

Report on the CTAC-meeting May 8 2018 in Aarhus

The 2018B common call for OPTICON TNA opened in early February 2018 and closed at 23:59 on February 28th. The call was published here:

<http://www.astro-opticon.org/h2020/tna/call/call-2018b.html>.

52 proposals were submitted. Two of them were eliminated as they were not compliant with the OPTICON rules. Of the remainder one asked for a period where no time was offered and one team eventually withdrew as they were awarded ITP-time on the La Palma telescopes for their project. Thus 48 viable proposals remained for discussion. Of these 12/48 proposals could be awarded time within our 250k Euro per semester budget.

The CTAC-meeting to discuss the proposals for the semester 2018B was held in Aarhus on May 8 2018. The current CTAC consists of Roi Alonso (La Laguna), Beth Biller (Edinburgh), Frank Grundahl (Aarhus), Geza Kovac (Konkoly), Laura Offer (Palermo), Helene Roussel (Paris) and Jochen Heidt (Heidelberg, Chair). OPTICON Project Scientist John Davies (UKATC, Edinburgh) was in attendance to advise on technical issues and record the meeting outcomes but did not participate in the scientific discussions.

There was one time domain proposal for gravitational wave follow-up which requested a large amount of telescope resources (more than 50% of the financial resources available in this semester). Scientifically it was ranked highly but not on top (ranked 10 based on initial grades). Although its scientific merit score put this proposal above the cut-off, after an intense debate the CTAC, however, decided not to allocate time (even partly) to this proposal for the following reasons:

- a) It was already stated in the proposal that identical (or similar) proposals will be sent to national TACs and/or large-programme calls (eg ITP). Given the high priority of this science these will most likely be approved and it will not be clear if an observation is being made under OPTICON time or under national time.
- b) It is clear that in case of a gravitational wave detection, an armada of telescopes will follow-up on this using national time and DDT. This would imply that a large (perhaps the full) amount of OPTICON time allocated for this project would not be used. Due to the nature of the TNA process, time 'reserved' for overrides but not used cannot be re-allocated to other projects and so cannot then claim the allocated EU funds. This creates a complicated scheduling issue.
- c) If the proposal had been accepted in its present form it would have consumed, or at least blocked, more than 50% of the financial resources available in this semester. This would have increased the "oversubscription" to almost a factor of ten and only perhaps 5/52 proposals could have been accepted. This might have had a major impact on potential proposers of more traditional projects in the future.

The CTAC encouraged the applications to reapply but to think about a proposal which is unique and which distinguishes it from the other "standard" applications in this field.

As a consequence, OPTICON and the directors of the telescope network should consider the wider implications of this sort of project in the future and should issue new guidance in the next call.

As in previous calls, the distribution of the proposal between the astrophysical topics was heavily skewed which is also somewhat reflected in the demand per telescope (TNG, CAHA35 and NOT being the highest as they offer instruments suitable for exoplanet and stellar research). Table 1 shows the distribution the proposals among categories and among the telescopes offered.

Topic	N _{prop}	Telescope	N _{prop}
Exoplanet	3/19	TNG	10
Stars+stell. pop	3/14	NOT	10
ISM	2/9	CAHA35	7
Time domain	4/7	AAT	7
Low-z Universe	-/2		
High-z Universe	-/1		

Table 1: Distribution of applications among categories (left) and telescopes (right). For the applications we show the number of approved vs submitted applications. Exoplanet, stars + stellar population as well as ISM proposal dominate. Telescope requests are dominated by the demand for high-resolution spectrographs for exoplanet and stellar research. The AAT benefits from its wide-fieldMOS capability. The remaining telescopes offered in the call were requested in 2-3 proposals on average.

16/52 = 30% of the proposal were received from smaller communities, ie 4 from Greece, 3 from Ireland, 2 from Belgium, Estonia and Poland each, and 1 from Israel, Serbia and Hungary each. Only two of them were given time (one from Israel, one from Belgium). On the contrary 5/12 proposal which were awarded time came from the UK.

At the end of the meeting a round table discussion was held to review the CTAC process. The following changes will be implemented for the next meeting (and discussed on whether they should be kept afterwards):

- The astrophysical categories for the proposal template will be evaluated (eg solar system and exoplanets might be split in separate ones). This eases the assignment of primary / secondary referees for the CTAC meeting.
- The proposal template will be modified. Some of the sections in the proposal template can be removed or will be combined.
- Pregrades are given in steps of 0.5 and not in a 1.0,1.3,1.5,1.8,2.0 etc. scheme as before by the panel members before the CTAC-meeting.
- During the CTAC-meeting itself, the proposal will be discussed by category and not in descending order by their pregrades as previously.

Beth Biller and Geza Kovacs will leave the CTAC. It was a pleasure to have had them in the panel for some time. In the meantime we have secured a replacement for Beth working in the same area as Beth does (exoplanets) and are looking actively for a substitute for Geza. Due to the lack of expertise in the CTAC this person should work in the area of GRB, GW or SN and be from a smaller community, if possible.

Feedback to all proposers has been prepared and was distributed in early June. The next call will open on about August 1st and the next CTAC meeting will tentatively be held in November 2018 in Palermo.