

## **Astronomy representation in the decision-making bodies of the European Union**

Astronomy is now for a large part a “big science” for which considerable observational infrastructures are needed. These infrastructures are developed in collaborations involving many different states and serve a wide international community of astronomers. Further, large observational, experimental, theoretical and computational projects involve multi-national collaborations. In Europe decisions regarding astronomy are more and more taken within the structures of the European Union. It is therefore important that the astronomical community as a whole increases its presence and visibility within these structures.

The interplay between European Union and national policies is still very important in astronomy as in other domains. A collaboration between the European astronomical community on one side and the national communities on the other is therefore the proper approach to best build an efficient Europe-wide set of policies. In our field this translates in a coordination between the EAS and its affiliated societies. The presence of national societies of countries that are not members of the EU amongst the EAS affiliated societies and the fact that the EAS represents the whole European astronomical community ensures a certain degree of Europe-wide coordination.

In order to give life to these ideas the EAS and its affiliated societies decide to enter into a scheme by which a common strategy will be developed and efficiently represented in the EU decision-making bodies.

The following steps are undertaken in early 2015:

- 1) A small (up to 7 members) strategy group (in the form of a working group of the EAS) is established.
- 2) This group develops the points that need to be ported onto the European political scene in Brussels. Typical examples are ESA-EU relationship, or how to structure new large projects in Europe. The group is expected to meet few times per year and develop lobbying strategies for an efficient European astronomical policy and for its implementation.

This group will need access to and understanding of the astronomical policies, not only of the EU, but also in all European national communities. In order to establish this link:

- 3) National societies will nominate one official who will serve as national point of contact to the strategy group. It is expected that the colleagues accepting this mandate will be well informed of their national policies and of the aspirations of

the corresponding astronomical communities.

The strategies developed by this group must be carried out by the EAS as a whole as well as by its affiliated societies. To ensure this:

4) The reflections developed by the strategy group will be discussed yearly with all the affiliated societies at the business meetings of the EAS.

5) The strategy group reports to the EAS council who approves the strategy.

6) Efficient links with major European organisations must be established to ensure that the views of the astronomical community are as much as possible in line with their policies.

This strategy will be brought to the attention of the relevant EU authorities by a person who will receive a mandate from the EAS corresponding to a level of about 20% of a FTE. That person will serve as secretary of the strategy group.

The EAS council approved steps 1 to 6 above at its meeting in Rolle on February 5 2015.

At the business meeting with the affiliated national societies of the EAS on February 6 2015 also in Rolle, items 1-6 were approved.

The first chair of the strategy group is suggested by the EAS council and the affiliated societies present in Rolle to be Prof. T. Courvoisier, president of the EAS. Prof. M. Barstow, President of the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS, UK), will also be a member of the group. Further members will be nominated by the EAS council in consultation with the initiators of this project.

The EAS and its affiliated societies will support the funding of this initiative in a form to be defined. The EAS has already included some funding for this initiative in its 2016 budget. The RAS has accepted to underwrite possible missing funds during the initial 3-year period. This is gratefully acknowledged by the EAS council and the affiliated societies.

It is aimed to have an operational set up in the Summer of 2015.

This agreement is initially for 3 years. Experience will dictate how this scheme is to evolve.