



OPTICON-Alliance news update October 2026

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ZOOM Call to update all on EC and EAF changes underway – Friday Oct 23 14:00
UK/15:00 CEST/16:00 Athens

Observing Calls for proposals

Our recent Call and Allocation process tested operation without funding. This was the first Call without EC-funded costs to telescopes or T&S support to observers. It was a big success, confirming the interest of the community of telescope operators in supporting excellent science and enhanced collaboration from the widest possible set of astronomers. See <https://opticon-alliance.eu/> for a report.

In the absence (see below) of EC support funds for TransNational Access, we will continue the OPTICON-Alliance Calls on a volunteer basis. Calls will follow standard semesters, February and August deadlines, with the next Call to open in January 2027. We will contact all facilities before then to identify the largest possible list of facilities who wish to be involved. Individuals able to help administer the Call and/or help to develop a Call management system do please contact us! The **BHTOM network of telescopes for time-domain observations** remains open at all times.

Changes to EC funding systems

The EC has supported OPTICON, its successors, and many other astronomy-related activities, for many years. The EC has now changed its eligibility for many Horizon Europe Calls. Rather than specific communities - e.g. optical/IR astronomy – proposals must now represent the ESFRI-defined domains. In our case there is a single domain covering all of astronomy, astroparticle physics and space sciences, a very large and diverse community. Moreover, in current Calls proposals must cover several domains. An INFRA-DEV (structuring, networking) proposal in which OPTICON-Alliance is included – PSENTRIC – covers 3 domains, all of Astronomy, Astroparticle Physics and Space Sciences; and Particle and Nuclear Physics; and Analytical Physical Sciences. This is a large community; there will be little resources for each part of it. Should it be approved we will have some support for BHTOM, and support for 3 OPTICON-Alliance meetings. Results are due this autumn. We thank Europlanet for substantial generous support in this.

The new EC approach requires us to coordinate with all our neighbour subjects. This is needed to prepare for forthcoming EC Calls, e.g. the HORIZON-INFRA-2027-SERV call, to manage the very new quite complex funding and partner model. But it is also a desirable way forward, encouraging community. The community response is the European Astrosciences Forum.

European Astrosciences Forum (EAF)

EAF is envisioned as an open, inclusive, and informal platform designed to bring together the diverse Astronomy, Astroparticle physics, and Space science (AAS) community across Europe. EAF serves as an overarching coordination structure that enables dialogue, cooperation, and alignment among the diverse actors in AAS, and is independent of single projects or scientific priority-setting bodies.

EAF is not a decision-making body and does not establish scientific priorities, allocate resources, or make binding decisions on behalf of participating organisations or communities. EAF does not aim to replace or duplicate existing structures, but to complement them. EAF may support the development of common positions on matters of shared interest. However, it does not constitute a representative body and does not speak on behalf of participating organisations unless explicitly mandated to do so through agreed processes.

EAF is open to European-level research infrastructures (including ERICs and IGOs), networks of research infrastructures, research-performing organisations, consortia of research institutions, funding agencies, and entities representing European scientific communities, such as professional societies and coordinating bodies.

Together with ESO, OPTICON-Alliance is the representative for Europe's small-medium telescopes. If you know of any potential members not yet listed on the web-site See <https://opticon-alliance.eu/> please encourage them to contact us. Every relevant facility is welcome.

Everything about the EC new community model and its funding implications is new, complex and unproven. The European Astrosciences Forum is under development. A first meeting of the partner organisations will happen on Oct 28/29. Prior to that we will have a zoom for all (potentially) interested OPTICON-Alliance members to update you on what (little) we know, and to collect your opinions. The link is below. Please pass it on to all who may be interested.

ZOOM CALL TO UPDATE ALL ON EC AND EAF CHANGES UNDERWAY
FRIDAY OCT 23 14:00 UK/15:00 CEST/16:00 ATHENS

Gerard Gilmore is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82412109186?pwd=8FITATDanO6OtGJf9FsOu0GkFm9DeO.1>

Meeting chat link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/jc/82412109186>

Meeting ID: 824 1210 9186

Passcode: 506925

We look forward to talking to you then, and will update regularly as situations clarify.

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