

OPTICON Executive Committee 10

Meeting held in Paris CDG, Sheraton Hotel, Salon 6

2 July 2008

Present:			
G Gilmore (Chair)	UCAM	E Kohler	INSU
J Andersen	NOTSA	S D'Odorico	ESO
J Bergeron	IAP	E Oliva	EAS
W Boland	NOVA	R Rebolo (by teleconference)	IAC
J Davies	UK ATC/ OPTICON Project Scientist	G Vettolani	INAF
J-M Hameury	INSU	C. Vincent	STFC
S Howard (minutes)	UCAM	O. von der Luehe	KIS
Apologies:			
R Gredel	MPIA	J Seiradakis	GNCA
A Omont	INSU		

N.B. FINAL DETAILED FP7 ITERATIONS ARE ONGOING WITH PIs

1. Welcome

GG welcomed Colin Vincent as a new member to the Executive, replacing Rowena Sirey as the STFC representative.

There was an action in the minutes from the last Executive on WB to resolve the communication problems within the Interferometry network, which has been done. WB informed the Executive that he had spoken to Andreas Quirrenbach (the PI) a couple of weeks previously and had also contacted the Fizeau network direct, and discovered that there would be an approx. 70-75K EUR spend. All other actions are complete.

2. FP6 status and finances

2.1 Status of AR4

SH circulated an update on this and explained how quickly the report and its corrections were submitted to the EC compared to previous years. GG explained that the report had been unofficially approved in May, but no formal action on this approval was taken until July; it is the slow administrative process at the EC that delays the release of each payment. However, progress is as good as can be expected, and it is anticipated that the money will be distributed among the partners in the summer¹.

2.2 Financial status and final budgeting

GG introduced this item by explaining that the Executive must decide if it is happy with the way money is being spent, whether to take away underspend, pay any approved overspend, for every single agency/ PI, stressing that it is important each member fully knows the implications for its own agency.

¹ To show how slow EC administration can be, Cambridge received a letter on 1 July 2008, date 19 May 2008. This letter contained initial information on the outcome of the evaluation of the OPTICON proposal which was circulated by e-mail in May. After a final set of iterations and spreadsheets, ensuring every activity and every partner budget balanced to 0.01€ with a total of 19,200,000.00€, the AR4 was accepted on 16 July 2008.

JKD then gave a presentation on the current financial status of FP6 for each activity, explaining his summary financial spreadsheet and notes which were circulated before the meeting. There is 2.9M EUR left in the budget but we will probably get approx 1.9M EUR from the EC in the next payment (keeping in mind that 20% of unaudited money is held back). There is a combination of requests for new funding and as yet uncorrected adjustments to previous reporting, which implies an overspend of approx. 600K EUR, which must be addressed.

The main points were:

- ESO's request for a further 380K EUR for JRA1

The Executive voted unanimously not to give ESO the extra 380K EUR. This decision has no impact on the approved programme.

- INSU who has an overspend of 266K EUR

This can be resolved by an adjustment to the previous period in the 2008 Form C. EK confirmed that the uncertainty will be clarified and the approved allocation spent in full. She explained that this error had come about by lack of information and confusion over the budget for each activity.

- INAF who have over claimed by 91K EUR

Action 1: *JKD to resolve INAF's finances with GV. This process is already underway.*

- Transnational Access which has an approx. 200K EUR underspend.

AAO and CAHA have allocated more nights than were in the budget, but these will balance out against the under-allocations by ESO and ING. There was discussion on whether AAO and CAHA should be funded the over-allocation or whether the money should be retained as contingency against FP7 priorities. The Executive decided to retain the funds for FP7 as far as is possible.

JKD explained that the networks are overall in good shape financially. There has been a request from Michel Dennefeld for an extra 10K EUR. The Executive felt that this would be inconsistent with requests from other PIs if accepted, so this request was unanimously rejected.

Action 2: *GG/ JKD to inform M Dennefeld that his request for further funding has been declined.*

GG recommended that agencies are informed on what can be spent and asked for recommendations on how contingency is dealt with. ESO has overspent by 24K by continuing to charge costs to AVO on their Form C which were never approved. This will be handled as part of the FP6 contingency balancing.

Action 3: *GG and JKD to confirm with PIs and agencies the final 2008 available spend cash limits.*

3. FP7 Contract and CA

3.1 Medium Telescopes Review Status

GG explained the document that was circulated at the meeting. There is a draft implementation plan which has just been approved by Jacqueline Bergeron and Janet Drew, but it also needs to be approved by the Executive. It was generally agreed that this review process is only worth doing if the funding agencies are fully involved.

Action 4: *GG to circulate a full implementation plan, including the Terms of Reference, to the Executive and then collate feedback a couple of weeks after that.*

The Executive felt that the panel should start with the science vision as written, the roadmap recommendations and other extant public science cases. The review will look at implementation; it should not be the panel's role to write science cases, but rather how to implement the mix of science.

GG also asked the Executive to consider membership to the panel. The review felt that a representative from AstroNet Panel B should be involved, with others, such as AURA and ReStar, etc. involved on an adhoc basis. EO asked that the EAS be invited to provide information to ETSRC, and this was approved.

3.2 Consortium Agreement Status

SH explained that most potential FP7 partners have not yet provided comments on the Consortium Agreement, and all partners must be happy with the document. WB pointed out that the role of the Board and Executive has changed since the FP6 Consortium Agreement, with the Board having more responsibility for policy decisions. Furthermore, he noted that the present wording of the Board voting procedures might have secure problems in meeting the quorum rule.

Action 5: *GG to clarify the description of roles, responsibility and membership of the Board and the Executive in the Consortium Agreement and re-circulate*

3.3 Contract status

SH provided a brief update following a letter from the EC. The main points are that the budget allocation has dropped from 15M EUR to 10M EUR (this is non-negotiable) and the deadlines for submitting the first draft of the contract. The EC Project Officer informed SH that these deadlines are fully flexible, but it is hoped that the first draft of the contract can be submitted by the end of September 2008.

3.4 Rebalancing the budget

GG explained the process of writing the financial information for the FP7 proposal and that each Work Package in his presentation would be broken down by financial contribution request. It would then be the Executive's job to provide cuts and guidelines which would be relayed to the PIs.

Due to the change in matching profile from 50/50 in FP6 to 75/25 in FP7, most of the reduction is in matched funding.

WP 1.1/ 1.2	N Hubin has told GG that the William Herschel Canary activity could be (if necessary) descoped. S D'O said a general 10% cut could be made by increasing ESO's support.
WP2	The pnCCD could be terminated.
WP3	AIP has recently been granted funding for photonics, so could cut from OPTICON.
WP4	No overheads were incorporated in the original Interferometry proposal. A revised plan was therefore developed for the original total. The call for proposals for new co-phasing ideas could be delayed.
WP5	This was cut by GG to 500K from 665K, as had requested 165K over limit. Can't really cut further or the programme would not be worth doing at all; it's an integral part of the planning process for the ELT role.

WP6	One of the work packages could be delayed until later in FP7.
WP7	The Access office will go to ING, so 300K could be scaled down. NorthStar will be reconsidered. Significant cuts in training are inevitable.
WP8	There could be a significant saving on audits for the Management budget, but this will not be known for possibly another year. There is currently 1000K, including about 100K contingency.
ELT	This could not be cut by more than half (to 300K).
NUVA	This is a science based network that has delivered its science case for future activities and held its large meeting. It has completed its aims.
HTRA	This is a science based network that has delivered its science case for future activities and held its large meeting. It has completed its aims.
Site characterisation	This is a new proposal of 160K but will not be initiated due to funding pressure.
FASE	The budget of 260k could be cut in half.

It was agreed that cuts in the budget will be made as follows:

WP no.	Activity	Original request (K EUR)	Reduction made	New budget (K EUR)
WP1.1 – 1.2	Adaptive Optics	3997	797	3200
WP2	Fast Detectors	1400	250	1150
WP3	Photonics	500	200	300
WP4	Interferometry	1000	650	350
WP5.	Smart instrument tech.	500	0	500
WP6	New Materials	600	170	430
WP7	Access programme	3130	1130	2000
WP8	Management	1000	0	1000
<i>WP9</i>	<i>Future Europe: Science</i>	<i>570</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>280</i>
WP9.1	Key Technologies	150	0	150
WP9.2	Site characterisation	160	160	0
WP9.3	Software standards	260	130	130
<i>WP10</i>	<i>Future Europe: Technologies</i>	<i>794</i>	<i>494</i>	<i>300</i>
WP10.1	ELT Science	600	300	300
WP10.2	NUVA	80	80	0
WP10.3	HTRA	114	114	0
<i>WP11</i>	<i>Strengthening Skills</i>	<i>760</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>360</i>
WP11.1	Integrating new communities	600	400	200
WP11.2	EII Interferometry (inc. Fizeau)	160	0	160
<i>WP12</i>	<i>Optimising Science Access</i>	<i>749</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>460</i>
WP12.1	TDF + TAC + Access office + NorthStar	630	300	330
WP12.2	Future (Strategy Forum)	80	80	0
WP12.3	Solar Physics	130	0	130
				10330

This still leaves a further 330K EUR to cut from the budget, but GG and JKD stated that they will make the further necessary cuts as part of the process of iterating the revised implementation programme. At the first FP7 Executive meeting, the budget will need to be confirmed in its implementation status.

Action 6: GG and JKD to make further cuts to the FP7 budget, and all information relayed to the Project Managers.

Additional:

1. E-mail from Rafael Rebolo, 3 July 2008

During our past Executive meeting, which I attended by teleconference, I was aware about the proposed reductions in the budget for Working Packages 9 and 10, but it was not clear to me that this implied absolute 0 funding for activities 9.2, 10.2, 10.3. Unfortunately, I misunderstood during the telecon that this reduction was proportional for the various subpackages, otherwise I would have expressed an opinion against the cancellation of these activities.

In my opinion the precursor networking activities in FPVI for subpackages 9.2, 10.2 and 10.3 were very satisfactory and OPTICON will lose more than win by setting a 0 budget to the continuation proposed by the corresponding PIs. Small funding could make a major difference for these activities that involve a significant part of the community. I would like to propose we reconsider the allocation of 80 keuros to each of them. The corresponding 240 keuros could be taken for the moment, in order to simplify the discussion, from the 1Meuro allocated to Management and contingency. This can be reviewed when final decisions on budget are taken in Brussels. Given the smaller budget we aim for OPTICON with respect to FPVI, such a reallocation would keep a similar fraction for management than in the previous program. This little redistribution would keep involved and interested in OPTICON more than 200 researchers in Europe from the three communities affected, this should make even more attractive our proposal to evaluators.

I hope this could be reconsidered if this were not possible I would appreciate the previous paragraph, or a shortened version, appears in the minutes.

2. E-mail from Alain Omont, 13 July 2008

Although I know the terrible competition you had to face between the various excellent parts of the original 15Meuro OPTICON proposal, I agree with Michel [Dennefeld] that the "Enhancement" budget has been specially severely cut. I hope that you could still be able to reduce a little this cut in the final adjustments.

3. E-mail from Jean Marie Hameury, 15 July 2008

I do feel that the 65% reduction on interferometry WP was excessive, and I had not realised that this was considered as part of the VLTI-2 funding. In view of the discussion at the last exec, and of your last message to Denis [Mourard], I would consider that this WP is certainly the one deserving additional support, and if you can find somewhat more than the 100K left, these would be more than welcome. Clearly, this comes with a much higher priority than the enhancement budget.

4. GG sent the following e-mail to all PIs on 10 July 2008:

*Dear Colleagues,
Following our very disappointing large reduction in funding by the EC FP7 review, the Executive reviewed the programme in detail. They adopted a harsh but we believe fair programme, which focuses on the OPTICON strengths, assumes an increase in activity level in the extension of OPTICON later in FP7, which will recover most of our reductions, and focuses on strategic priorities.
Regards, and keep positive,
Gerry*

Attached to this e-mail was a revised FP7 Budget iteration table as per Action 6.

WP no.	Activity	Original request (K EUR)	Reduction made	New budget (K EUR)
WP1.1 – 1.2	Adaptive Optics	3997		
WP2	Fast Detectors	1400		
WP3	Photonics	500		
WP4	Interferometry	1000		
WP5.	Smart instrument tech.	500		
WP6	New Materials	600		
WP7	Access programme	3130		
WP8	Management	1000		
<i>WP9</i>	<i>Future Europe: Science</i>	<i>570</i>		
WP9.1	Key Technologies	150		
WP9.2	Site characterisation	160		
WP9.3	Software standards	260		
<i>WP10</i>	<i>Future Europe: Technologies</i>	<i>794</i>		
WP10.1	ELT Science	600		
WP10.2	NUVA	80		
WP10.3	HTRA	114		
<i>WP11</i>	<i>Strengthening Skills</i>	<i>760</i>		
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WP12.1	TDF + TAC + Access office + NorthStar	630		
WP12.2	Future (Strategy Forum)	80		
WP12.3	Solar Physics	130		
WP1 Adaptive optics	ESO extra subsidy of 600K presumed, cuts to focus on reducing the WHT effort. We suggest removing WP3.4, assuming national support will appear, and reducing WP2.1.4 Other changes at PI's discretion. Retaining programme breadth is desirable	3997	1000	3000
WP2 Fast detectors	Remove support for WP2.6, AA-pnCCD work (=250K). Ask e2v, ESO and CNRS for additional 100K subsidy for the contract, wp2.2.2 (reduce by 100K) to 800K		350	1050
WP3 photonics	We assume AIP can fund their involvement, so reduce WP3.T3 to self-funded (total=163K), and reduce rest by 37K – at PI's discretion. Maintain communications with Interferometry community (WP4, WP11.2).		200	300
WP4 interferometry	Focus on the shorter-term science exploitation of VLTI. Delay the CfP until year 3-4, and assume implementation funding under the extension of Opticon in year 5+		650	350

WP5 Smart instruments	Retain all activity, but manage within original 500K allocation		0	500
WP6 New materials	Delay WP6.4 until year 5 of the new Opticon contract		170	430
WP7 access	This is the access user-fees. We will establish a process with the TDF to determine implementation policy, in the light of the AstroNet ETSRC review timetable, and the need for continuity in the activity.		1130	2000
WP8 management	Management – we actually spent this much, and its our only notional contingency..		60	940
WP9 Technology futures	Proposal was 9.1 key tech roadmap 150K 9.2 site characterisation (new) 160k 9.3 software standards (FASE) 260k Keep 9.1, delay 9.2 to Y5, after the ELT site decisions are made,, cut 9.3 to 130K		290	280
WP10 Science support networking	Proposal was: 10.1 ELT community science 600k 10.2 nuva 80k 10.3 htra 120k Cut 10.1 to 300K, terminate htra (cf WP2), end 10.2		500	300
WP11 Training schools	Proposal was 11.1 NEON schools 600K 11.2 Fizeau programme 160K Reduce 11.2 by part. Do not start instrumentation schools, and ELT-related work.		400k 40k	320
WP12 Access implementation	Proposal was 12.1 TDF, access office, common TAC, Software, etc (630K) 12.2 ETSRC review (80) 12.3 EAST solar physics (130) Assume access office is funded pro rata, retain TDF (expand?), review/recost s/w. 12.2 funded inside WP8 12.3 cut to 100k		300 80 30	430
	This leaves 100K to correct the worst errors...			9,900

The Access Programme must be in a position to respond to the Medium Telescope Review outcome. It was clear that some form of Access Programme must proceed for continuity and community support. The Access programme budget needs to be passed to the Telescope Directors' Forum so decisions can be made on how to allocate the reduced budget. GG and JKD will iterate a proposal for the distribution of the access time with the TDF. This proposal is supported by JA and WB.

Action 7: JKD to contact the TDF to confirm implementation details.

GG informed the Executive of forthcoming meetings:

There will be a Board meeting in Porto 10-11 November 2008, to include an open session of presentations by PIs. This will be last FP6 meeting. The Portuguese astronomical community will be invited to participate in the open session.

There is a JENAM meeting in Hertfordshire in April 2009 – OPTICON will coincide its public FP7 kick-off with this meeting.

Colin Vincent will provide a list of National EC Programme Committee members so that the Executive can lobby their national representatives.

Action 8: CV to circulate the list of committee members to the Executive.

The meeting closed with GG thanking the Executive for their efforts.

N.B. The European Telescope Strategy Review Committee Terms of Reference have been circulated with these minutes.