



FIRST ASTRONET JOINT CALL FOR PROPOSALS

INTRODUCTION

The "ASTRONET ERA-NET" project has been initiated with the aim of enhancing the co-ordination and co-operation between national funding and research management organisations in Europe who are responsible for astronomical research.

The ERA-NET scheme is the principal means for the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) to support this trans-national harmonisation of research activities (e.g. programmes, strategic projects) being funded and carried out at national or regional level. The organisations involved in ASTRONET (national funding organisations, research councils, research ministries, research programme management organisations) have been closely co-operating with the goal of initiating a truly trans-national funding initiative (call for proposals) in Astronomy in early 2008.

Under the umbrella of ASTRONET

- the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Austria;
- the National Centre for Scientific Research/ National Institute for Science of the Universe (CNRS/INSU), France;
- the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Germany;
- the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), The Netherlands;
- the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC), Spain;
- the Swedish Research Council (SRC), Sweden;

(hereafter called the Partners) have together decided to open the first joint call for multilateral trans-national research projects. This call will become effective on the 1st of February 2008 and will be open for research projects aiming at:

“Common Tools for Future Large sub-mm Facilities”

ASTRONET cordially invites you to participate in this call.



NATURE, PURPOSE AND THEME OF THE CALL

At this moment the European countries invest significantly in the development and building of large sub-mm facilities. The primary ground-based facility certainly is ALMA which is jointly funded by ESO, the U.S.A., Canada, Chile and Japan. In space the European Space Agency's Herschel Space Observatory will open up new observational opportunities. ASTRONET recently published "A Science Vision for European Astronomy", which identifies four key science questions for which the astronomical community would like to find the answers within the coming 20 years. The above mentioned sub-mm facilities will be of particular importance for making progress in two of these key science areas, namely the understanding of how galaxies form and evolve and what the origin and evolution of stars and planets are. These facilities will become available for the whole astronomical community. In order to boost the scientific output and extend the scientific user base it is required to develop new tools for the community, specifically in the areas of:

- Numerical simulation and theoretical modelling;
- Data evaluation infrastructure including data analysis and post processing tools (above the pipeline data reduction);
- Provision of atomic, molecular and other physical parameters in a coherent way linked to the infrastructures, and via the development of dedicated database structures.

Project proposals should aim at the development of tools which will boost the benefit of the mentioned future large sub-mm facilities. The results of the projects should help the interpretation of the sub-mm data and be made available for the European astronomical community. The projects should contribute to providing a fundament for answering the above mentioned key science questions posed in the Science Vision Report.

In general, trans-national joint project proposals should comprise novel and ambitious ideas to increase the scientific output of the future large sub-mm facilities. They should demonstrate a clear added value to the applicants' partnership over and above what could be achieved individually. Genuine trans-national collaborations should comprise complementarities of expertise and methodology among partners. Parallel national projects with little interaction are not acceptable.

Restrictions in projects that are eligible for funding may apply for individual Partners (e.g. not all funding agencies can support space oriented research, see the National Annexes for details).



PROJECT TEAMS

All researchers based in the countries listed in the introduction, who are eligible to apply for national project funding according to the national regulations of the countries in which they are based, will be eligible to apply for ASTRONET research grants.

Applicants must belong to eligible organisations legally established in the ASTRONET countries funding the call and must perform their planned activities within such organisations. The funding applications must be made by individuals (not organisations). Potential applicants should consult the National Annex for the country they are working in for more details.

Research projects funded by ASTRONET must not duplicate research already funded at national or EU level within national, international or EU calls. It will be the responsibility of each project applicant to establish and declare that the submitted proposal fulfils this condition; such declarations will be subject to verification. Discovery of duplication will lead to the withdrawal of funding from approved projects.

Applicants for funding must form project teams in which a minimum of two members from a minimum of two participating countries will participate. Partners from non-participating countries or non-eligible organisations can join these teams, and by joining strengthen a proposal, but will not be eligible for funding via this Joint Call. The teams will consist of a Team Coordinator (or project coordinator) and team members (co-applicants).

The Team Coordinators will be responsible for preparing all necessary documents for the application process and for handling the communication with the ASTRONET Joint Secretariat (JS) and with his/her own national funding agency. The other team members (co-applicants) will be responsible for communication with their country's own national funding agency.

In some countries there may be specific rules or exclusions concerning permissible consortia constellations. Prospective applicants are strongly advised to consult the National Annexes for the country in which they are working for more details.

FUNDING MODEL; ELIGIBLE COSTS; DURATION OF PROJECTS

The call will be financed by the Partners according to national rules; there will be no funding from the European Commission. In total, € 3,5 million of funding will be provided by these organisations for trans-national projects for the period 2009-2011. It is expected that 5 to 10 proposals will be awarded in this call.

The call will use the so-called "Virtual Common Pot" model in which each participating national funding agency will fund its "own" team members in a particular project according to the rules and regulations usually employed when financing national projects, see also the



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National Annexes. The budget of each partner in a consortium cannot exceed the limit fixed by the national funding agency.

Eligible costs are defined by the rules of the participating national agencies. Overheads and Value-Added Tax (VAT) will be handled according to the usual national rules for that Partner. The total available budget for projects submitted from a particular country will be fixed by that country's national funding agency.

Country-specific information concerning funding agency limits, rules and regulations including a brief summary of eligible project costs, including the amounts and funding rates per cost category and Partner, can be found in the respective National Annexes of the call.

As a rule, funding for a national sub-project will normally cover costs such as those for:

- at least one full-time PhD student or Post Doc position for the duration of the project;
- travel expenses for the person(s) under contract and other staff that are active in the project (according to the rules of the National Funding Agencies);
- Project related equipment/consumables up to 50 kEuro (if justified).

All personnel, equipment and consumables need to be fully justified and cost effective. Projects will be funded for a minimum of two and a maximum of three years, starting January 2009. In some countries certain positions can be extended, see National Annexes.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE, DEADLINES, FUNDING DECISION

The project proposals should contain the following information:

- Project title and project acronym;
- Project summary (maximum 1000 characters);
- Contact details of each team member;
- Background, rationale and a review of the state-of-the-art (maximum 1 page);
- Objectives of the projects (maximum 1 page);
- Detailed description of the proposed research, including the scientific question and expected results, research approach, scientific importance and urgency, relation to present research both inside and outside the team (together with the project plan maximum 10 pages, including figures);
- Project plan, including time plan deliverables and mid-term milestones, the team coordination and structure, work-packages, the role of each team member, potential risks and the risk mitigation plan and a results dissemination plan (together with the detailed description of the proposed research maximum 10 pages, including figures);
- Detailed costs estimates (per year) for each partner (according to the accounting rules of their national funding agency), including the cost motivation and information concerning any co-funding.
- CV of the team members, including a description of the main domain of research and a list of the 5 most relevant publications, (max 2 pages per team member);



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All applications for funding must use the ASTRONET Joint Call templates provided and must be submitted electronically as .pdf files to the ASTRONET Joint Secretariat via the link "1st Call" on the ASTRONET portal www.astronet-eu.org. Each proposal should be submitted by its respective Team Coordinator on behalf of all the applicants. By submitting a proposal, the Team Coordinator is acknowledging that each applicant approves this proposal and where necessary got the approval from its institute to submit it. These approvals do not need to be sent with the application, but could be asked for in case of doubt. In some cases national funding agencies might require a simultaneous submission via the national portal.

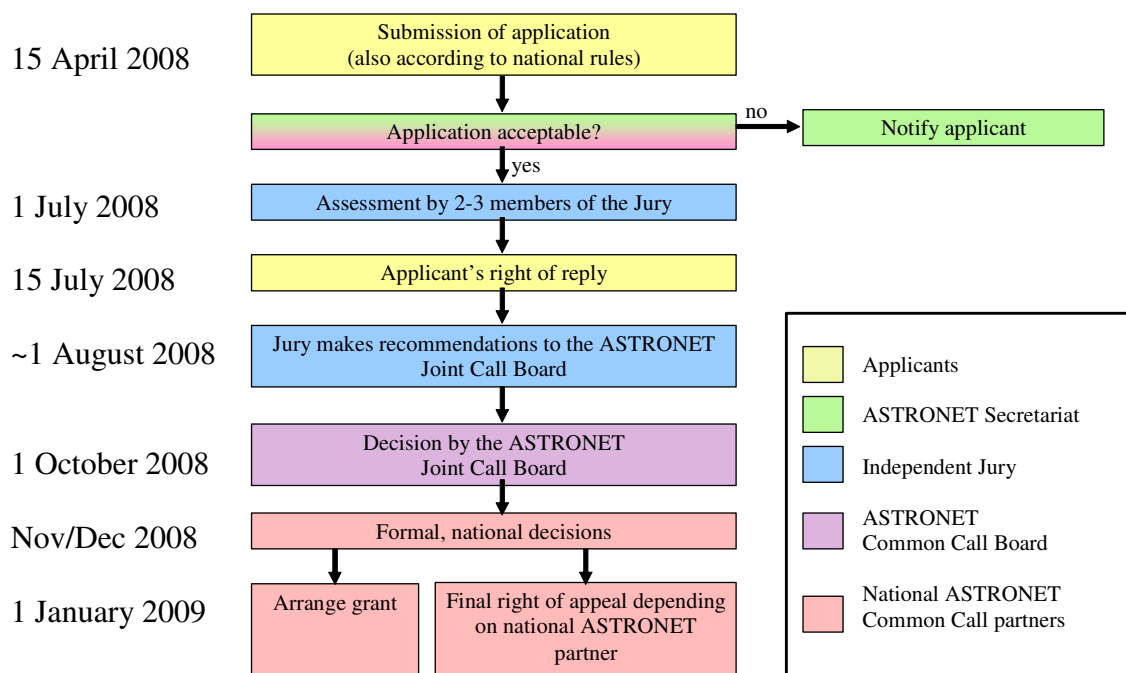
The submission deadline for the proposals is 23:59 noon CEST on the 15th of April 2008. In the event of any difficulties encountered in submitting their proposal forms, applicants are requested to contact the ASTRONET Joint Secretariat at NWO immediately by one of the following:

E-mail: astronet@nwo.nl
Telephone: +31 (0)70344 0921.

In addition, in some countries it might be necessary for funding applicants to also send additional forms or hardcopy applications as required by the national funding agencies of those countries.

Potential applicants should consult the National Annex for the country they are working in or contact their national help-desk for more details of these requirements and where to send any additional information.

The application procedure will follow the following steps:





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Applications for ASTRONET project funding will be evaluated and ranked by a panel of independent external referees (also called “Jury”) selected by the ASTRONET Joint Call Board. Proposals will be refereed as a whole and according to their relevance to the call theme and by taking into consideration the following three criteria:

- Scientific and/or technological excellence
 - Scientific quality of the research plan
 - Feasibility of the research plan
- Implementation
 - Competence of applicant
 - Quality of the research environment
 - Justification of requested resources
- Impact
 - Innovativeness
 - Added value of collaboration
 - Potential use for the scientific community

Two to three Jury members will act as evaluators and will write an evaluation report about the applications. Project applicants will be given the opportunity to comment on these evaluation reports by means of a rebuttal. It will not be possible to modify a project application once it has been evaluated.

The panel of referees will rank the proposals based on the proposals themselves, the evaluation reports and the rebuttals. For the ranking (so not yet in the evaluation reports!) scores will be awarded for each of the three above mentioned criteria, but not for the individual sub-criteria. Each criterion will be scored 0 to 5. Half marks can be given. Scores indicate the following with respect to the criterion under examination:

- 5 – **Excellent**, all relevant aspects successfully addressed.
- 4 – **Very Good**, all relevant aspects successfully addressed, only minor shortcomings.
- 3 – **Good**, criterion well addressed, though certain improvements are possible;
- 2 – **Fair**, significant weaknesses that would need corrections, though proposal broadly addresses the criterion;
- 1 – **Poor**, serious inherent weaknesses;
- 0 – **Very poor**, criterion addressed in a cursory and unsatisfactory manner;

No weights between the individual criteria will be applied. Thresholds will be applied to the scores. The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the individual scores, will be 10. Projects below these thresholds will not be eligible for funding.

The final decision to fund projects will be undertaken by the national funding agencies participating in this call.



Final Workshop in 2012

In 2012 a scientific workshop will be organized by the participating funding agencies. The successful applicants (one team-member per participating institution) are expected to present at this workshop their results and as part of a “lessons learnt analysis” for this an insight to the synergy effects and their experiences in the trans-national collaborations. The related costs for participation will be covered by the grant.

NATIONAL ANNEXES, NATIONAL HELP DESKS

Information about the national rules and regulations concerning the public funding of research projects in the countries participating in the call together with any peculiarities required for the application process for applicants in those countries are given in the corresponding National Annexes on the ASTRONET Website.

In addition, prospective applicants will also find here contact information for the ASTRONET help-desk in their country, which will be most happy to answer any questions regarding ASTRONET or this call and which will offer advice or assistance with project applications.