COUNCIL

137th Meeting
Garching, 8 and 9 December 2015

Report from 97th OPC meeting

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Council is invited to take note of this document
1. **Introductory remarks**

At the deadline for P97 proposal submission, 2015 October 1st, 1020 valid observing proposals were received for the La Silla Paranal Observatory, including one joint *XMM-Newton*/VLT proposal.

Distribution per proposal type:
- Normal Programmes: 900 proposals
- Large Programmes: 22 proposals
- ToO Programmes: 48 proposals
- GTO Programmes: 44 proposals (including VST/OMEGACAM GTO)
- Calibration Programmes: 1 proposals
- Monitoring Programmes: 5 proposals

Distribution per site:
- Paranal only: 884 proposals
- La Silla only: 91 proposals
- Chajnantor only: 32 proposals
- Paranal and La Silla: 13 proposals
- Paranal and Chajnantor: 0 proposals

The ESO Observing Programmes Committee (OPC) met in the Commundo Conference Centre, Ismaning, from 17-19 November, to evaluate the observing programmes for Period 97 (March - September 2016). After an introductory all-hands meeting for all referees, the panels met on Tuesday and Wednesday for the scientific evaluation of the proposals.

The OPC proper meeting took place on the Thursday. The structure and process remained unchanged, and worked smoothly and efficiently.

The Commundo Conference centre will close down in December 2015. From P98 (May 2016) the OPC Panel meetings will be held in the Municon conference centre at Munich airport, while the OPC proper meeting will take place in the New Council Room at ESO HQE, in Garching.
2. Large Programmes

2.1. Concluded and Ongoing ESO Large Programmes

The OPC reviewed 17 progress reports from ongoing and recently completed Large Programmes (LPs). Each LP was assigned a primary referee, who presented the report to the OPC and flagged the compensatory time requests and/or any potential problems. Requests for compensation time were granted where a clear scientific justification and technical reason, e.g. equipment failure, were presented. All ongoing LPs were recommended for continuation.

2.2. New ESO Large Programmes

The OPC recommended 3 of the 22 submitted LP proposals for implementation. Two LPs were recommended in category A (Cosmology) – one with MUSE for 106 hours (0384 Fumagalli) and one with KMOS for 216 hours (0717 Cirasuolo). One LP was recommended in category C (ISM, Star Formation), with VISIR (0816 Lowry). This proposal was resubmitted upon request by the OPC to apply for the considerable amount of time lost back in Period 85 due to the non-availability of VISIR.

3. Calibration Programme

One Calibration Programme was submitted, for 22h on SHFI, with the aim of extending APEX calibration capabilities for heterodyne instruments.

The OPC recommended this programme for implementation, provided that the APEX instrument scientist examines best possible distribution of time allocation, potentially over several periods, to avoid affecting the execution of high-priority programmes.

4. Targets of Opportunity

48 ToO proposals were submitted, distributed in the scientific categories as follows: 7 for category A, none for category B, 8 for category C and 33 for category D.

The OPC took note of the results of the Panel discussions and recommended that 27 ToO proposals be considered for allocations of time. Typically, not all recommended ToO proposals can be scheduled due to the requirement that they have to fall in the A-rank class, which is only known at the end of the scheduling process.
5. **Public Spectroscopic Surveys Review (Miguel Mas Hesse)**

On behalf of the ESO Spectroscopic Survey Panel, M. Hesse presented the recommendations from the final review, which took place on 23 October 2015, of the public spectroscopic surveys, *Gaia*-ESO (PIs Gilmore and Randich) and PESSTO (PI Smartt).

These surveys have been operating since early 2012 on the VLT (FLAMES+UVES) and the NTT (SOFI+EFOSC), respectively. Both survey teams provided detailed reports. In addition, the PSSP requested supplementary information from *Gaia*-ESO about the impact of weather losses on their ability to produce a well-sampled legacy archive of open cluster measurements.

The PSSP was pleased with the progress on both surveys. Scheduling and observing have been proceeding smoothly, as has the timely provision of legacy-quality data to the ESO Archive through the Phase-3 system.

PSSP were mindful of the conflict between delivering public surveys of the highest quality and avoiding overly large time commitments in the face of other high-priority programmes. PSSP recommended that both PESSTO and *Gaia*-ESO proceed to their fifth year as planned. They argued that PESSTO should receive no compensation for time lost during the first four years. *Gaia*-ESO, on the other hand, should be compensated in full for technical and ToO losses and partially for weather losses, for a total of 40 additional nights, to be scheduled as soon as is feasible.

The OPC thanked M. Hesse for his presentation and endorsed the recommendation by the PSSP.

6. **Any other business**

B. Leibundgut informed the OPC that a workshop on the science and legacy value of the ESO Public Surveys and Large Programmes was held at ESO during 2015 October 5-9. This workshop featured scientific presentations from all Public Surveys, both imaging and spectroscopic, and a representative set of LPs that were completed since the 2008 Large Programme workshop, thus addressing the standing request by the OPC for an assessment of the scientific return of Large Programmes.

He also announced an article in the December issue of the ESO Messenger, summarizing the highlights of this workshop, and an article about the science return of the VLT (M. Sterzik et al.).

7. **OPC feedback**

Workload in the Panels

A steady increase of proposals in the category “Galaxies and Galactic Nuclei”, observed for several periods now, led to an unprecedentedly high workload in the B panels compared to the other categories. It was therefore agreed that OPO will ensure a reasonable balance of proposals in the four main scientific categories, probably via re-
distribution of some scientific sub-categories, though all feasible options will be explored. The result will be announced in due time in the internal scientific newsletter and in the Call for Proposals for P98, so that users are made aware of any changes well before proposal submission.

High rate of re-submissions

The OPC noted with some concern the high rate of re-submissions of proposals, particularly Large Programmes, and encouraged ESO to look into remedial measures. As a first step it was agreed that F. Patat would provide statistics to quantify the re-submission rate. The OPC Chair was of the opinion that very clear and specific OPC comments will help to avoid re-submission of practically unchanged proposals.

Large Programme status for GTOs

The OPC Chair suggested the introduction of a Large Programme status for large GTO proposals, a request that has been put forward several times by the GTO Consortia. R. Ivison commented that this is being considered as part of the imminent revision of general GTO implementation policies.

Joint Panel Meetings

Some OPC members stated that it might be useful to re-instate short joint meetings of the panel Chairs to discuss potential duplications, re-submissions, expertise issues, etc. E. Hoppe commented that this had existed in the past, and was abolished because the OPC had not found it useful.

8. Concluding remarks

R. Ivison thanked the OPC members and in particular A. Renzini, the departing OPC Chair for his excellent stewardship of ESO’s time allocation process. He also thanked M. Hesse for his clear presentation of the PSSP recommendations. Finally, he commended the OPO team for a very well organized process and meeting.

A. Renzini, the departing Chair, stated that he was very impressed with the organization of the OPC meetings and thanked the Observing Programmes Office. He thanked the OPC, in particular those members whose term came to an end, for the work performed throughout their terms of service.

Rob Ivison
ESO Director for Science

Ferdinando Patat
Head of the Observing Programmes Office

Alvio Renzini
Chair, ESO Observing Programmes Committee