

OPTICON Executive Committee 5

Meeting held at Council Room, L'Observatoire de Paris

24 February 2006

Present:			
G Gilmore (Chair)	UCAM	R Gredel	MPIA
J Andersen	NOTSA	S Howard (minutes)	UCAM
P Benvenuti	INAF	A-M Lagrange	INSU
J Bergeron	IAP (pm only)	G Monnet	ESO
W Boland	NOVA	B Nordstrom	EAS
J Davies	UK ATC/ OPTICON Project Scientist	A Omont	INSU
M Dennefeld	IAP/ Access Review	J Seiradakis	GNCA
		R Sirey	PPARC
Apologies:			
R Rebolo	IAC	O. von der Luehe	KIS

1. Welcome & Apologies

G Gilmore welcomed the Committee, and especially J Seiradakis (representing the non-funding agencies), R Gredel (official Max-Planck representative), B Nordstrom (representing astronomy in central Europe), A. Weexsteen (administrative representative from INSU). It was noted that J Bergeron would join the meeting during lunch. Apologies were received from R Rebolo and O von der Luehe.

1.1 Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were accepted two weeks after circulation, as per the rules of procedure.

2. Annual Report

G Gilmore informed the Committee that, to date, the process of gathering the financial forms has been more successful than last year, and the substantial delays of 2005 were not anticipated this time. S Howard circulated a summary spreadsheet of progress.

J Davies updated the Committee on the progress of the technical side of the Annual Report, the draft version of which is currently on the ftp site:

ftp://ftp.roe.ac.uk/pub/jkd/opticon/ECreport_sb.040305.doc

Information for N4 (Puget) and N5 (Quirrenbach) is still awaited, and J Davies stated that the whole report still needs to be checked and cross-referenced.

There was an update on the projected spend of the various projects:

The Access programme spending has fallen slightly below the baseline spending profile after aggressive action to reduce the overspend in 2004. Small adjustments to the allocation profile for 2006 should bring the programme back to the nominal 20%/year guideline by the end of this year, and to 80% by 2007. Accelerating the rate of delivery of the contracted amount Access would be possible if necessary. Due to lower than expected network spending, there is a likelihood there will be approximately 400,000 EUR of unspent network money to redeploy in the last two years of the contract. The main cause for concern was JRA4 which currently looks set to overspend by 25%, which the Committee deemed unacceptable. It was agreed that the reporting process should not be delayed as a result, but

that it must be made clear that this does not automatically mean that JRA4 will be granted the funding. The Committee resolved to investigate JRA4 in the same way as JRA3.

Action 1: *GG, WB, JKD to investigate JRA4 in order to understand its spend profile and commitments. GG will contact A Chelli with an immediate warning.*

J Andersen voiced concerns relating to the forward look of the Access Office, which contained proposals discussed but not approved by the Directors' Forum as deliverables. G Gilmore assured the Committee that the final submission to the EC would make clear that the suggested deliverables are subject to confirmation by the Telescope Directors' Forum.

Action 2: *MD, JKD to check the text of the review against that of the report to ensure consistency. J. Burgos at IAC to be informed that he cannot necessarily go ahead with these deliverables.*

Subject to Actions 1 and 2, the Executive approved the planned forward look in the Annual Report.

3. Options for year 4 and 5 of the OPTICON programme

JKD presented a 1-page document to the Committee and detailed the implications of spending profiles. Subject to EC Parliamentary approval, FP7 contracts could start in January 2008. OPTICON will not know if its FP7 bid has been successful until (possibly) Autumn 2007. There was discussion on how best to proceed with years 4 and 5, with the possibility of accelerated completion of FP6 and the implications of such an action. Possible complications include the achievement of JRA deliverables and the status of the Access Office if the actual Access programme had been brought to an early conclusion.

Action 3: *JKD to check the deliverables for FP6 with regard to a possible early end.*

4. CAHA

R Gredel informed the Committee that the legal status of CAHA changed at the end of 2005, so it must become a new contractor under the rules of the EC. However, R Gredel suggested waiting 4-6 weeks by which time his successor would be in place, before undergoing this procedure. CAHA will be a Spanish partner, established under European law and its entry in to OPTICON was approved by the Board in October 2005.

This led G Gilmore to update the Committee on the status of the funding of LSW/ MPIA – transfers are in process.

5. Options for OPTICON in FP7

G Gilmore explained the historical background to the FP5 and FP6 programmes and remarked that for FP7 we are not bound to simply continue what we have done in the past. He noted that the main potential difference under FP7 will be the proposed change in financial cost models, as current AC cost models may not be able to claim back all their spend, so it may not be advantageous for universities (or indeed small establishments) to be partners. It was stressed that the EC could not manage a project any bigger than OPTICON, so it is not a case of the bigger the project, the higher the funding. OPTICON must seriously consider what it wishes to achieve in the future and review its mission statement.

Although no specific 'mission statement' was defined, there was general agreement that any FP7 programme should be inclusive and move forward on a broad front rather than focussing on any very specific objective which might make the proposal vulnerable to a 'single point failure'. If this sentiment is communicated widely, a more precise shape of the proposal can be developed with likely participants at the FP7 planning meeting in June.

Action 3: *JKD to speak to C Cunningham about a technology roadmap.*

There was some discussion regarding the place of interferometry and solar physics in the OPTICON project.

Action 4: *GG to ask NA5/ JRA4 and O von der Luehe whether the interferometry and solar physics communities wish to continue within OPTICON in FP7, or prefer to pursue their own contracts.*

G Gilmore asked the Committee to consider ways in which to co-ordinate and manage a future FP7 OPTICON project. It is currently managed (primarily) by J Davies, J Burgos and S Howard.

J Davies explained that large telescope strategy is also an important point to consider for any FP7 Access programme.

Action 5: *JKD to ask 8m telescope directors if they wish to be involved in the Access Programme and if so, work out an innovative way to proceed at reasonable cost.*

6. Edinburgh FP7 Planning Meeting June 22-23

J Davies welcomed suggestions on who to invite to this meeting; so far, he suggests inviting the OPTICON Board members, the JRA PIs, a few people from the Networks, two Telescope Directors, maybe some representatives from ALMA, VOTech, and one person from each Network (e.g. RadioNet), which will consist of a total of 40-50 people.

Action 6: *JKD to circulate a draft invitation letter and a draft list of invitees for approval/ amendment.*

7. AOB/ Date of next meeting

The Board meeting will be held 26-27 October 2006. S Howard will be in touch with further details in due course.

After the FP7 Planning meeting in Edinburgh, another Executive meeting will be required to further discuss FP7, which will probably be late September. S Howard will contact the Executive Committee nearer the time.

G Gilmore closed the meeting by thanking the attendees.