

# Minutes of the ASTRONET Board meeting

Online; 4 november 2025, 13:00-16:00

**Present:** Salvatore Sciortino (INAF), Gaitée Hussain (ESA), Begona Garcia-Lorenzo (MICIU), Garrelt Mellema (SRC), Tomaz Bulik (PTA), Vladamir Karas (CNKA), Martin Giard (CNRS, chair), Chris Woolford (STFC), Jean-Paul Kneib (SCNAT), Grazina Tautvaišienė (TFAI), Antoine Mérand (ESO), Sven Wedemeyer (EAS), Saskia Matheussen (NWO), Sona Ehlerova, Paul Callanan, Mathilde Janssen (NWO, minutes)

**Guest:** Elodie Couvet (CNRS)

## Action Items

- Antoine: Send name of ESO sustainability officer to Mathilde.
- Mathilde & Saskia: Draft overarching work plan for WG5.
- ESA: Share updates on science program progress.
- Mathilde: Confirm dates for Lausanne meeting and online meeting.
- Mathilde: Remove Annex 1, renumber Annex 2, update section 6.4.
- Mathilde: Send updated MoU version.
- Members: Obtain legal feedback by end of December.
- Mathilde: Plan WG4 meeting before EAS confirmation.
- Saskia: Send open invitation for WG4 meeting.
- Members: Provide feedback on the latest version of the MoU

## 1. Opening (13:00)

Martin opened the meeting at 13:03.

## 2. Approval of Previous Minutes (25 June 2025) (13:00–13:05)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

## 3. Round Table (13:05–13:15)

## 4. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (13:15–14:15)

### a. Members

Discussion focused on key issues in the ‘final’ version of the MoU shared earlier. Members were asked to verify whether their previous suggestions (sent to Mathilde) have been addressed.

Documents 4a and 4b can be used for reference; key issues are listed in document 4c.

Martin explained the background of renewing the ASTRONET MoU. The previous MoU could not be renewed as-is; CNRS drafted a new version. Most members have now provided comments, and CNRS has prepared an updated version. The goal is to have the document signed before year-end.

### Discussion Points:

- Antoine (ESO): Asked whether another feedback round is needed or if members should proceed to signing. Noted that while the MoU is not legally binding, financial aspects are involved.
- Martin: Each member must check with their legal team before signing.
- Chris: Also needs legal review.

- Salvo: Sent the MoU to his legal team this morning. Raised concern about Annex 1 being outdated. It seems that it can be removed. Mathilde will alter this in the MoU and circulate the version without Annex 1.
- Garrelt: Asked if the MoU states that national law overrides the MoU; this is important for Sweden. The confidentiality law of Sweden is quite strict and that is therefore this is an important point for Sweden. Elodie, mentions that it only applies to the information that is marked as confidential
- Salvo: Clarified that since the MoU is not legally binding, this is not an issue. Elodie agreed.
- Begona: Still awaiting feedback from legal staff; expects it soon.
- Elodie: Confirmed ESO's status and noted that simplification should remove previous concerns.

#### Next Steps:

- Mathilde will send the latest changes.
- Legal feedback should be provided by end of December, it seems not possible to sign it before December therefore we move it to March 2026.

#### b. Observers

Discussion on whether observing countries could become members.

#### 5. EAS 2026 (14:15–14:45)

The proposal submitted to EAS has been circulated by Saskia. Discussion focused on opportunities for the session. The idea is to have a strategic session including the large infrastructures (ESA, ESO, SKAO). We are expected to hear by the end of November if our session is being selected.

#### Suggestions:

- One-day session preferred.
- Possible plenary session.
- Sven: Proposed a 1-hour panel discussion with diverse representation.
- WG4 will meet after confirmation; Saskia will send an open invitation.
- **Action:** Mathilde will plan this meeting proactively.

#### Ideas:

- Chris: Include updates from WG chairs.
- Begona: Include solar telescopes (EST).
- Martin: ESO timeline and new infrastructures.
- Paul: White paper deadline is near; more workshops expected.
- Gaitee: Funding update expected March/May.
- Garrelt: Role of AI and machine learning.
- Nanda: has send some suggestions via de email.

#### 6. Working Groups (14:45–15:30)

Discussion on progress and support needed for WGs. Overview in document 3.

**WG1:** Link with APPEC and common strategies. Several meetings held; drafting a short document on common questions/methodologies. Ranking of infrastructures expected within a year.

**WG2:** Future strategies for small telescopes. Meeting planned this month; framework and goals under development.

**WG3:** Building strategies to materialize the roadmap. No progress yet; concerns about scope and identity.

- Garrelt and Sven discussed coordination for EST and SKA.
- Saskia suggested involving both subject experts and those with a broader view.

**WG4:** Connection and joint policies with EC and stakeholders. Focus on EAS meeting and EC interaction. Also contributed to Ukraine rebuilding workshop.

**WG 5:** difficulties with getting this working group of the ground, so we are wondering how we can make it start.

- Martin suggested organizing a discussion with Hugues and setting up a brainstorming session with ASTRONET, followed by inviting Hugues to participate in these discussions.
- Antoine: Mentioned ESO has a sustainability officer; will send the name to Mathilde.
- Begona: Confirmed she attended a related discussion previously and will share the slides from this session
- Paul: Emphasized the need for a clear direction and a definitive output, such as a document from the WG that could be published on the website.
- Saskia: Proposed formulating an action at the Executive Board level, create an overarching work plan to be ready for the next board meeting.

## **7. Updates (15:30–15:50)**

### **a. ESA**

In the next two weeks, ESA will advance work on the science program for the next three years, which will help define the way forward. NASA situation is a situation and that is part of the discussion.

There will be a meeting with the member states in December, after the ministerial council meeting.

### **b. ESO**

CTAO: Signing process for the road to the site has started (south); ERIC was established in October. First telescope should arrive at the site in 2026, hardware.

- 70% completion of ELT. Ongoing concerns about the observatory complex protection in Chile. The ministry of Science in Chile is going to do a recommendation of a norm to protect professional observatory cities.
- “Expanding Horizons” initiative discussed; Paul can contribute.

### **c. SKAO**

Thijs was not present during the meeting

### **d. Other**

During the meeting in Cork: A motion of concern regarding the USA situation was drafted by Chris and Saskia. ESO raised concerns, and Martin decided not to proceed with the motion.

## **8. Next Meeting (15:50–15:55)**

- Physical meeting in Lausanne planned for July
- Online meeting scheduled between 2–11 March

## **9. Any Other Business (15:55–16:00)**

No other business.

## **10. Closing (16:00)**

- Martin closed the meeting at 15:52.