



Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area

ERA-NET

Coordination and Support Action

ASTRONET

Coordinating Strategic Planning for European Astronomy

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Dissemination Level

PU	Public	
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	X
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

Objectives of the Task

The general goal of all ASTRONET Work Packages, and in particular those concerning common calls or other common actions, is to create the basis for reaching the scientific objectives described in the ASTRONET Science Vision by implementing the recommendations of the ASTRONET Infrastructure Roadmap.

The overall objective of Task 5.5 is the actual implementation of joint calls. There is a strong interconnection with Task 5.4, since generally speaking a joint call can be seen as a specific common action. Therefore there is strong overlap of the activities of both tasks. The task also depends strongly on input from Tasks 4.4 and 4.5 which will deliver expert committee reports on Astrophysical Software Laboratory (ASL), Virtual Observatory (VO), and Laboratory Astrophysics (LA).

Previous work

By the end of the first phase of ASTRONET end of 2010, the discussion within ASTRONET had led to the conclusion that a call theme aiming at instrumentation for wide-field spectroscopy had the widest support. At the same time it became obvious that a call in the area of the wide-field spectroscopy theme would suffer from the lack of information on instrumentation aimed for in such a call. At that time, the recommendations by the ASTRONET Wide-Field Spectroscopy Working Group were not yet available and ESO had just launched a call for wide-field spectroscopic instrumentation in September 2010 with a decision still pending by the end of ASTRONET-1. This lack of information was considered a severe drawback for the call theme at that time. Given these conditions it appeared meaningful to postpone a call to a later date once sufficient information for the selection of a theme was available.

Recent activities

After the launch of ASTRONET-2 the discussion on the implementation of the 2nd joint call continued during the reporting period. Three teleconferences taking place on

- 13 July 2011
- 8 September 2011
- 5 December 2011

were devoted to this effort (see Annexes 1 to 3 for the agenda). They were also used to identify ways for a less formal common action rather than a joint call. These online meetings involved mainly MINECO, NWO, STFC, and PT-DESY, with occasional participation of ESO and CAS.

Further extensive discussions took place at the meetings of the Executive Committee in January 2011, September 2011, and May 2012 as well as at the Board meetings in September 2011 and May 2012. Likewise, the Task 5.4 workshop in April was used to promote decisions of the further procedure for a joint call (cf. Deliverable D5.3).

Results

The discussion following the end of ASTRONET-1 in 2011 narrowed down the most promising theme to the project WEAVE, the “WHT Enhanced Area Velocity Explorer” being planned for the 4.2-m William Herschel Telescope (WHT) at the Observatorio del Roque de los Muchachos, on La Palma in the Canary Islands.

This powerful new multi-object spectrograph will allow astronomers to take spectra of up to 1000 stars and galaxies in a single exposure. This huge leap in observing efficiency (currently only 150 objects can be observed simultaneously) will allow astronomers to tackle several astrophysical problems that until now have remained out of reach. European astronomers are in broad agreement about the need for a powerful multi-object optical spectrograph on a medium-sized telescope in the northern hemisphere to tackle such questions (see report by ASTRONET's European Telescope Strategy Review Committee).

It was realized by the project proponents that there were serious gaps in the funding of the design phase which urgently needed to be filled. It was proposed to proceed by initiating a fast track coordinated action under the umbrella of ASTRONET on national funding for the WEAVE design phase to close the funding gaps instead of launching a joint call, as this would not have allowed a fast enough reaction.

At the same time, work towards the 2nd joint call was continued, aiming at the actual construction phase following the Preliminary Design Review (PDR) in 2013. The call text for a joint call with the theme “Technological developments related to WEAVE, the WHT Enhanced Area Velocity Explorer” was prepared including the procedural details. However further discussions during the Task 5.4 workshop in April 2012 showed that a joint call for the construction phase was not appropriate at this time. It was realized that funding of the construction phase was out of scope for a joint call, both concerning the time frame of the project, the decision timeline within the agencies, and in particular the financial constraints in the agencies for ERA-Net joint calls.

Rather, the preparation activities were recognized as an efficient and most successful common action under the umbrella of ASTRONET, helping to secure the funding for the design phase and thus to implement the first step towards realization of a large instrumentation project with a financial framework in the ~10 to 15 M€ range. As a result, funding for the design phase was secured from the UK, Spain, Netherlands and France, whilst other countries expressed interest in becoming partners in the science team. This was considered as a significant success of the joint activities within ASTRONET.

Beyond that, the WEAVE project now on track with the help of the ASTRONET common action due to its long-term character supports the future of the William Herschel Telescope. Aiming at having WEAVE operational in 2017 this innovative instrument certainly plays a central role in the 2010-2020 vision for the Isaac Newton Group of Telescopes (ING).

Next steps towards implementation of a joint call

At the Board meeting in May 2012 it was decided to reconsider the theme for a joint call in due time as soon as the reports of the committees preparing reports on the ASL, VO, and LA are available. The work of these committees is carried out within Work Package 4, Tasks 4.4 (VO and ASL) and 4.5 (LA). The timeline for the reports are: ASL and LA presumably in autumn 2012, VO in 2013.

The expectation is that once the reports are available themes for joint calls meeting the needs of the communities and the strategic focus of the funding agencies will quite naturally emerge rather than being forced.



ASTRONET 2nd Joint Call

Agenda
Teleconference
13 July 2011
 10:00 – 11:00 CEST

1	Status of 2nd call preparation (5 min.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conclusions of the discussion process so far - News from agencies relevant to call timeline and call theme - Agencies' timelines for decision on participation in 2011
2	Status of ESO MOS Call (15 min.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Result of the selection process - Timeline - Implications for national funding agencies
3	Status of Working Groups reports (10 min.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wide-Field Spec. - ASL - ETFLA
4	Theme selection issues: Plan for further process (20 min.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wide-field spec.: common action vs. joint call - Other call themes?
5	Conclusions (10 min)



ASTRONET 2nd Joint Call

**Draft agenda
Teleconference
8 September 2011
14:00 – 15:00 CEST**

1	Preparation of the 2nd joint call: common action - Discussion of the options for a common action for WF spectrograph in the context of the 2 nd joint call on the basis of suggestions provided by ASTRONET partners. - Further steps towards a preparation for the Executive meeting in September in Rome.
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ASTRONET 2nd Joint Call

Agenda Teleconference 5 December 2011

15:00 – 16:00 CEST

1	present status of the planning of the 2nd joint call
2	fast track coordinated action on the WEAVE design phase within the context of ASTRONET
3	Further planning of the 2nd joint call
4	Conclusions