



## **Working Breakfast of the European Parliament's AERAP Group (18 June 2013)**

and

## **1<sup>st</sup> Workshop on the Implementation of the AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation (18/19 June 2013)**

### **Summary Report**

Several Members of the European Parliament, during a working breakfast on 18 June, expressed their support for the objectives of the AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation. Host of the event, Irish MEP Emer Costello, declared, "This is a very exciting project with enormous potential and it is important that Europe and the EU are at the heart of all this. This is a significant step towards developing closer EU-Africa relations." Italian MEP Vittorio Prodi expressed his excitement about the innovation potential of radio astronomy and the potential for synergies with other science and technology application areas such as satellite navigation. Emer Costello MEP and Spanish MEP Miguel Angel Martinez Martinez were awarded certificates of appreciation in recognition of their on-going engagement for AERAP. Martinez Martinez was a sponsor of the Written Declaration 45/2011 on science capacity building in Africa which led to the establishment of AERAP. Other MEPs present at the workshop included Antonio Fernando Correia de Campos (Portugal), Michael Gahler (Germany), Jan Mulder (Netherlands), Wim van de Camp (Netherlands) and Auke Zijlstra (Netherlands).

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Workshop on the Implementation of the AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation (18 and 19 June), the participants reviewed the key actions (cooperation initiatives) proposed for each thematic priority of the framework programme in order to evaluate how mature for implementation the actions are. The workshop also undertook an initial survey of potential participants in these actions.

Workshop participants identified two initiatives as potential flagship projects for AERAP. These are:

- Support for the establishment of an African VLBI Network (AVN) through education and training programmes for astronomers, engineers and technicians organised within the context of Africa-EU cooperation. Within the context of European support for the AVN, cooperation could also focus on areas such as capacity development for big data management and the development of renewable energy supply for AVN infrastructures.
- Development of a wide-band, mid-frequency aperture array demonstrator through African-European cooperation including scientific training which could support preparations for Africa's hosting of these components in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Square Kilometre Array.

Workshop participants felt that these potential projects offer rich potential for mutually beneficial Africa-EU cooperation both within the context of advancing scientific knowledge generation and supporting capacity building including research infrastructure development.

In addition to these two initiatives, the workshop participants also enriched and refined the content of other actions proposed in the AERAP Framework Programme. Some actions were merged in order to create greater efficiency and focus while some new proposals were added to fill gaps identified, e.g. training courses for staff managing research infrastructures. Overall, there was consensus that the current draft of the framework programme represents a comprehensive as well as focused agenda for cooperation.

The workshop also identified numerous possibilities for cooperation and synergies between AERAP and other initiatives; these include [RadioNet](#) (with regard to researcher and training), [EU-Hands on Universe](#) and [EU Universe Awareness](#) (with regard to the thematic priority “Astronomy as a tool for science education”). These links will be crucial for the success of AERAP since the platform aims at building on existing initiatives to advance African-European radio astronomy cooperation as efficiently as possible.

Comments made on the workshop on the AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation will now be integrated into a revised version of the framework programme. Similar additions will be made after the meeting in Cape Town (see below). The revised version will be circulated by the end of July to the AERAP community. A matrix to highlight the flagship projects and illustrate their connections with the key actions will be added. It should be emphasised that the AERAP Framework Programme will be a living document which will be constantly updated and revised to respond to new developments.

#### Next steps

A second workshop on the implementation of the AERAP Framework Programme for Cooperation will take place on 17 July in Cape Town, South Africa. The aim of this workshop will be to inform the African radio astronomy community about the outcomes of the Brussels workshop and to collect their input on the framework programme and the implementation of the proposed key actions.

A third implementation workshop is envisaged for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2013. At that time there will be greater clarity on the range of instruments which could support the implementation of the framework programme. It is proposed to organise this workshop in three parallel sessions, with one each focusing on the proposed flagship initiatives, AVN and the mid-frequency aperture array demonstrator, and a third session on projects implementing other key actions. It is hoped that several members of the African radio astronomy community will be able to participate in this meeting although a similar event will be organised in South Africa.

The proposed dates for this third workshop are:

- 24 and 25 September 2013
- 4 and 5 November 2013

No dates for October were proposed because we are aware of many other meetings planned for this month. Please indicate your availability for these dates until 19 July 2013 in the following doodle poll: <http://www.doodle.com/bpgppd83ahemdshs>