Report on the virtual CTAC meeting April 25/26 2022

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Summary

The 2022B common call for the optical element of the Trans-National Access programme within the OPTICON-Radionet Pilot (ORP) opened in early February 2022 and closed at 23:59 UT on 28 February 2022. The call was published here: `https://www.orp-h2020.eu/optical-call-2022b`. Fifty-one (51) proposals were submitted. This was similar to the 2022A call (52 proposals). One (1) proposal was not discussed as they did not qualify on nationality grounds and had subsequently withdrawn. The remaining fifty (50) were all evaluated, discussed, and ranked.

As per usual, the demand for telescopes was not evenly spread. In contrast with previous semesters every telescope was asked for. In total, seven (7) telescopes were oversubscribed (out of the 13 telescopes participating), but none of them by more than a factor of 1.8 (see full list below). As per usual, the TNG, the NOT, and the AAT were oversubscribed. New oversubscribed telescopes were SALT and OHP. There were proposals in every science topic, however we were not able to grant time for at least 1 proposal in each science topic (one science topic saw no proposals granted).

The oversubscription, calculated in terms of funds, was about a factor of 2.5. This pressure factor is slightly lower than earlier semesters, but on-par with 2022A. There is a large spread between the different individual proposals in terms of the resources they are asking for which is fully expected and was within expectations.

Time could eventually be allocated for 26/50 proposals. The ranking cut-off was at a reasonable level and motivated by funding availability. The cutoff was clear in both the absolute and reweighted scores of the full CTAC panel with scores enough apart to clearly draw the line. The average score of the CTAC panel overall agreed with the average score of the external reviewers.

The CTAC wanted to make sure that the ratio of the approved and non-approved proposals for CEE and non-CEE countries was comparable without compromising the quality of the accepted proposals. This was now a lot better than previous semesters, however, a divide between the two sets of proposals remains present. The CTAC ensures detailed feedback is given to improve proposals.

Details

The CTAC-meeting to discuss the proposals for the semester 2022B was still held online, hosted from Edinburgh. The CTAC was complete with 7 members and consisted of Despina Hatzidimitriou (Athens), Renata Minkevičiūtė (Vilnius), Roser Pello (Marseille), Victor Béjar (Tenerife), Kari Nilsson (Turku), Leonardo Tartaglia (Padova), and Annelies Mortier (Cambridge, Chair). The optical TNA Work Package leader, John Davies (UKATC, Edinburgh) was in attendance to advise on technical issues and record the meeting outcomes but did not participate in the scientific discussions. This was the same group as last semester. Dan Dicken (UKATC, Edinburgh) will be replacing John Davies as Work Package Leader soon and was in attendance to listen in for most of the meeting. A picture of the team is included below.

One proposal had withdrawn before the meeting as they were flagged as not complying with the TNA rules. The PI and the telescope director were put into contact to discuss

their alternative options. All other proposals were discussed. The discussion was held per topic and following the preliminary ranking within a topic. Topics were done in opposite order as last semester. Overall, the evaluation of the proposals was smooth with roughly 9-10 minutes spent per proposal.

Table 1 illustrates the demand for each of the telescopes. Seven telescopes were oversubscribed. However, all proposals ranked in the top half received the appropriate telescope time. Two proposals near the cut-off received a reduced allocation for science reasons combined with funding availability. Out of all requested telescopes, observation time was awarded to use all telescopes with the exception of OHP.

Telescope	N_{prop}	Requested time	Available time	Oversubscription	$N_{success}$
NOT	15	16.8n	10n	1.7	8
SALT	7	113.5hr	100hr		4
TBL	1	0.2n	10n		6
OHP	3	18n	10n	1.8	5
CFHT	5	6.36n	4n	1.6	2
AAT	5	15.5n	10n	1.5	2
TCS	1	1.3n	14n		1
TNG	7	13.5n	10n	1.3	1
LT	5	32.5h	50h		2
LCO	6	202.8h	400h		2
REM	4	90h	300h		0
CAHA35	6	5.8n	10n		1
CAHA22	5	14n	10n	1.4	1
Aristarchos	1	0.1n	20n		1

Table 1: Statistics on the number of proposed/offered proposals and requested/available time per telescope. Note that some proposals asked for more than one telescope.

As in previous calls, the distribution of the proposals between the astrophysical topics was skewed towards exoplanet, stars and stellar populations and time domain science, as seen in Table 2. This is somewhat reflected in the skewed distribution of requested telescopes as some are more suited to study these topics. Relatively speaking, Stars and Stellar populations proposals grew while Time Domain and Exoplanet proposals slightly decreased. All other topics were generally similarly popular as usual.

The number of approved proposals ($26/50 = 52\%$) is better than the oversubscription in terms of the budget of 350 kEuro. For the science topics with many proposals, Exoplanets and Time Domain were generally more successful than SSP, with success rates varying between 37% and 67%. For other topics, we are very much inside low-number statistics. Not all topics were funded, with ISM/PNe not having a successful proposal.

Proposals were submitted with PIs from 15 different countries, of which 11 countries were

Topic	N_{prop}	$N_{success}$	Success rate
Solar System	1	1	100%
Exoplanets	9	6	67%
Stars and stellar population	19	7	37%
CSM and star formation	3	3	100%
ISM and Planetary Nebulae	2	0	0%
Low-z Universe	3	2	67%
High-z Universe	3	1	33%
Time Domain Astronomy	10	6	60%

Table 2: Statistics on the number of proposals requested/offered per science topic.

successful in getting time. The countries with no successful proposals only had 1-2 submitted proposals. As per usual, Germany and the UK were most active, with 19 submitted proposals, which is similar to previous semesters. Both countries also had a success rate exceeding the average success rate (80% and 67% respectively).

The CTAC continued to specifically motivate astronomers from CEE countries to apply, resulting in 15 submitted proposals (30%), which is better than the last call, but still low overall. Proposals from CEE countries had a success rate of 40% (6/15) while the non-CEE proposal success rate was 57%. While this is still unbalanced, there is a clear positive trend with respect to previous calls. The CTAC continues to look at ways to help adjust this, including detailed feedback to improve proposal writing.

What to expect for 2023A

There are substantial changes expected for the upcoming semester.

A new proposal tool (as part of the ORP) is in preparation, but may not be ready in time for 2023A.

At least three members are expected to leave the CTAC for the next semester, including the chair (Despina Hatzidimitriou, Renata Minkevičiūtė, and Annelies Mortier). A replacement for John Davies was hired, Dan Dicken. He attended this CTAC meeting and will be working on the hand-over in the coming months. Dan will work on finding suitable replacements guided by the remaining and leaving CTAC members.

Careful and detailed feedback to all proposers is being prepared and will be distributed by mid-May 2022. The next call will open by early August 2022. The location for the next CTAC meeting (late October 2022) is being discussed and will likely be at a CTAC member's home institution.