

OPTICON I3 Board Meeting 4

Meeting held Max-Planck Institut für Astronomie, Heidelberg

20 October 2006

Present:			
R Albrecht	ESA, ST-ECF	N Hubin	ESO (JRA1)
J Andersen	NOTSA	E Kohler	INSU
J Bergeron	INSU/ IAP	T Marsh	Univ of Warwick (JRA3)
W Boland (Chair)	NOVA	G Monnet	ESO
C Cunningham	ATC (JRA5)	B Nordstrom	EAS
J Davies	UK ATC/ Proj. Scientist	E Oliva	EAS
R-J Dettmar	RDS	A Omont	INSU/ IAP
P Feautrier	Grenoble (JRA2)	R Rebolo	IAC
G Gilmore	UCAM/ Co-ordinator	J Seiradakis	GNCA
R Gredel	MPIA	R Sirey	PPARC
S Howard (minutes)	UCAM	F Zerbi	INAF (JRA6)
Apologies:			
P Benvenuti	INAF	P Diamond	RadioNet
M Bode	AstroNet	R García-López	RA3
J Burgos	IAC	A-M Lagrange	INSU/ CNRS
M Dennefeld	IAP	P Vettolani	INAF
		T de Zeeuw	UL
Absent:			
O von der Lühe	KIS	S White	MPA

[NB: all presentations are available on the OPTICON WWW site]

1. Welcome

H-W Rix opened the meeting by welcoming Board members to MPIA.

W Boland welcomed E Kohler (INSU) and E Oliva (EAS).

1.1 Minutes of last meeting and agenda

The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

The action points from the last meeting were discussed and the outstanding issues are as follows:

Action 1: an OPTICON overview brochure has not yet been produced, only handouts currently exist.

Action 1 ***JKD to speak to Douglas Price re: possibility of producing a small brochure.***

Action 3: the legal status of CAHA is still underway – this was to be discussed later in the meeting.

All other action points have either been completed or superseded.

A Omont expressed regret that A Chelli was not invited to the meeting. J Davies/ G Gilmore apologised for this oversight due to an administrative error.

2. Status of Annual Report

S Howard informed the Board that once again the receipt of funding will be much later than hoped due to the late first iteration of the OPTICON 2005 Annual Report and also accentuated by the 'closure' of Europe over the summer. Further amendments were requested by and submitted to the EC recently, and it is hoped that the next tranche of funds should arrive in

Cambridge by mid-November. SH informed the Board that all partners will be required to provide contact details for (preferably) two administrative staff who can assist with financial reporting.

Action 2 *S Howard to contact partners for contact details of admin. assistants and to provide updated guidelines for producing financial reports.*

2.1 Mid-Term Review

A letter from the EC was circulated, stating that a special report for our Mid-Term Review is no longer required. Instead, a review panel will be set up to read the OPTICON Annual Reports for Periods 1-3 and the contract itself, and this panel will also have the option of attending an OPTICON Board meeting in 2007. G Gilmore explained that it would be desirable for the panel to be provided with an overview report of the last three years and that the technical part of the Annual Report 2006 must be submitted on time, or the panel will think that OPTICON is incapable of working to essential deadlines.

3. Co-ordinator's Report

G Gilmore provided an overall project status. The project technical activities are all going well. Reporting is a little more problematic, with most of the delay is due to technical issues, such as audits and disputes between national and EC expectations. He stressed that OPTICON needs to be faster and correct in presentational details: FP7 participation in OPTICON is at stake for failures.

The general progress of the JRAs is very good and activities so far are within the budget. GG informed the Board that continuing activity levels into FP7 could be a problem, as most of the funding will be gone by the end of 2007, and FP7 is not anticipated to start until early 2009. It is expected that a small contingency (few 100K€) will be identified after the third Annual Report (approx. March 2007), and the Board would need to decide where this money should be spent. The Board voted unanimously to optimise contingency funds, but stressed the need to inform the PIs of JRAs and Networks about the procedure and time schedule, to explain why this is happening and that this will not affect future funding for their activities.

Action 3 *GG/ JKD to e-mail JRA and Network PIs re: contingency funds.*

GG recommended that UPS/ Orsay be removed as a formal partner. Instead their activities, which will be unaffected, should be kept inside the "INSU umbrella". This is a purely administrative change to correct an anomaly. The Board voted unanimously for this contract amendment.

Action 4 *GG to arrange for the relevant contract amendment to be sent to the EC to remove UPS/Orsay as a separate partner, once E Kohler has confirmed receipt of their mandate and UPS agree.*

R Gredel briefly clarified the legal situation of CAHA: the new Director does not have full power of attorney as yet, so cannot sign official papers, so R Gredel will continue to sign the papers for FP6. GG then explained that a formal contract amendment would need to be sent to the EC. IAA, Granada (the local host institute for CAHA) has expressed an interest in joining OPTICON. It was suggested that IAA may wish to join FP6 as an observer.

South Africa also wish to join OPTICON in FP7. There is strong generic political support for this and there is a strong astronomical community. Again, it was agreed that the community should be invited to 'observe' OPTICON until the end of FP6.

Action 5 *GG to contact IAA and South Africa to be invited as 'observers' in OPTICON FP6. They could then be involved in the preparation of the proposal for FP7.*

3.1 Project Scientist's Report

JKD highlighted the several successes and achievements and thanked the activity leaders for their reports. He informed the Board that there are spreadsheets available used to track

spending and progress. There is a projected Network underspend of approx. 250K€ which could help balance other budget perturbations.

JKD reported that no progress reports or requests for further funding have been received for N4 (Synergy). The general consensus of the Board was to set this activity to low priority with immediate effect until a new active PI is identified.

Action 6 *JKD to contact J-L Puget and M Kessler to inform them of the Board's decision.*

JKD asked the Board to note the excellent technical progress of the JRAs, the difficulties presented by delays and ambiguities in Form Cs, and the need to increase the JRA5 budget, due to the loss of the extra Swiss funding. The Board approved an increase of 168K€ for JRA5.

Action 7 *JKD to rework the JRA summary finance spreadsheet following further feedback received from E Kohler at INSU.*

4. Current status of AstroNet

J Andersen explained the background and motivation of AstroNet. He informed the Board that A-M Lagrange has officially resigned due to ill health, but it was hoped that her successor would be in place by the next AstroNet executive meeting next month.

The Board expresses its wishes that OPTICON plays a pro-active role in the AstroNet work package on road mapping. GG was asked to contact M Bode (leader of this AstroNet activity) soon to express OPTICON's wishes.

Action 8 *GG to contact M Bode.*

5. FP7 and Status of Calls for Proposals

GG stressed the need to be stringent when deciding what should be included in the OPTICON FP7 programme, as we will have to wait 3 years to resubmit a proposal if the first one is rejected. The current proposals amount to approximately 85M€, this must be cut to about 30M€.

GG summarised the proposals received and the comments from the Executive Committee. The following additional comments were received from the Board:

- 5.1 Adaptive Optics**
This is a top priority for astronomy but need to ask for less money.
- 5.2 Fast Detectors**
This proposal has the same priority as AO.
- 5.3 Interferometry**
The management must be greatly improved.
- 5.4 High-Time Resolution**
This should be merged with 5.2.
- 5.5 Smart Focal Planes**
This concept is over ambitious and must be desopped.
- 5.6 New Materials**
More partners might be included and there should be more communication with 5.5.
- 5.9 Solar Astronomy**
The general consensus was to keep Solar Astronomy in OPTICON.

Action 9 *GG to expand on comments received from the Executive and Board and pass the feedback to the PIs, after approval from the Board.*

6. OPTICON Access Programme in FP7

B Nordstrom made a presentation on the Access programme in FP6, reiterating that it has been a great success. However, there has been insufficient progress in involving astronomers from new member states and impact of the programme has been limited due to insufficient funding.

The issue of the Access programme caused much lively debate, although the Board was in agreement that the top level issue of the Access programme should be to create equal opportunity for astronomers all over Europe. GG informed the Board that Wayne Rosing, the former vice-president of Engineering at Google, has recently founded the Las Cumbres Observatory, the purpose of which "seeks to honor outstanding educational outreach by an amateur astronomer to K-12 children and the interested lay public". Further details can be found at:

<http://www.addmtc.com/lco/index.htm>

Action 10 *JKD to contact the UK Schools Observatory to obtain further information.*

The Access programme has created a lot of interest and support, although OPTICON now needs to decide in which direction the programme should move and it needs to be more imaginative. The Board asked the Telescope Directors' Forum to prepare a vision document on top-level goals for the Access Programme on a timescale of 5-10 years.

Action 11 *JKD to contact the Telescope Directors' Forum to provide recommendations by summer 2007 and to invite a wider group of users to a TDF meeting to obtain feedback/ ideas.*

7. Board Chairman, Next Meeting, A.O.B.

The Board unanimously voted to re-elect W Boland as Chairman. It was noted that the duties of the Chairman will be more onerous next year, due to the necessity of extra meetings for FP7 development and the Mid-Term Review. It was agreed that a new Chairman would be elected at the next Board.

The next Board meeting will concentrate wholly on FP7 and the mid-term review and will involve a much wider participation (of approx. 60-70 people). Draft proposals for FP7 will be available by this time.

Action 12 *GG to write a brief for W Boland for the next Board meeting.*

Paris was suggested as the venue for the next Board in September/ October 2007. However, this is still to be confirmed as the EC timescale is still unknown.

Action 13 *GG to suggest names of competent people for the mid-term review panel.*

W Boland closed the meeting by thanking R Gredel for hosting and organising the meeting, S Howard for assisting in the organisation and G Gilmore and J Davies for their continuous endeavours.

<p>Please see attached document, "FP7 Proposals: Comments from the Executive and the Board" which accompany this set of minutes.</p>
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