



SIXTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME

European Commission

Community Research



OPTICON Overview

OPTICON, the Optical Infrared Coordination Network for Astronomy, is an EU funded "Infrastructure Cooperation Network". OPTICON brings together Europe's multinational, national and major regional providers of astronomical infrastructures and some leading research institutes. The infrastructures of interest to OPTICON include optical and infrared telescopes, their instrumentation, observatory infrastructures, astronomical data archives and electronic communication networks. By encouraging common approaches, OPTICON enhances both the quality and the amount of access to these infrastructures across the whole EU.

OPTICON seeks to identify challenges and opportunities for optical-infrared astronomy which require collaboration across Europe. The network sponsors Europe-wide working groups which bring together appropriate individuals and agencies to agree goals and then take action to achieve these goals. These activities may result in bi- or multi-national agreements or the development of new proposals for funding.

In future initiatives to be proposed under FP6, OPTICON will extend access to world class European astronomy facilities, bringing in those countries without major national infrastructures.

The OPTICON partners are independent national agencies or research institutes, and multi-national organisations. They are:

- PPARC Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (UK)
- IoA Cambridge-Institute of Astronomy (UK)
- CDS Centre de Données astronomiques de Strasbourg (France)
- ESA European Space Agency (International)
- ESO European Southern Observatory (International)
- IAP Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris (France)
- CNRS/INSU Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/Institut National des Sciences de l'Univers (France)
- IAC Instituto de Astrofisica de Canarias (Spain)
- INAF Instituto Nazionale di Astrofisica (Italy)
- Leiden University (Netherlands)

- MPfA Max-Planck Institut für Astrophysik (Germany)
- MPIA Max-Planck Institut für Astronomie (Germany)
- NOVA Nederlandse Onderzoekschool Voor Astronomie, (Netherlands)
- Nordic Optical Telescope Scientific Association (International)



Some of the activities covered by OPTICON working groups which are described in more detail on other sheets, our brochure and our website are:

- Defining a European Excellence Fellowship Scheme.
- The Astrophysical Virtual Observatory.
- Interoperability of Facilities.
- Common software for scientific instruments and surveys.
- Cooperative Operation of Many European Telescopes (COMET).
- The scientific case for the future European Extremely Large Telescope.
- Joint activities with Radio Astronomy via the RadioNET ICN.
- Key technologies development.

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.

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