

To: astro-group
From: Greek National Committee for Astronomy <gnca@astro.noa.gr>
Subject: Newsletter No. 1
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachments:
In-Reply-To:
References:

GNCA Newsletter 1

Dear colleague,

I am pleased to inform you that the Greek National Committee for Astronomy (GNCA) would like to establish an active link with all greek astronomers worldwide and starts today the distribution of short Newsletters via e-mail.

In this first communication, I would like to draw your attention to the existence of the Committee's WWW site, at the URL:

<http://www.astro.noa.gr/gnca/ca-main.htm>

In this site, you can find useful information about the scope of the GNCA, news, reports, links etc. Your feedback on these pages, as well as suggestions for matters that may interest the greek astronomical community, are most welcome.

In addition, we would appreciate if you circulate this message to colleagues that have not received it, because we may not yet know their e-mail addresses.

On behalf of the GNCA

With best regards,

From: "Greek National Committee for Astronomy" <gnca@astro.noa.gr>
Reply-To: gnca@astro.noa.gr
Subject: Newsletter 2
To: All.Greek.Astronomers@titan.astro.noa.gr
X-Mailer: Diffondi COOL V2.1 (W95/NT) by Nicola Delfino
Date: Wed, 15 Apr 1998 17:27:05 +0200

GNCA Newsletter No. 2

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Greek National Committee for Astronomy, I would like to wish you and your families a very happy Easter!

In addition, you may find below a message from Prof. J. Ventura, announcing a meeting about the future development of Greek Astronomy. This is an event open to all astronomers. Please, notify us by e-mail if you intend to participate.

Finally, I take the opportunity to remind you that the elections for new Council of the Hellenic Astronomical Society (Hel.A.S.) are scheduled for the 2nd of June and all of us should support this important event.

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis

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PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Greek National Committee for Astronomy (GNCA) is happy to announce a two-day meeting, on the subject:

Astronomy 2000+
Greek Prospects

to be held at the Penteli Astronomical Station, National Observatory of Athens, on the 12 & 13th of November 1998.

This meeting will be a forum for discussing the areas favorable for the development of Greek Astronomy in the coming decades. We expect established Greek astronomers, from Greek institutions and from abroad, to participate and offer their perspectives. The GNCA has also set up an external advisory committee with the task of preparing a report on the prospects of Greek Astronomy during the coming decades in the context of European and international planning.

Members of this committee are also expected to participate in the meeting and discuss key points of their report.

Desirability versus cost of participation in major European or International Organizations is expected to be a central topic of the meeting, as well as specific proposals for new activities and astronomical infrastructure in Greece. Prospective participants should bear in mind that the meeting is devoted to planning and development strategies and should arrange their presentations accordingly. Questions to be addressed could include the following:

- present versus desired distribution of disciplines and activities
- future evolution of existing programs
- astronomical education and opportunities for young Greek astronomers

Thinking and planning for this meeting has been in the air for some time now and several of you have already sent me an initial response of interest and, occasionally, concrete ideas for the meeting. I wish

to thank you for your interest and to invite you now to join the efforts of the Scientific Committee, in order to ensure a stimulating

and successful event in November. Concerning your contributions to the meeting, I suggest that you discuss your ideas and proposals at a

local level before sending an abstract, at your earliest convenience and, in any case, before July 1st, 1998, to:

Greek National Committee for Astronomy
National Observatory of Athens,
P.O.Box 20048,
GR - 118 10 Athens

OR by e-mail : gnca@astro.noa.gr

With my best wishes,

Joseph Ventura

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From: "Greek National Committee for Astronomy" <gnca@astro.noa.gr>
Reply-To: gnca@astro.noa.gr
Subject: Newsletter 3
To: All.Greek.Astronomers@titan.astro.noa.gr
X-Mailer: Diffondi COOL V2.1 (W95/NT) by Nicola Delfino
Date: Tue, 14 Jul 1998 10:22:18 +0200

GNCA Newsletter No. 3 - July 1998

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank all who expressed their interest in the "Astronomy 2000+" Workshop. The process of organising this Workshop is well under way and you found the relevant details in the second announcement, circulated a few weeks ago. I take the opportunity to remind you that the dead-line for abstract submission expires on July 15th.

Since our last Newsletter, a few events are worth mentioning. First, I would like to congratulate the new President and members of the Council of the Hellenic Astronomical Society (Hel.A.S.), who were elected on June 2nd. It is fortunate that our Chairman, Dr. E. Kontizas, is in the new Council, so the GNCA expects a closer and more fruitful collaboration with Hel.A.S. On the other hand, I regret to inform you about a tragic loss of the astronomical community: Michael D. Papagiannis, Professor at the University of Boston and one of our most esteemed colleagues, passed away on July 11th. On behalf of the Committee, I express our sincere condolences to his family.

During occasional discussions with several colleagues, it became apparent that there is a shortage of proper information, in the Greek astronomical community, about the activities of the GNCA. Although the basic facts can be found in our WWW site (<http://www.astro.noa.gr/gnca/ca-main.htm>), I would like to inform you as follows:

The Greek National Committee for Astronomy (GNCA) was founded, by law, in 1957 as the official advisory panel of the Greek State for all matters relevant to Astronomical and Astrophysical research. The Committee is nominated by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) and has the following principal objectives:

1. To co-ordinate and promote the various astronomical activities in Greece, including research and education.
2. To act as the link between the Greek astronomical community and the International Astronomical Union (IAU), officially representing Greece in the General Assembly of the IAU and paying the relevant

subscription. In addition, the GNCA nominates the Greek delegate to the Board of Directors of "Astronomy and Astrophysics" and pays the relevant subscription.

3. To facilitate the advancement of international collaboration between Greek and foreign astronomers and research groups.

The GNCA provided financial support for several International Conferences and Workshops that took place in Greece (e.g. 2nd and 3rd Panhellenic Astronomy Conferences, WI.FI.SPE Conference etc.). In particular, the Committee supported young astronomers (nominated by the respective Organising Committees) who participated in the 2nd Panhellenic Astronomy Conference (1995) and the JENAM97. Furthermore, the GNCA supported the 1st and 2nd Summer Schools on Astrophysics (1996 & 1997) for high-school students. In addition, the GNCA recently paid 32,000 Swiss Francs for the Greek subscription to the International Astronomical Union, whereas the Greek subscription to the Astronomy & Astrophysics is 6,200 German Marks per annum.

The primary goal of the GNCA is to advise the authorities about the best strategic plan for the future advancement of Astronomy in Greece

. In order to prepare such a plan, the GNCA has set up an external advisory committee with the task to prepare a report on the prospects of Greek Astronomy during the coming decades in the context of European and international planning. In addition, it organises the International Workshop:

Astronomy 2000+

Greek prospects for the 21st century

During the Workshop, all Greek astronomers will have the chance to hear the report of the advisory committee, to present their own views about the future planning of Astronomy and to discuss with colleagues about the advancement of Astronomy in Greece. The conclusions of this meeting will form the basis for the final report of GNCA to the General Secretariat of Research & Technology.

I hope that the above information will help everyone to better understand the role of the GNCA in the astronomical activities in Greece.

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of the Newsletter

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END OF NEWSLETTER



Dear colleagues,

Since our last communication, in July, several interesting developments took place and I would like to inform you as follows:

1. Our Web site (<http://www.astro.noa.gr/gnca/ca-main.htm>) has been greatly revised. It contains now the full text of all Newsletters and new items, like IAU membership, Access to Large Facilities etc. Please, visit the site and have a look for yourselves!
2. The General Secretariat for Research and Technology decided recently to increase the budget of the Committee, in order to cover the costs involved in the annual contributions of Greece to the IAU and the 'Astronomy & Astrophysics', which are paid through the GNCA.
3. Colleagues wishing to apply for membership in the IAU should sent the relevant application to GNCA (see our Web site for details).
4. Preparations for the ASTRONOMY 2000+ Workshop are going according to schedule. More than sixty (60) participants have already registered to the Workshop. About 30 talks will be given, encompassing all major areas of astronomical / astrophysical activities.

If you are interested in attending the Workshop but have not registered yet, please DO so (using the on-line form), unless you do not want to have a chair and coffee!

It is expected that the Final Programme of the Workshop will be announced by the end of October. For up-to-date information, stay tuned to the Web site of the Workshop (<http://www.astro.noa.gr/~gr2000>)

For those of you that need help with accommodation in Athens during the Workshop, here are the addresses of two hotels that are close to the Penteli Astronomical Station:

(1) HOTEL KATERINA:

Mykonou 3 & Kolokotroni Street, KIFISIA

tel: 8018495, 8015218

prices: (a) 2-bed room (single occupancy) -> 21.000 drx
(incl.breakfast)

(b) 2-bed room (double occupancy) -> 24.500 drx

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(c) suite (single occupancy) -> 25.500 drx

(d) suite (double occupancy) -> 29.000 drx

(2) HOTEL AKRAION

Leoforos Pentelis 143,

tel: 8041084 or 6135025

prices: single room -> 9.000 drx (no breakfast)

double room -> 11.000 drx --"---

for breakfast: add 1.200 drx

The prices above (especially those of the KATERINA hotel) are special prices for the Observatory. Therefore, participants wanting to book a room should make clear to the hotel management that they are astronomers participating to the Workshop. For further information, please contact Dr. M. Plionis (NOA) at plionis@sapfo.astro.noa.gr

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of the Newsletter

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END OF NEWSLETTER
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Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to inform you that the ASTRONOMY 2000+ Workshop is ready to go as scheduled (12 and 13 November 1998, Penteli Astronomical Station, Athens)

The Programme of the Workshop is posted on the Web site (<http://www.astro.noa.gr/~gr2000>), along with other useful information. Please, have a look at the Programme, especially if you have submitted an oral presentation!

About 100 participants have registered to the Workshop and 38 oral presentations will be given, as well as 5 posters, encompassing all areas of astronomical and astrophysical activities (research, infrastructure, facilities, education, careers etc).

On behalf of the Organising Committees I would like to thank you for the support given to our common effort and to assure you that we look forward to seeing you at the Workshop.

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of the Newsletter

END OF NEWSLETTER

Dear colleagues,

As most of you know already, the ASTRONOMY 2000+ Workshop took place very successfully.

The need for such a meeting was evident to GNCA long ago and preliminary work on organising it was going on for the last two years. A major decision of the GNCA was the appointment of an External Advisory Committee with the task of reporting on the possible directions of Astronomy in Greece in the 21st century. In addition, great effort was put in order to contact all Greek astronomers and instill them with the idea of the meeting and our prospects from it.

You are aware of the progress towards the meeting from our previous Newsletters, so I do not need to repeat anything here. I will add only that the great attendance of the Workshop, especially the presence of many young colleagues from abroad, gave us all confidence to continue our efforts for the development of Greek astronomy.

Concluding this short note, I would like to inform you on the following:

1. The final number of participants, who were able to attend the Workshop, is 98 (not including a few that came without registering!)
2. As announced already, the GNCA decided to publish the Proceedings of the Workshop. Therefore, all participants who contributed to the Workshop, either with a talk or a poster, are kindly requested to send us the full text of their presentation, using the PASP Conference LATEX style (it will be circulated to all authors very soon). Authors are allowed up to 6 pages (including figures, if any) and the deadline for submission is DECEMBER 30, 1998. Please, send your camera-ready Postscript file to : gr2000@astro.noa.gr
3. Following this editorial, you can find messages about the Workshop from Dr. E. Kontizas, Chairman of GNCA, and from Prof. J. Ventura, Chairman of the S.O.C.

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of the Newsletter

A Message from Dr. E. Kontizas:

Now we are one!

This historic meeting has proved that "Greek astronomers can work together, can discuss together, can plan together, can dream together" as Prof. Y. Terzian said.

Many thanks to the External Advisory Committee for their excellent report and their contribution to unify Greek Astronomers.

Many thanks to all participants for their contributions.

Many thanks to all speakers for their visions and plans.

Many thanks to Prof. I. Ventura for his effort to bring the Greek astronomers together.

Many thanks to Prof. J. Seiradakis, President of HeL.A.S., for his contribution so that "ASTRONOMY 2000+" was a successful meeting.

Many thanks to Dr. H. Varvoglis, Secretary of HeL.A.S., for helping me solve some logistics problems.

Many thanks to Prof. L. Resvanis for his advice on how to negotiate with ESO. His experience from CERN was valuable.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Prof. L. Mavrides for his marvelous way to chair the panel discussion.

Finally, I was happy to realize that the Committee's recommendations covered entirely all the plans presented by the participants of the meeting. And here they are:

Recommendations presented by the External Advisory Committee

(quote)

Having examined the current status of astronomy in Greece and the international perspective on observational astronomy, the committee proposes two sets of recommendations, one that would involve new funding and one to strengthen the overall conduct of astronomical sciences in Greece.

Primary Recommendations Requiring Major Resources in Order of Priority:

- A. Join ESO
- B. Strengthen observational/instrumental astronomy
- C. Provide for merit based usage of any large national facilities and allocate resources for their use.
- D. Provide small optical telescopes.
- E. Join ESA

Recommendations to Strengthen the Conduct of Astronomical and Space Sciences:

1. Foster national and international collaboration
2. Enhance space-based science and technology programs
3. Broaden the scope of training graduate students to improve employment opportunities
4. Utilize existing astrophysical and space data
5. Maintain a strong theoretical astrophysics program
6. Make major upgrades in computing facilities
7. Strengthen the astronomical sciences at the major Greek universities

(end of quote)

Thanks to all of you

Dr. E. Kontizas
Chairman of G.N.C.A.

A message from Prof. J. Ventura:

Dear Colleagues,

On November 12 – 13 1998, Greek Astronomers met at Penteli, Athens to discuss, plan, and promote ideas for the strategic development of Astronomy in Greece in the coming decades.

Prompted by the phenomenal development in modern computers and space technology, at the dawn of the 21st century Astronomy is thought to have entered a new golden age. The international scene is teaming with plans for ever more powerful installations to be placed in five continents and in space, that can probe the universe farther away in space and farther back in time to its very beginning.

This meeting was very timely because of the clear need Greek astronomers face to reorganize their resources and priorities in the face of a very stringent economic environment and a tightening international competition. Devoted to strategy and planning, the meeting was also unique in that it was the first of its kind ever attempted in Greece. This may perhaps explain the unexpectedly massive participation it has attracted.

Both the wide participation and the high standard of the presentations and discussion attained have made this event very successful and welcome I think.

It has given us a sense of perspective, and also a message that Greek Astronomy is active and ambitious. Many of the proposals and

ideas, we have been exposed to, will still need time to ripen and take shape. I feel confident though that some of them we shall see transformed to reality in the coming years, and that they will leave their legacy onto our community.

Many people have contributed to this very positive outcome. It is a pleasure for me to thank the members of the External Advisory Committee, Drs. Athanasoula, Kafatos, Kazanas, Kouveliotou and Krimigis, who under the leadership of Dr. Y. Terzian have worked for several months to produce their report:

"Astronomy in Greece at the Gates of the 21st Century".

In itself an important document, this report has also formed the backbone of our meeting.

The members of the Scientific Organizing Committee deserve my sincere thanks; they have been instrumental in creating the program and in mobilizing the human resources. The members of the Local Organizing Committee have had a crucial impact in the outcome through their tireless efforts, their attendance to detail, and through their ideas and enthusiasm. Last, but not least, I wish to thank the session chairmen for their help, and the participants for their important contributions.

Our thanks are further extended to the General Secretariat of Research and Technology, under whose auspices this meeting was held, for their support and also for enabling two of its divisional directors to address us. Finally, we must thank our other sponsors for their generous support: the National Observatory of Athens, the University of Athens and the University of Crete.

The meeting was a success, yet no meeting on its own will solve problems. Our very success poses the challenge of what the next steps should be which will contribute to a more effective and successful international presence for Greek Astronomy. Let us plan, and debate, and propose for the improvement and development of Greek Astrophysics. Let us improve the level of communication and collaboration between our groups, and with astronomy centers abroad. In the words of Yervant Terzian, let us DREAM.

With my best wishes,

Joseph Ventura
Chairman of the S.O.C.

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END OF NEWSLETTER
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Dear colleague,

It is my pleasant duty to inform you that the Minister of Development Mr. E. Venizelos appointed new members of the Greek National Committee for Astronomy as follows:

Dr. E. Kontizas, Astronomical Institute, National Observatory of Athens

Dr. J. Ventura, University of Crete

Dr. R. Korakitis, National Technical University of Athens

Dr. M. Contadakis, University of Thessaloniki

Dr. G. Antonakopoulos, University of Patras

The new members will serve a two-year term, starting on June 21st, 1999.

I take the opportunity to remind you that you may submit an application for membership in the International Astronomical Union through the Web site of GNCA (<http://www.astro.noa.gr/gnca/ca-newsiau.htm>), where you can also find additional information. The deadline for such an application is December 31st, 1999. Early next year the Committee will send the proposals to the IAU and they will be approved during the XXIV General Assembly (9-16 August 2000).

I hope we meet you in Samos, for the 4th Astronomical Conference (16 - 18 September 1999).

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of the Newsletter

Subject: Newsletter No. 8
Date: Tue, 21 Dec 1999 14:21:57+0200
From: <gnca@astro.noa.gr>
To: <romylos@survey.ntua.gr>

Dear colleague,

Several days ago I sent out the Newsletter No. 8 of the Greek National Committee for Astronomy. Unfortunately, I found out that most people did not receive it. Therefore, I send it again and I apologize for the inconvenience if you have already got it before.

Dr. R. Korakitis

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GNCA Newsletter No. 8 - December 1999

Dear colleague,

One year after the memorable meeting "ASTRONOMY 2000+", I would like to inform you about the progress made in several key issues, regarding the prospects of Greek Astronomy, which were discussed and accepted unanimously during the meeting, where all Greek astronomers participated.

1) The Committee is actively investigating possible ways of Greece joining the ESO, which was the major recommendation of the Advisory Committee and the Workshop.

2) Another major recommendation was the support of new infrastructure, like the new 2.3-m telescope project of the National Observatory of Athens (NOA).

During the Workshop, a lengthy discussion was done and everybody wished that the telescope should be put at the best possible site in Greece. The project team of NOA worked hard throughout the year to examine characteristics of potential sites and focused their effort on the mountain top of Helmos, near Kalavryta in Northern Peloponnese. The new site, at an altitude of 2340 m, is quite dark, has good weather statistics and very good seeing. Due to the very nice characteristics of the new site, this proposal is enthusiastically supported by the telescope manufacturer (CARL ZEISS Jena).

Many of you had the chance to hear about this intention of NOA during the 4th Astronomical Conference in Samos (16 - 18 September 1999). In a special session of the Conference, the new telescope was officially given the name 'Aristarchos', paying tribute to the ancient Greek astronomer who put

forward the heliocentric theory.

Now, I am very pleased to inform you that the General Secretariat for Research and Technology accepted the proposal of NOA and decided to put the new telescope on Helmos. This is a major decision that satisfies the expectations of the whole astronomical community in the best possible way. Development of the necessary infrastructure and construction of the building will be done through an independent project, which was awarded 400 million drachmas.

Of course, a lot of work lies still ahead before the telescope becomes operational. The realization of this project principally depends on the active support of all astronomers and other key people in NOA, GSRT, Municipality of Kalavryta, public services, Ministries etc.

3) The Proceedings of the ASTRONOMY 2000+ Workshop are now being printed. Soon you will be able to access them electronically, through our Web site.

4) Finally, I would like to remind you that: colleagues wishing to apply for membership in the International Astronomical Union should act NOW. The deadline for such an application (normally 31st Dec. 1999) is extended to 15 Jan. 2000. Submission can be done through the Web site of GNCA (<http://www.astro.noa.gr/gnca/ca-newsiau.htm>) where you can also find additional information. Please, send your CV by e-mail (preferably to me at: romylos@survey.ntua.gr) before the mentioned deadline.

I take the opportunity to inform you that GNCA has just paid the annual contribution of Greece to the IAU for the year 1999, which is 11300 Swiss francs.

With best regards and wishes for Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Dr. R. Korakitis Editor of the Newsletter

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END OF NEWSLETTER
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Dear colleague,

Since our last issue, No. 8, a few noteworthy developments took place and I would like to draw your attention to them:

- 1) After a lengthy delay, due to the bureaucracy involved in managing the budget of GNCA, the Proceedings of the "ASTRONOMY 2000+" meeting were sent to the participants.
- 2) Several colleagues applied to the GNCA for membership in the International Astronomical Union. I am very pleased to inform you that all thirteen (13) applications have been passed to the IAU Secretariat and we expect that our colleagues will be officially admitted to the IAU during the 24th General Assembly in Manchester (August 2000).
- 3) During their latest meeting, the members of the Greek National Committee for Astronomy were informed about the progress of the construction of the new 2.3m Greek telescope ARISTARCHOS by the Principal Investigator of the project. Dr. E. Kontizas presented briefly the current status of the project: the primary mirror is entering the final stage of polishing, the structural parts are under construction in the Carl Zeiss Jena factory, where the large hall is ready for the assembly. All work progresses according to schedule and ARISTARCHOS is expected to see first light by the end of 2001. On the other hand, the members of GNCA expressed some concern about the rate of progress of the construction of the telescope tower, on top of mount Helmos. The tower and its associated infrastructure and equipment are separate projects, with Dr. P. Hantzios as Principal Investigator. The GNCA expressed its will to assist the NOA administration and personnel, in order to facilitate the overall co-ordination of the individual projects, thus ensuring the timely and proper realisation of the whole telescope project, which is of great national importance.
- 4) In the last few months, the members of the Greek National Committee for Astronomy, as well as the members of the Council of Hel.A.S., were officially informed about the status and the prospects of the Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics of the National Observatory of Athens. In particular, we learned with regret that the Institute is lacking an astronomer Director (since June 1999), the current staff (seven researchers only) is by far the smallest among the Institutes of NOA and the administration (both the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council of NOA) has no plans to increase it in the foreseeable future. These facts are worrisome, since they affect the future development of one of the principal astronomy research institutions in Greece and, in addition, they pose a threat to the full exploitation of the new telescope ARISTARCHOS. The GNCA is quite unhappy about this

situation and has already expressed its concerns to the General Secretary of Research and Technology.

5) Finally, I would like to remind you that the elections for the new Council of Hel.A.S. will take place on June 16th, in the premises of the Section of Astronomy, Astrophysics & Mechanics of the University of Athens.

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of the Newsletter

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END OF NEWSLETTER
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Dear colleague,

The Greek National Committee for Astronomy is very happy to inform the astronomical community that, during the 24th General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union in Manchester (August 2000), thirteen Greek colleagues were admitted by the Executive Committee of the IAU, advised by the Nominating Committee (GNCA), as new members of IAU. This brings the total number of the Greek IAU members to 110.

The new Greek IAU members are (in alphabetical order):

ANASTASIADIS Anastasios
BOUMIS Panayotis
CHARMANDARIS Vassilis
CHATZICHRISTOU Eleni
DAGLIS Ioannis
GEORGANTOPOULOS Ioannis
GONTIKAKIS Constantin
KALVOURIDIS Tilemahos
PATSIIS Panos
PETKAKI Panagiota
POLATIDIS Antonios
POLYGIANNAKIS John
XANTHOPOULOS Emily

On behalf of the GNCA, I express our sincere congratulations to the new IAU members and wish them a happy life and a successful career in Astronomy!

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of the Newsletter

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END OF NEWSLETTER
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Dear colleague,

As the second millennium draws to a close in a few days, I would like to summarise the most important activities of the Greek National Committee for Astronomy during the last two years.

1) Membership of Greece in international organisations

* The Greek contribution to "Astronomy & Astrophysics", for the years 1996 to 2000, was paid at last, after long and tedious efforts. The total amount paid to A&A was 30200 DM (about 5.2M Drachmas).

* The Greek contribution to the International Astronomical Union for the year 2000 was also paid (12160 SF or about 2.8M Drachmas).

* During the 24th General Assembly of IAU in Manchester this summer, thirteen (13) Greek astronomers were officially admitted as new members of IAU, bringing the total number of Greek IAU members to 102.

* In the same GA of IAU, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was admitted as an Associate Member of IAU with the name "FYROM", as is officially recognised by the United Nations. I would like to emphasise that our neighbours had applied for admission to the IAU at the previous GA in Kyoto (1997) with the name "Republic of Macedonia". The present decision of IAU justifies the position held in Kyoto by our National Representative Dr. E. Kontizas.

2) The new Hellenic Telescope "ARISTARCHOS"

During the meeting "ASTRONOMY 2000+" (November 1998) there was considerable discussion about the best site for the installation of the new 2.3m telescope "ARISTARCHOS" of the National Observatory of Athens. As you might remember, the GNCA was instructed to supervise the necessary search for a site better than Kryonerion. During 1999, several observing campaigns were carried out by NOA personnel at the top of mount Helmos, near Kalavryta. These observations verified that this site, originally proposed by Dr. D. Sinachopoulos of NOA, is quite dark, has very good seeing conditions and is the best feasible choice for the installation of "ARISTARCHOS". The GNCA forwarded these conclusions and was very pleased to see that the General Secretariat for Research & Technology accepted this recommendation. The GNCA regrets, however, that the Institute of Astronomy & Astrophysics of NOA (still lacking an astronomer Director for 18 months) did not continue the testing of the site in 2000.

3) Prospects of Greek Membership in ESA and ESO

* The prospect of Greece joining the European Space Agency (ESA) is considered by the GSRT through the Committee for Space Research and Technology. Although the GNCA was not invited in all relevant discussions, our Chairman Dr. E. Kontizas sent appropriate letters,

emphasising the importance of such a move for the Greek astronomical community.

* The prospect of Greece joining the European Southern Observatory (ESO) was the primary recommendation of the "ASTRONOMY 2000+" meeting. The GNCA advanced this recommendation further and our Chairman explains the current status of the matter in a message that follows this Newsletter.

Finally, on behalf of the GNCA I send you my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a very happy and fruitful New Year 2001, the first of the 3rd millennium!

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF GNCA

WHY GREECE SHOULD JOIN ESO

In many developing countries, the significant investment in education is not bearing the desired fruits. This is closely associated with the fact that participation in advanced science functions efficiently in the industrialised world only. Consequently, investment in education often results only in the creation of a consumer market, while a professional, intellectually identifiable and academically oriented, cadre of scientists is necessary for sustainable development. It is clear that there exists a strong need for a fruitful interplay between the academic and the commercial sector, which should not be the only driving force.

Greece is currently enjoying unprecedented economic growth. The big challenge for Greece is to sustain this growth by increasing expenditure, both by government and by industry, on R&D. Greece is a small economy on the EU scale and one cannot expect it to become world leader in research. On the other hand, Greeks have already demonstrated that they can develop expertise in a number of key areas. In the global research market of today, it is unlikely that we will achieve anything in isolation, so we see our membership in international research organisations as crucial to the policy of growing our R&D base.

The Greek domestic research effort is one of the weakest in Europe: the Gross Expenditure for R&D in Greece is estimated to be less than 0,5% of the GDP. The technological development is further hampered by the small contribution of business firms to the domestic gross expenditure: only 20%-25% of the total amount comes from business expenditure. This is due to the strategic orientation of the firms, their size and their capital structure. Consequently, the public research institutes are isolated from their socio-economic environment, making the linkage between academia and the productive

sector more difficult than elsewhere in Europe.

The European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), the European Southern Observatory (ESO) and the European Space Agency (ESA) are Europe's leading physics research organisations. In particular, ESO is a world leading research centre, which successfully competes with USA and Japan. These two countries, with tradition in high tech, are willing to collaborate with ESO for new projects.

ESO's main mission, laid down in the 1962 convention, is to provide state-of-the-art research facilities to European astronomers and astrophysicists, allowing them to conduct front-line science in the best conditions. Whilst La Silla remains one of the scientifically most productive observatories in the world, the most prominent new facility is the Very Large Telescope Array (VLT) at the Paranal Observatory. The implementation of the VLT interferometer (VLTI) will enhance the capabilities of this unique facility even further.

At the beginning of the 3rd millennium, European astronomy is facing a future full of challenges and opportunities. Among the new projects is the Atacama Large Millimetre Array (ALMA), based on intercontinental collaboration. In fact, the ALMA may develop into the first true "world facility" in astronomy. Another project is the 100-m class "Overwhelmingly Large Telescope" (OWL).

ESO is an intergovernmental organisation supported by Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. Portugal will join ESO on Jan. 1st 2001, while several other countries (most notably the UK) have expressed a strong interest in joining ESO as well.

The case of Portugal is particularly interesting, since this country has many similarities with Greece. In 1990, Portugal and ESO signed a Co-operation Agreement, which allowed Portuguese astronomers access to ESO facilities. At that time, there was only a handful of professional Portuguese astronomers. An Advisory Body was set up to monitor the development of Portuguese astronomy and its interaction with ESO. Over the years, an increasing number of measures to strengthen the Portuguese astronomy were funded. Now, ten years later, the Portuguese astronomical community has increased many-fold and is the youngest in Europe. The access to ESO facilities has proven to be a great incentive to the Portuguese scientists.

The case of UK is different. Initially, UK decided not to participate in the establishment of ESO because it had its own facilities in the Southern Hemisphere. But now ESO has developed into a major astronomical organisation, so joining ESO was considered a top priority for UK astronomy in the recent Long Term Science Review. Under current proposals, the UK will become a member of ESO in 2002, at a cost of £12M per year (about 6.7 billion drachmas) plus a joining fee of around £70M (about 39 billion drachmas) to be paid within the next 10-15 years.

The issue of Greece joining ESO is a very important subject. Greece

must pursue the path to join ESO in order to develop observational and instrumental astronomy at an international level and broaden the training of students and post-doctoral researchers.

At present, the key element in an overall strategy for modernising Greek astronomy is the installation of the new 2.3m telescope "ARISTARCHOS", planned in 1997. The new telescope, at an internationally competitive site like Helmos, should be the proper vehicle for developing both observing and instrumental skills that will enable Greek astronomers to take full advantage of ESO membership.

Last year the GNCA discussed the prospect of Greece joining ESO with the appropriate people in GSRT. Our proposal met a positive attitude, due to the pro-European policy of the Greek Government. Pursuing this path, the GNCA initiated a meeting in Garching, the headquarters of ESO, in order to discuss the prospect of Greece joining ESO. Present in this meeting, which took place on 3rd November 2000, were the Chairman of GNCA, Dr. E. Kontizas, and Professors M. Kontadakis and J. Ventura. ESO was represented by its Director, Dr. Catherine Cesarsky, and by Nobert Konig, Head of Administration and Richard West, Head of Public Relations.

The importance and strength of the astronomical community in Greece particularly impressed the ESO officials. They were also impressed by our plans to strengthen astronomy in Greece, as exposed in the report: "Astronomy in Greece at the Gates of the 21st Century".

Both delegations concluded that the step of Greece joining ESO would be very beneficial, both for ESO and for Greece. It would demonstrate the commitment of Greece to European scientific and technological development and would provide the Greek scientific community and industry with access to technologies that are recognised worldwide. It would also enable Greece to participate actively in future developments in optical and radio astronomy, such as the building of new instruments, whereas Greek astronomers and engineers would join ESO staff.

As to the financial implications, the hypothetical present share of Greece in the regular contributions to the ESO budget would be about 2.3 percent. For a total contribution of 76M EURO (the level of the 2001 budget) this would mean about 1.7M EURO per year (about 600M Drachmas). In addition, a joining fee would have to be negotiated. Following traditional calculation methods, a total amount of about 10M EURO (about 3.5 billion Drachmas) has to be paid over a certain number of years (10 or more).

I would like to stress that Greece is currently paying 5.2M EURO as annual contribution to CERN, which is 3 times the expected annual contribution to ESO.

Summary of benefits for Greece joining ESO:

ESO is the world-leading organisation in astronomy. Participation of

Greece in ESO will steer mobility for staff members and young researchers and will bring them in active contact with their colleagues in other ESO member states. In addition, access to large facilities will provide a source of technical know-how, which can then be transferred to Greece. In this way, Greek R&D efforts will be much more productive and at a cost which is much less than current expenditure (e.g. for CERN). After all, Astronomy was born in Greece, so why should we be behind Portugal?

Dr. E. Kontizas
Chairman of GNCA

END OF NEWSLETTER

Dear colleague,

I would like to draw your attention to the following developments that took place since our last Newsletter:

1) On 5 & 6 March, the Workshop "New Co-operation Agreement between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the European Space Agency for Peaceful Purposes - Opportunities", organized by the General Secretariat of Research and Technology, was held in Athens. It is worth noting that, thanks to the efforts of GNCA, the space sciences are specifically mentioned in the areas of co-operation as follows (article 2, paragraph 2):

(Quote)

(a) Space Science, in particular space astronomy and astrophysics, solar system exploration and solar-terrestrial physics;

(End of quote)

About 30 colleagues participated in the Working Group devoted to Space Sciences and had a friendly and fruitful discussion, moderated by Prof. Em. Sarris (Un. of Xanthi) and Dr. H. Olthof (Head of ESA Space Science Division). At the end, a resolution was unanimously approved, the main points of which are:

- the experience of the Greek scientific community encompasses all areas of research at ESA Space Science Division, namely:

Astrophysics, Solar Physics & Solar-Terrestrial relations, Planetary Physics and Solar System exploration.

- Greek participation in ESA missions could involve, principally: software development for data simulation and analysis, exploitation of data from space science missions, development of instrumentation (e.g. detectors and data manipulation systems).

During the closing session of the Workshop, the Minister of Development, Prof. N. Christodoulakis, announced his intention to start formal negotiations about full Greek membership in ESA next autumn.

The GNCA hails this prospect and hopes that the negotiations about Greece joining ESO, which were initiated and put on firm ground by the GNCA and are now transferred to the GSRT, will be further developed as well.

2) On 2 April, the designated Electoral Committee proposed Prof. Christos Goudis (Un. of Patras) as the new Director of the Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics of the National Observatory of Athens. The GNCA greets this proposal and is very pleased that the Institute, which lacked proper leadership for almost two years, will have, at long last, an astronomer Director. We congratulate Prof. Goudis for his election and wish him Good Luck in his new position.

3) Progress of the 2.3m telescope project: In our previous Newsletters we informed you about the progress of this project and

expressed our concern about the construction of the telescope tower. We regret to say that our fears were justified and, as it seems, there will probably be a delay in the installation of the new telescope at Helmos. This is evident from the following facts:

- As stated in the official WWW site of the project (<http://www.astro.noa.gr/ngt-2.3m/ngt-reports.htm>) installation of telescope on site (i.e. Helmos) should be done by 31st July 2001 and final acceptance on site by 30th September 2001.
- Construction of the tower has not yet started at Helmos.
- As we are officially informed by Dr. G. Drakatos, representative of the researchers of the National Observatory of Athens in the Board of Directors of NOA, the following item was discussed during the last meeting of the Board (11 April 2001):

(Quote)

9. 0 Genikos (Deniozos) den ypegraphe tin enarksi tis anagersis tou ktiriou sto Xelmo (thewrontas oti i symbassi ypegrafei kathysterimena). Etsi oi diadikassies arxizoun pali.

(End of quote)

(Please, excuse the Latin Greek above but I quoted the message SIC) I leave any comments to you.

With best regards,

Dr. R. Korakitis
Editor of Newsletter
