

OPTICON Executive Committee 8

Meeting held in Venice

5 March 2007

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| Present: | | | |
| G Gilmore (Chair) | UCAM | S Howard (minutes) | UCAM |
| J Andersen | NOTSA | G Monnet | ESO |
| P Benvenuti | INAF | S D'Odorico | ESO |
| W Boland | NOVA | A Omont | INSU |
| J Davies | UK ATC/ OPTICON Project Scientist | R Rebolo | IAC |
| R Gredel | MPIA | J Seiradakis | GNCA |
| J-M Hameury | INSU | R Sirey | PPARC |
| | | G Vettolani | INAF |
| | | | |
| Apologies: | | | |
| O. von der Luehe | KIS | | |
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1. Welcome

G Gilmore welcomed the committee, and especially Sandro D'Odorico from ESO (who replaces Guy Monnet) and Jean-Marie Hameury from INSU/ CNRS (who replaces Anne-Marie Lagrange).

G Gilmore explained that the minutes from the previous meeting were approved by e-mail, and all actions are complete with the exception of removing IAS/UPS as a separate contractor (which is a low priority). Due to the delays inside the EC, the FP7 item would be removed from the agenda, as there is no further news on this at the present time.

There is no information as yet on how the Mid-Term Review will be carried out either, but J Davies and G Gilmore will write a detailed executive summary on OPTICON for the panel as part of the present Annual Report

Action 1: *GG and JKD to write a detailed executive summary on OPTICON for the Mid-Term Review.*

2. Status of Annual Report

GG informed the committee that we hope to submit the Annual Report before Easter, then arrange a visit to Brussels to speak to the project and financial managers at the EC to fully understand/ resolve any problems so corrections can be submitted before the summer 'close-down'. GG stressed that is important to get the Annual Report completed and accepted, so that all efforts can be concentrated on the FP7 contract.

SH gave a presentation on the status of the financial report, naming those partners who have still to send their forms:

- INSU/ CNRS
- NOTSA
- SANW
- RA3
- GRANTECAN
- ULg
- UTRECHT
- NUIG
- IAS-UPS
- ONERA
- DURHAM

- LSW
- OO
- AAT

and those partners who persistently miss the set deadlines:

- LSW
- NUIG
- SANW

Lesser 'offenders':

- AAT
- OO
- GRANTECAN
- INSU (much improved)

GG pointed out that there has never been any significant problems with the technical report; it is only the financial side of the report for which the EC request amendments.

3. Budget and Activity Planning

JKD gave a presentation, reminding the committee that the original FP6 proposal was for €38M, which was cut to €19.2M. As no contingency was allowed, a generous allocation was made to management and networking. Early problems included the non-arrival of approximately €200K of Swiss money and the unanticipated and costly audit certificates.

JKD reminded the committee that the EC only advances 80% of the 18-month plan (which is revised every 12 months), so all activity leaders were told to restrict their commitments to 80% of the 5-year budget, until otherwise informed. The JRA budgets were approved to 100% in Paris last Spring. €168K was added to the JRA5 budget in Heidelberg last Autumn to solve the Swiss budget issue and to allow CSEM to continue.

JKD showed examples of the budget spreadsheets (the 5-year plan, advance given, 18-month plan, what's left, etc.). The JRA budgets are more difficult to control compared to the Network and Access budgets, as the activity spans several contractors and the JRA leader does not see the declared spends for each lab until the Form Cs and JoRs arrive.

Access

This programme must be included in the FP7 contract, at least at a comparable level to FP6, although it was agreed that it could be more imaginative. The Access Office keeps very detailed records, including a list of those users who cannot take up telescope time without funding. R Sirey suggested that this may be to OPTICON's advantage in bidding for more money for the Access programme under FP7.

Under our current FP6 programme, the amount of annual disposable cash for Access is €900K (not including access office or travel). The programme is working well and is over-subscribed, so there is no need or benefit in changing the allocation at this stage.

JRAs

JKD gave a summary of what each JRA is doing, the forward plans, etc.

JRA1: Adaptive Optics, Norbert Hubin ESO
Total 5-year allocation = €4800K

There is a possible overspend of €50K at ESO, but JKD is still awaiting full forward planning financial information from the JRA leader. And this €50K overspend may be resolved when the information arrives. All deliverables will be met. This is a strategic priority and will be taken through to FP7.

Action 2: *S D'Odorico to chase up the internal reporting for JRA1 for financial planning for the Annual Report.*

JRA2: Fast Optical Detectors for AO, Philippe Feautrier

Total 5-year allocation = €955K

JKD has received a request for an extra €50K split almost equally between INSU and IAC, for detector testing. Again, this is a strategic priority (and is closely linked to JRA1), so will be taken through to FP7.

JRA3: Fast Detectors for HTRA, Henk Spruit MPG
Total 5-year allocation = €1195K

JKD explained the history behind this JRA and its restructuring in year 2. He has received no report from LSW (and SH also experiences problems with LSW regarding the financial report). It is unlikely that this programme will be continued at any significant level in FP7. Only €20K of the €70K allowance for LSW has been spent. The Project Manager, Henk Spruit, has asked G Gilmore to withdraw the available €50K, which he thinks can be done without affecting deliverables or performance.

Action 3: *GG to organise a meeting with JRA3 partners and to 'take back' the unallocated €50K, and to resolve the LSW relationship with the rest of those involved in this JRA.*

JRA4: Interferometry, Alain Chelli. LAOG
Total 5-year allocation = €1020K

There seems to be some misbalancing between partners with regards to funding, although it seems that all deliverables will be met. All French partners need to be informed, however, that no more money will be forthcoming, as INSU received all their cash in the first year.

Action 4: *GG to contact all partners involved in JRA4 individually (rather than leave it to the Project Manager) to inform them that they must operate within approved cash limits. The partners must save internally the (approximately) €35K needed for Swiss participation.*

JRA5: Smart Focal Planes, Colin Cunningham UKATC
Total 5-year allocation = €1800K, increased to €1968K to allow Swiss participation

JKD reported that there has been some reported overspend as follows:
UCAM €9k
INSU €84K (which is in fact, exactly 4 times more than Callum Norrie's allocation, so this could be a reporting error – this is still being investigated).

Action 5: *J-M Hameury to check what has happened at INSU regarding this possible overspend.*

INAF €40K (Piero Benvenuti confirmed that this was a mistake, and this relates to manpower, which should not have been charged to the project).
IAC €10K

Colin Cunningham has also informed JKD that he could easily use a further €300K in this JRA if extra funds were available.

JRA6: VPHG Gratings, Filippo Zerbi Milan
Total 5-year allocation = €600K

There are no concerns and no extra funding has been requested. Cash flow problems have been experienced due to late payments from the EC.

Networking

N1 Management

Total 5-year allocation = €1200K

EC rules state no more than 7% of the entire budget (€1345K) should be spent on global management (not local management), but we are planning for a significantly lower spend.

GG explained that the EC will only advance 80% of unaudited money. It was for this reason that OPTICON decided to submit audit certificates on an annual basis – no other I3 project does this. It is anticipated that only the biggest partners will require an audit for the 2007 report. However, all partners will require an end of project audit, even those partners who have always claimed zero costs. Overall, approximately €140K will be spent on audit costs during FP6, so cash must be set aside to pay audit costs at the end of the project. If everything goes well, FP6 should run smoothly into FP7, but there will be very little disposable cash in 2008. A contingency (of €100K) has been retained to provide staff effort for a final report. This will not be needed if FP7 approval and funding is successful. If so, this contingency can be re-allocated, possibly to the Access programme.

N2 – ENO

Total 5-year allocation = €600K

There are 3 WPs under this network. Much of the work is complete, the major spend now being on site-testing for E-ELT and ATST. This needs to be completed.

N 3.1 – ELT

Total 5-year allocation = €410K

This is already over the original budget due to the agreed extra spend on the ELT Science Case books and CD. Isobel Hook has requested money for meetings, staff effort, revised science case, etc. This is Europe's strategic project, but how much more is spent on community support is the decision of the Executive.

Action 6: *GG to clarify to the Executive the relationships between the various ELT Science activities.*

N 3.2 – NUVA

Total 5-year allocation = €62K

No extra money is required and NUVA would like to participate at the same level in FP7. They have produced a book and have a major conference scheduled in May 2007.

N 3.3 – HTRA

Total 5-year allocation = €96K

The Executive need clarification on the spending plans. There is apparently a conference to be held in Edinburgh, but this has not been widely advertised.

Action 7: *JKD to contact Don Phelan at University of Ireland, Galway to find out more about this conference in Edinburgh.*

N 3.4 – AVO

Total 5-year allocation = €39K

This was €22K over the allocated budget at the end of 2006; there was no allocation for 2006, but ESO is still claiming. This appears to be a reporting error, rather than a formal request for money.

N 3.5 – Key Technologies

Total 5-year allocation = €133K (staff), plus €120K for meetings

This network expects to commit all its allocation by mid – late 2008, as the road map will need updating, although GG pointed out that their 'meeting' fund is very generous.

N 3.6 – Software

Total 5-year allocation = €96K

This finishes mid-2008. It is on budget, with the possibility of a surplus.

N4 – Fellowships

Total 5-year allocation = €81K, €73K residual

This activity has been stopped, and most of the budget is unspent. The ambition of this activity remains important, but is probably better continued by AstroNet.

Action 8: GG to send an official letter to the AstroNet Board, bringing the Fellowship issue to their attention.

N5 – Interferometry

Total 5-year allocation = €260K

JKD has received no report or forward plan. There is an allocation of €52K per annum, but only half of that was spent in the first three years.

N6 – Telescope Network

Total 5-year allocation = €150K (6.1), €380K (6.2), €100K (6.3)

WP 6.1 – Telescope Directors' Forum: The Aristarchos telescope is still to go through the peer review by the Telescope Directors' Forum and several other activities are ongoing and there is a generous margin for travel.

WP 6.2 – Access Office is needed up to the end of the project and for the final report.

WP 6.3 – Enhancement has approximately €75K unspent, but with the possibility of commitments, much of this in 2007/08.

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G Gilmore stressed the importance in making plans for the remaining money now, as once the forward plan has been sent to the EC, contractors have, in effect, been promised the money.

G Gilmore suggested the following rebalancing of OPTICON FP6 money:

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|----------------------|--|
| N1 (Management) | retain allocation as FP7 transition contingency |
| N2 (ENO) | remove €35K |
| N3.2 (NUVA) | no change |
| N3.3 (HTRA) | remove €35K |
| N3.4 (AVO) | reset the apparent overspend of €22,494 to zero |
| N3.5 (K.T.) | remove €35K (travel money from Key Technologies) |
| N3.6 (Software) | remove €35K |
| N4 (Fellowships) | remove €73K |
| N5 (Interferometry) | remove €70K |
| N6.1 (TDF) | remove €35K |
| N6.2 (Access Office) | no change |
| N6.3 (Enhancement) | remove €35K (unless M Dennefeld has plans) |
| Total | €353K |

There is also a plan for contingency in the management line of approximately €100K.

The following was agreed by the Executive:

- The approximate €353K network re-budgeting will be allocated as follows:
 - transfer €168K to JRA5, to refund Swiss involvement
 - transfer €24K to NOTSA via JRA3
 - the residual (approximately €160K) to be allocated to N3.1, E-ELT.
- JRA3 will be reduced by €50K and this will be allocated to JRA2, retaining the detector testing activities.
- JRA4 must identify funding for its Swiss partners inside its original allocation.
- Access will be left as budgeted.

GG confirmed that all JRA and Network leaders will be directly informed of the new spending profile.

Action 9: *GG to send the Executive, by e-mail, all information relating to the spending profile with updated spreadsheets.*

P Benvenuti made some suggestions regarding planning for FP7:

1. OPTICON should consider investing in a tool to assist co-ordination of spending calculations.
2. OPTICON should arrange for the training of any 'leader' under FP7, even imposing this as a condition of being an activity leader.
3. OPTICON should go through a process of self-assessment, including what worked, what was achieved, what proved to be a waste of time, and this should be included in the FP7 proposal. It was agreed this should be an agenda item at the next Board meeting, stating specific goals to be included in the FP7 proposal.

Action 10: *R Sirey to speak to PPARC colleagues about Impact Committees.*

4. FP7

This item was postponed until further information has been released by the EC.

5. Status of related FP7 proposals

G Monnet gave a presentation on this. The EC has stated in no uncertain terms that E-ELT should apply under FP7. E-ELT proposal deadline is 2 May 2007 and approximately €8M may be received. No instrumentation should be included in the proposal.

6. Next Board Meeting

GG informed the Executive that there will be a Board meeting in the autumn, along with an FP7 planning meeting, but it was too soon to plan until the date of the call for FP7 is known.

7. A.O.B.

J Andersen informed the Executive that the AstroNet meeting in January 2007 had been a great success. J-M Hameury was appointed co-ordinator at the last Board meeting after A-M Lagrange's resignation. The first meeting of the Working Group to plan infrastructures is scheduled for 12 March 2007 in Manchester, UK. The plan is to have a facilities roadmap ready by the end of 2008.

G Gilmore thanked the Executive Committee.

End of meeting