The CTAC 2019B Reflections from Palermo

Jochen Heidt, ZAH, Landessternwarte Heidelberg

jheidt@lsw.uni-heidelberg.de
The CTAC process – how it works
   ➔ As input for discussion, Radionet people
Radionet/OPTICON common TAC?
   ➔ separately, together, small telescopes?
CCE – what needs to be done?
   ➔ training, training, training
Other pressing action items
   ➔ what is really TNA ?
The magnificent seven

Annelies Mortier
Cambridge

John Davies
Edinburgh

Helene Roussel
Paris

Roi Alonso
La Laguna

Laura Affer
Palermo

Jochen Heidt
Heidelberg

Renata Minkeviciute
Vilnius
CTAC – the process
Timeline

- Prerequisite:
  
  Outcome should be known before the national TACs meet

- Typically:
  
  T0: Call for proposal issued
  T+4 weeks: Deadline
  T+12 weeks: CTAC-meeting (telescopes notified)
  T+15 weeks: Comments sent out
Preparation of meeting – careful process

• After deadline propos sorted out by John (compliant checks) + made available to CTAC
• John & chair assign primary/secondary assessors for each proposal
• Lists sent out to CTAC for check of conflicts + resort if necessary
• Primary assessors name potential external scientific referees + John asks (painful process)
• John asks observatories for technical assessment ➔ reviews are available for CTAC as they come in (quite some ext. ref. do not)
• CTAC members are expected to review all proposals (equally well)
• ...have to put in their grades 1-2 days prior to meeting, grades from 1-5, in steps of 0.5 ➔ blind review, grades of others are unknown before the meeting
• John prepares a preliminary ranking, goes to chair
The meeting itself

- Strictly confidential (closed session), ALL proposals are discussed
- Discuss proposals along categories (from top to bottom in the past)
- Once done review the outcome, check availability of telescope time, verify ranking using renormalized grades
- If everybody is happy (normally yes), meeting is closed
- Done within one day, including post-meeting round-table discussion

Except Palermo ➔ 2 days !!!
After the meeting

- Primary assessor has to send comments to chair based on:
  a) own assessment, the secondary and the discussion
  b) the comments by external and technical reviewer
- Chair makes preliminary comment sheet, which is iterated among the CTAC, ranking of proposals is done in 3 blocks:
  - accepted, rejected but not far from cutoff, rejected & far off
- PIs notified and comments sent out (quite some)
- (Report from CTAC-meeting distributed)

Given the permanently high interest by community TNA is not only highly attractive but we need to and do a good and careful job!

Of course, there is always room for improvement
Palermo meeting: April 29/30 2019

Two full days between Sunday and May 1st, because:

- 6 members only, more work for everybody
- 63 proposals, overbooking 5.5 !!!!!  
  (reduced to 3.5 afterwards by assigning more money)
- Discussion on MTR, implementation of recommendations, CEE in particular
- Large number of politically/technically difficult proposals
- TDF – ideas for pilot 2020+

CEE is an abbreviation for structurally less privileged countries
Some statistics - oversubscription

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telescope</th>
<th>Num\textsubscript{prop}</th>
<th>Night\textsubscript{requested}</th>
<th>Night\textsubscript{offered}</th>
<th>Oversub</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAHA35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAHA22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52h</td>
<td>500h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAT</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHP19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHP12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNG</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESO22:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>254h</td>
<td>150h</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45h</td>
<td>50h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFHT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some statistics – the outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>$N_{prop}$</th>
<th>Telescope</th>
<th>$N_{prop}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solar system</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>AAT</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exoplanet</td>
<td>6/19</td>
<td>CAHA35</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stars+stell. pop</td>
<td>5/17</td>
<td>NOT</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumst. med</td>
<td>-/2</td>
<td>TNG</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time domain</td>
<td>6/13</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-z Universe</td>
<td>-/3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-z Universe</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Checked by us: The absence of our 7th member (expert on stars and stellar systems) did NOT affect outcome!!!
Changes for 2020A – not many

- Going for one long semester until end of H2020 contract ???
- CTAC is happy to continue with 6 members as there may be as yet unknown changes in the course of the 2020+ pilot
- Expect many proposal. Demand for multiple telescopes per proposal increases as is the time request.
- CEE proposal will perhaps be discussed separately (depends on numbers)
- Giving less discussion time for lowest ranked proposal
- Kill proposal still using old Northstar template !!!
- Leave more time between deadline and meeting ➔ deadline a bit earlier
- Location of next meeting TBD, duration 1-2 days
- “Observer” from Radionet invited to join (see next slides)
Radionet/OPTICON – common TAC?
Radio astronomy is not so different that common TAC is impossible:
  eg triage funds, triage TAC?

Example - Effelsberg:
+: molecular clouds, galaxy clusters, AGN monitoring, EVN
new: TDA-programs (grav. wave, tidal disruption events)
-: Pulsars

Benefit: Small telescopes important for AGN monitoring / TDA!

a Radionet “observer” is invited to attend the next CTAC-meeting
Requirements

✓ CTAC must be composed to match topics and not by Agency concerns; members from CEE countries should be in; healthy mix of experts and newcomers (training)

✓ Technical assessment is a must, external scientific reviewer useful (though painful to find, eg for TDA proposal)

Issues

- Large number of members required
  (if triple TAC: radio, optical, combined)
- Deadlines of individual observatories (20+ telescopes, EVN etc)
- Small telescopes: may require dynamical evaluation/scheduling
  ➔ think about and implement alternatives
CEE – room for improvement
Various ideas on how to implement a higher success rate for proposal from CEE countries, eg

- a certain number of wildcards or money
- lifting all proposals up by a grade of +0.5
- similar success rate for CEE / non-CEE proposals

But maintain a certain scientific quality !!!

⇒ None of them was highly favored

Decision postponed to until the end of meeting
MTR/CEE – how did we end up?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Proposal Accepted/Submitted</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>3/4 (CEE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1/7 (CEE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(CEE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>1/2 (CEE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>7/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>1/2 (Non-EU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall: 21/63 (33%) accepted

CEE: 5/14 (36%) accepted

Non-CEE: 16/49 (32%) accepted

4 proposal rejected for GTO-conflict, not telling about other channels, wrong instr.

Reasonable !!!
Which country belongs to CEE category?

- Clear definition / advice required

BUT: not straightforward

eg what about proposals from Malta with 20 CoIs from Germany?

and: how do we implement them into the process?

…treated separately, together with the others?
You are using taxpayers money !!!!

➤➤ be efficient at the telescope

Many proposal from CEE countries are scientifically good, but lack adequate description of telescope time required

“…we need 10-14 nights“ and talking about biases and flats is not very useful…“

➤➤ CEE applicants must be trained ➤➤ Observing schools
Further pressing issues
The TNA spirit must be more in focus (being **compliant**):
- avoid “double-dipping” by proposals asking for:
  -- additional nights for national programs
  -- the same via national calls or ITPs
  -- targets overlapping with GTOs (exoplanet), ITPs, TDA

Not only large, but also simple, single-telescope proposal
(CEE countries may profit substantially)

It becomes increasingly difficult to judge on and to implement
programs asking for more and more time and telescopes
(bigger is not always better) !!!
Conclusions

✓ The current CTAC is the best one can imagine !!!!!
✓ Overall just ONE complaint in 19 cycles (2 weeks ago 😞)
✓ YES, a combined /structured Radionet/OPTICON TAC is a must
✓ But complicated: needs perhaps a dedicated person (or a working group) to take care of that
✓ The board or whoever MUST set the boundary conditions in an unambiguous way !!!

A CTAC Radionet/OPTICON is a developing entity, this may allow to set future standards ➔ that’s what the Pilot is made for !!!