

## **AERAP Workshop establishes funding opportunities for 2014**

Brussels, November 8, 2013: The 3rd Workshop on the Implementation of the AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation was held on the November 4 and 5 in Brussels.

The workshop was a continuation of ideas discussed in past Implementation Workshops held in June (Brussels) and July (Cape Town). It focused on the first AERAP Implementation Plan which detailed the operational activities which are essential in implementing selected key actions identified in the AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation. The Framework Programme proposes a multitude of African-European radio astronomy projects.

Specifically, the workshop was essential in paving the way for the next steps for AERAP community for relevant funding opportunities which will become accessible in 2014 such as Horizon 2020 including Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Development Fund (EDF).

Participants were optimistic about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Implementation Workshop. Mr Van Ardenne, a former Research and Development Director at the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy (ASTRON) and subsequently leading its SKA office said, “We have seen a real evolution of AERAP since the [Written Declaration](#). The Implementation Workshops have been very effective in identifying clear funding sources and in solidifying the working programme”.

The AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation constitutes a comprehensive but focused agenda for African-European radio astronomy cooperation. It proposes several key actions (specific cooperation initiatives) under seven thematic priorities: research infrastructures; instrumentation; research and development; support for global projects; human capital development; ICT and Big Data; renewable energy for radio astronomy; astronomy as a tool for science education and public understanding. The overarching goal of the programme is to ensure a strategic focus as well as synergy in advancing African-European radio astronomy cooperation.

In the past AERAP has been recognized as a leader in promoting scientific partnerships between Africa and Europe, specifically for its contribution to leveraging research infrastructures for human capital and socioeconomic development.

Prof Patricia Whitelock, former Director of South African Astronomical Observatory, also highlighted SKA’s contributions to the greater population that go beyond radio astronomy at the workshop, “SKA goes way beyond radio astronomy in training students in science and providing skills such as problem solving skills which translate and can be used in other fields. SKA and AERAP help the general public in Africa by closing the increasingly widening digital divide.”

The creation of AERAP in 2012 as a bi-regional stakeholder platform was a direct response to the calls of the European Parliament, through the adoption of the Written Declaration 45/2011, and of the Heads of

State of the African Union, through their decision “Assembly/AU/Dec.407 CXVIII”, for radio astronomy to be a priority focus area for Africa—EU cooperation.

The overall goal of AERAP is to advance scientific discovery, improve knowledge and stimulate competitiveness across both continents.

The AERAP participants will start developing project proposals for various funding opportunities in different working groups in 2014.

### **Media Enquiries**

Jessica Hadjis

ISC Intelligence in Science

Email: [jessica.hadjis@iscintelligence.com](mailto:jessica.hadjis@iscintelligence.com)

Phone: +32 2 88 88 100

Mob: +32 487 163 107

### **Editor’s Note**

#### **The African-European Radio Astronomy Platform (AERAP)**

AERAP is a response to the calls of the European Parliament, through the adoption of the Written Declaration 45/2011, and of the Heads of State of the African Union, through their decision “Assembly/AU/Dec.407 CXVIII”, for radio astronomy to be a priority focus area for Africa—EU cooperation. AERAP is a new stakeholder forum of industry, academia and the public sector established to define and implement priorities for radio astronomy cooperation between Africa and Europe. The overall goals of the platform are to leverage radio astronomy, advance scientific discovery, improve knowledge transfer and stimulate competitiveness across both continents. The platform will also enable effective dialogue to build a shared vision for international cooperation in radio astronomy.

Further information on AERAP: [www.aerap.org](http://www.aerap.org)

#### **The Square Kilometre Array (SKA)**

SKA is a global science and engineering project led by the SKA Organisation, a not-for-profit company with its headquarters at Jodrell Bank Observatory, near Manchester, UK. The SKA will address fundamental unanswered questions about our Universe including how the first stars and galaxies

formed after the Big Bang, how galaxies have evolved since then, the role of magnetism in the cosmos, the nature of gravity, and the search for life beyond Earth.

Thousands of linked radio wave receptors will be located in Australia and in Southern Africa. Combining the signals from the antennas in each region will create a telescope with a collecting area equivalent to a dish with an area of about one square kilometre.

Members of the SKA Organisation are Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of South Africa, Sweden and United Kingdom. India is an associate member.

For further information: please contact William Garnier, Chief Communications Officer of the SKA Organisation ([w.garnier@skatelescope.org](mailto:w.garnier@skatelescope.org))

or visit the website of the SKA Organisation: [www.skatelescope.org](http://www.skatelescope.org)

### **VLBI network to be deployed across Africa**

An African radio telescope network would fill in a major gap in the global VLBI network and that is what South Africa and its SKA partner countries are working towards. Such a network will also boost engineering and science skills development across the continent.

There are at least 26 satellite ground segment dishes, possibly more, spread out over Africa which could become a part of this new VLBI network.

Further information: <http://www.ska.ac.za/newsletter/issues/14/12.php>