

Who is ASTRONET ?

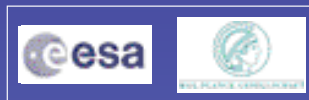
The signatories of the ASTRONET contract are the following organisations, which already represent about 80% of the total astronomical resources in Europe:

Institut National des Sciences de l'Univers du CNRS (CNRS/INSU, FR) ; Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF, DE) ; European Southern Observatory (ESO) ; Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica (INAF, IT) ; Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC, GB) ; Nordic Optical Telescope Scientific Association (NOTSA) ; Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (MEC, ES) ; Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO, NL) ; and Projektträger DESY (PT-DESY, DE).



Initially, the Associates are :

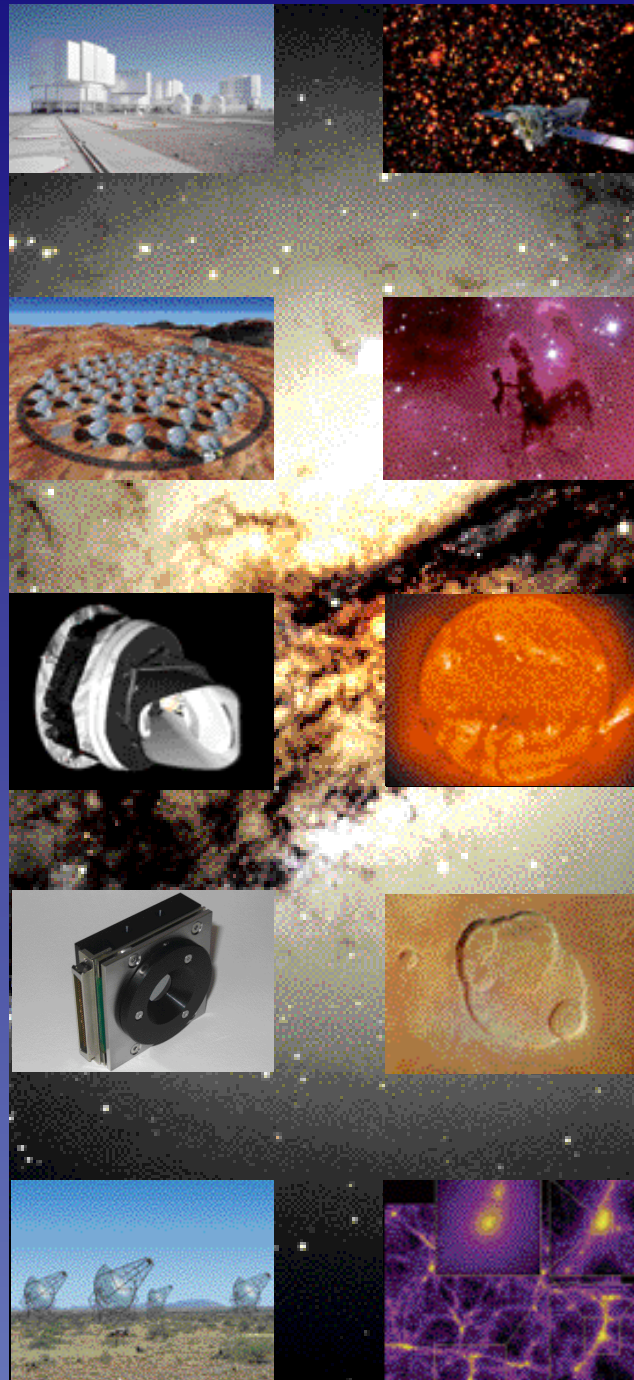
European Space Agency (ESA) ; Max Planck Gesellschaft (MPG, DE).



ASTRONET actively seeks to enlarge its membership to all interested organisations in Europe. Involvement in ASTRONET can take place at two levels, Participant and Associate. Participants are responsible for delivering the full ASTRONET Programme. Associates take part in the scientific work and some of the administrative activities, but are not themselves responsible for EC funding and associated reporting duties. Astronomical communities wanting to contribute to the scientific and technical discussions with ASTRONET support can do so as Forum Members, without formally joining as participants.

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SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area
ERA-Net Scheme



ASTRONET

Towards Strategic Planning
for
European Astronomy

<http://www.astronet-eu.org>

The objectives of ASTRONET

ASTRONET was created by a group of European funding agencies in order to establish a comprehensive long-term planning process for the development of European astronomy. The objective of this effort is to consolidate and reinforce the world-leading position that European astronomy has attained at the beginning of this 21st century.

The success of present-day European astronomy has been built by combining previously scattered resources into multilateral partnerships, the most important of which are ESO for ground-based optical astronomy and ESA for space astronomy. Developing this concept and its impact and expand it to all domains of astronomy and all of Europe requires a shared, comprehensive Science Vision and roadmap for future infrastructures in astronomy. In parallel, the barriers which impede coordinated joint projects among countries must be identified, and ways to overcome these barriers must be proposed and tested.

To do so, ASTRONET will cover all astrophysical objects from the Sun and Solar system to the global structure of the Universe, as well as every observing approach, in space and from the ground, and from radiation at any wavelength to astroparticles and gravitational waves. It will address the whole "food chain" from infrastructure and technology development to observation, including the Virtual Observatory, modelling, and theory. Equally importantly, ways to better coordinate the planning and execution of research programmes in astronomy among European countries will be explored and demonstrated in practice.

What is ASTRONET ?

Motivated by the need to bring European forces together for the development of astronomy at the European level, ASTRONET has been established as a four-year ERA-NET project under Framework Programme 6 (FP6) by funding agencies and ministries from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK, plus ESA, ESO and NOTSA.

The ASTRONET proposal was submitted to the European Commission (EC) in March 2005. The proposal was accepted, and the four-year ASTRONET programme started September 1st, 2005 with a total budget of 3.9 M€, including an EC contribution of 2.5 M€ and a total effort of some 25 person-years.

An important goal of ASTRONET is to enlarge its membership to all interested European funding agencies, who may join at a number of different levels of involvement. As part of this effort, a number of advisory panels are being established, whose membership should be representative of the whole European astronomical community.



Main milestones and deliverables

- ★ Finalising the list of ASTRONET participants (09/2006)
- ★ Symposium on "The scientific challenges of space and ground-based astronomy of the next 20 years" (12/2006)
- ★ Science Vision for European astronomy report (03/2007)
- ★ Report on the current organisation and funding of European astronomical research (07/2007)
- ★ Review symposium for the Roadmap for European Astronomy Infrastructures (03/2008)
- ★ Test call for proposals for a pan-European research project in astrophysics (07/2008)
- ★ Proposal for a long-term successor to ASTRONET, and Infrastructure Roadmap Report (09/2008)
- ★ Plan of action to increase the level of co-operation between agencies in Europe (11/2008)
- ★ Report on coordinated strategies for planning future projects and infrastructures (11/2009).

ASTRONET activities

The ASTRONET project covers 4 main activities, organized by Work Packages :

A Science Vision for European Astronomy : The goal of this activity is to prepare a Strategic Vision for the scientific development of European astronomy over the next 15-20 years. The Review will be organised by a Working Group with the active involvement of a wide European astronomical community. In parallel, a global census of European astronomical resources and national strategies will be prepared.

An Infrastructure Roadmap for European Astronomy : Based on the "Science Vision", a strategic plan will be prepared for the coordinated development of major astronomical research infrastructures in Europe. This will include the identification of key enabling technologies and initiate concrete mechanisms to implement the Roadmap.

Targeted Coordinated Actions : This activity will identify formal barriers to the further development of Europe-wide cooperation and initiate actions to strengthen astronomy in Europe through the development of coordinated evaluation procedures and eventually a common multi-agency research programme.

Networking : ASTRONET deals with the exchange of information between all relevant partners in European astronomical research. A prime goal is to establish regular coordination between programme managers throughout European astronomy. Two of the important tasks are to integrate new participants early in the life of ASTRONET, and to define mechanisms to initiated Europe-wide, cross disciplinary coordination on a permanent basis.