EUROPEAN ORGANISATION FOR ASTRONOMICAL RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

Council
155th Meeting (remote)
1 and 2 December 2020

For Information

REPORT FROM SCIENTIFIC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
96th (extraordinary) Meeting (remote)
2 October 2020

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SCIENTIFIC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE #96

2 October 2020 Videoconference

Report and Recommendations from the 96th Extraordinary STC Meeting

Present: P. Callanan (vice Chair), J. Cenarro, V. Hill, T. Hovatta, M. Ireland (Observer), P. Jáchym, S. Kimeswenger, J. Liske, M. Marconi, R. McLure, D. Mourard (Chair), L. Pérez, G. Pietrzynski, H. Sana, S. Sousa, M. Vestergaard, P. van der Werf

Excused: K.K. Knudsen, F. Pepe

P107 Time Allocation
STC recognizes the importance of a specific procedure for P107 and thanks ESO for the very detailed analysis presented on Oct 2, 2020 during the STC#96 extraordinary meeting.

After the discussion and the internal exchanges that have followed, STC considers that the current proposition may cause a lot of confusion. As such, the call is risky in overloading ESO and the selection committee, and in not really capturing the major science opportunities which were at the core of the decision for this specific call. For example, excellent proposals with strong RA constraints, which face the risk of being delayed up to P109, will probably be submitted without the exact nature of exceptional proposals that this call is intended to capture. Moreover, the proposed plan will probably generate a large number of proposals that will be difficult to handle. STC appreciates the staggered approach but the 5 deadlines with a sliding scale of available time is overly complicated. It may have also the consequence of a poor global comparison of merits between the sub-periods: a rejected proposal in the first call could easily be more critical than the accepted ones in a later deadline. STC understands the difficulty of using the DDT channel because of the time cap and the very specific evaluation process of this channel. However, it should be noted that the DDT channel is already covering exceptional science topics and not only time-critical observations.

Therefore, STC recommends preparing an exceptional extension of the DDT channel allowing to allocate up to 15% of the available P107 time to permit a larger number than usual of hot and highly competitive scientific topics that require urgent observations. STC also recommends the DG to appoint external members to enlarge the DDT Committee for non-time critical observations in P107. STC recommends extending the time-cap for these observations to 20-25h.