - oversubscription

Telescope	Num_{prop}	$Night_{requested}$	$Night_{offered}$	Oversub
CAHA35	8	13	10	1.3
CAHA22	4	18	10	1.8
Rem	4	52h	500h	
AAT	9	35	10	3.5
OHP19	1	5	10	
OHP12	1	4	10	
TNG	11	31	10	3.1
ESO22:	4	15	10	1.5
LCO	5	254h	150h	1.7
NOT	20	73.5	25	2.9
LT	4	45h	50h	
INT	1	1	10	
Arist	3	25	20	1.25
CFHT	2	2.5	4	
TCS	2	2.5	14	

Some statistics – the outcome

Topic	N_{prop}	Telescope	N_{prop}
Solar system	2/3	AAT	9
Exoplanet	6/19	CAHA35	8
Stars+stell. pop	5/17	NOT	20
Circumst. med	-/2	TNG	11
Time domain	6/13	rest	1-5
Low-z Universe	-/3		
High-z Universe	2/6		

Checked by us: The absence of our 7th member (expert on stars and stellar systems) did NOT affect outcome!!!

Changes for 2020A – not many

- Going for one long semester until end of H2020 contract ???
- CTAC is happy to continue with 6 members as there may be as yet unknown changes in the course of the 2020+ pilot
- Expect many proposal. Demand for multiple telescopes per proposal increases as is the time request.
- CEE proposal will perhaps be discussed separately (depends on numbers)
- Giving less discussion time for lowest ranked proposal
- Kill proposal still using old Northstar template !!!
- Leave more time between deadline and meeting
  ➔ deadline a bit earlier
- Location of next meeting TBD, duration 1-2 days
- "Observer" from Radionet invited to join (see next slides)

Radionet/OPTICON – common TAC ?

Why not !

✓ Radio astronomy is not so different that common TAC is impossible: eg triage funds, triage TAC?

Example - Effelsberg:
+: molecular clouds, galaxy clusters, AGN monitoring, EVN
new: TDA-programs (grav. wave, tidal disruption events)
-: Pulsars

Benefit: Small telescopes important for AGN monitoring / TDA !

a Radionet "observer" is invited to attend the next CTAC-meeting

Requirements

- ✓ CTAC must be composed to match topics and not by Agency concerns; members from CEE countries should be in; healthy mix of experts and newcomers (training)
- ✓ Technical assessment is a must, external scientific reviewer useful (though painful to find, eg for TDA proposal)

Issues

- Large number of members required
  (if triple TAC: radio, optical, combined)
- Deadlines of individual observatories (20+ telescopes, EVN etc)

- Small telescopes: may require dynamical evaluation/scheduling
  ➔ think about and implement alternatives

CEE – room for improvement

MTR/CEE – discussion and outcome

Various ideas on how to implement a higher success rate for proposal from CEE countries, eg

- a certain number of wildcards or money
- lifting all proposals up by a grade of +0.5
- similar success rate for CEE / non-CEE proposals

But maintain a certain scientific quality !!!

➔ None of them was highly favored

Decision postponed to until the end of meeting

MTR/CEE – how did we end up?

Country	Proposal Accepted/Submitted	Comment
Austria	1	
Belgium	1/1	
Finland	1	
France	4	
Germany	1/10	
Greece	3/4	CEE
Irland	2/4	
Israel	2	
Netherlands	1/2	
Poland	1/7	CEE
Portugal	1	
Serbia	1	CEE
Slovakia	1/2	CEE
Swiss	3/3	
UK	7/18	
US	1/2	Non-EU

Overall:
21/63 (33%) accepted

CEE:
5/14 (36%) accepted

Non-CEE:
16/49 (32%) accepted

4 proposal rejected for GTO-conflict, not telling about other channels, wrong instr.

Reasonable !!!

Which country belongs to CEE category ?

➔ Clear definition / advice required

BUT: not straightforward

eg what about proposals from Malta with
20 CoIs from Germany?

and: how do we implement them into the process?

…treated separately, together with the others?

You are using taxpayers money !!!!

➔➔ be efficient at the telescope

Many proposal from CEE countries are scientifically good,
but lack adequate description of telescope time required

"…we need 10-14 nights" and talking about biases and flats is not very useful…"

➔➔ CEE applicants must be trained ➔➔ Observing schools

Further pressing issues

Equally important – or even more…

- ✓ The TNA spirit must be more in focus (being **compliant**):
  - avoid "double-dipping" by proposals asking for:
    - -- additional nights for national programs
    - -- the same via national calls or ITPs
    - -- targets overlapping with GTOs (exoplanet), ITPs, TDA
- ✓ Not only large, but also simple, single-telescope proposal (CEE countries may profit substantially)
- ✓ It becomes increasingly difficult to judge on and to implement programs asking for more and more time and telescopes (bigger is not always better) !!!

Conclusions

- ✓ The current CTAC is the best one can imagine !!!!!
- ✓ Overall just ONE complaint in 19 cycles (2 weeks ago ☹)
- ✓ YES, a combined /structured Radionet/OPTICON TAC is a must
- ✓ But complicated: needs perhaps a dedicated person (or a working group) to take care of that
- ✓ The board or whoever MUST set the boundary conditions in an unambiguous way !!!

A CTAC Radionet/OPTICON is a developing entity, this may allow to set future standards ➔ that's what the Pilot is made for !!!