



SIXTH FRAMEWORK  
PROGRAMME

European Commission

Community Research



# COMET. The Co-operation of Many European Telescopes

Europe has a number of medium sized (2-4metre) telescopes funded by a variety of national agencies and consortia. These telescopes and their operators face similar challenges. The OPTICON medium sized telescopes working group has provided a forum to share ideas and agree bilateral exchanges of observing time. Widening access to these telescopes to the entire EU community is one of our priorities.

As 8 metre telescopes such as the ESO VLT, the International Gemini telescopes and the 10m Keck telescopes become the de facto large astronomical facilities, telescopes in the 2-4 metre class, until quite recently the worlds biggest, have become 'medium sized' by comparison.

However these facilities can still carry out unique and significant programmes that require more observing time than is available on the highly oversubscribed large telescopes, or that require particular, specialised instrumentation. They also offer opportunities for the training and development of astronomers by providing access and training to the whole European Community.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE OPTICON MEDIUM-SIZED TELESCOPES WORKING GROUP

- Achieve lasting integration of EU astronomers.
- Maximise scientific return within available resources.
- Create opportunities for trans-national mobility.
- Remove duplicated facilities to release funding for new initiatives.
- Use astronomy to inspire and train young people.

As part of OPTICON's FP6 proposal for a large Integrated Infrastructure Initiative, COMET will bring together most of the European operators of world class astronomical infrastructures to form a distributed, pan-European observatory. This facility will be open to all European astronomers via an agreed international peer review process.



EU access funds will allow astronomers from user communities to travel to more telescopes and use instruments not available at their national facilities.

A telescope directors forum will meet to consider bi- or multilateral exchanges of telescope time. This will save costs by removing duplicated facilities.

Large-scale European projects using multiple observatories will be encouraged by simpler proposal rules.

A wide community from across the EU and the accession countries has agreed to join the COMET collaboration.

## Our Mission

The OPTICON Infrastructure Coordination network brings together all of Western Europe's owners and operators of large observatories and data centres. Our goal is to identify opportunities where greater progress can be made by collaboration than by competition, and to take unified actions to achieve those agreed goals.

## Contacts

Professor Gerard Gilmore.  
Chair of OPTICON.  
Institute of Astronomy,  
University of Cambridge  
Madingly Road  
Cambridge CB3 0HA  
United Kingdom  
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 337506  
E-mail: [gil@ast.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gil@ast.cam.ac.uk)

Dr. John K. Davies  
OPTICON Project Scientist  
UK Astronomy Technology Centre,  
Blackford Hill  
Edinburgh, EH9 3HJ  
United Kingdom  
Telephone: +44 (0)131 668 8348  
E-mail: [jkd@roe.ac.uk](mailto:jkd@roe.ac.uk)

Web: [www.astro-opticon.org](http://www.astro-opticon.org)

**OPTICON** - The Optical Infrared Coordination Network for Astronomy

