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The Portuguese Astronomical Society

Presentation, challenges, solutions and other thoughts

André Moitinho - Rolle, Switzerland, Feb 1 2012

Overview

- ❖ 1991: 1st National Astronomy and Astrophysics Meeting
- Beginning of the 10 yr path to become a full ESO member
- ❖ 1999: Creation of the Portuguese Astronomical Society (SPA)
- 2000: ESO full member; Join ESA
- ❖ Now: 3 main Centres + 6 with ~140 people doing research related to A&A. Young community means almost all international.
- ❖ 88* SPA members. Most non members are new students, postdocs and foreigners. Also pure physicists. About 20 do not do research.

Activities - Highlights

- ❖ Annual National Meetings
- ❖ JENAM 2002
- ❖ Astronomy Olympics since 2004
- ❖ White Book (2005)
- ❖ National contact for A&A (the journal, 2006)
- ❖ IYA 2009 (started in 2006 ended in 2011!)
- ❖ JENAM/EWASS 2010
- ❖ ASTRONET (2010)
- ❖ TV Series (2011-2013)
- ❖ Input for Science and Education Policies, answering questions, mail lists...

Challenges: Resources

- ❖ **Funding:**
 - ❖ Annuities
 - ❖ Agencies (FCT, Ciência Viva) and Foundations (Gulbenkian)
- ❖ **Human resources:**
 - ❖ Directorate (3)
 - ❖ Activity based:
 - ❖ IYA: 3 + > 100
 - ❖ Olympics 2 + 3 +...
 - ❖ No permanent secretarial assistance. No way to get funding for that.

Lessons

- ❖ Some patterns emerge:
- ❖ **Funding**
 - ❖ Little money from fees and direct support from agencies
 - ❖ Reasonable amounts for Projects (IYA, Olympics, TV, etc)
- ❖ **Human Resources**
 - ❖ It is hard to find volunteers for activities **except** (the usual suspects or) if there is some public recognition (talks, newspaper, tv, radio) or payment.
 - ❖ Secretarial assistance only possible in well funded projects
- ❖ **Conclusion:** We must always have projects

Lessons II

- ❖ **Our strategy:**
- ❖ Empower the people but don't abandon them.
 - ❖ Do not override decisions
 - ❖ Provide help
- ❖ We hired "executives" (not pure secretaries) with experience in publishing and organisation of events.
- ❖ Stimulates pro-activeness and new ideas for funding.

- ❖ Identify a few needs of the community at large (not Centres) and try to solve them (A&A, ASTRONET, access to journals...) Roadmap.

Final challenge

- ❖ **The Question:**
- ❖ “Why should I belong to the Astronomical Society?” (which usually means: I don’t feel like paying the annual fee)
- ❖ For some, it’s the default thing to do.
- ❖ Usually, the answers evoke “collective good”, etc. Nothing convincing if you don’t feel like paying. Some privileges are expected.
- ❖ We have found a way to have things going and growing, but we still need to identify the kind of privileges we can afford to give.
This is one thing we’d much like learn from you and brainstorm here in Rolle.