

THE EUROPLANET RI NATIONAL NODES NETWORK

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The Europlanet RI contract

From January 2009, Europlanet (the European Planetology Network) will enter a new, ambitious phase under Framework 7 of the European Commission. The Europlanet project is the initiative of a group of European scientists that worked on the Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn and Titan. In the initial project, funded under Framework 6 of the European Commission from 2005-2008, Europlanet provided a network for European planetary scientists that enhanced the community's ability to define key science goals, exchange ideas and personnel, and build a prototype interactive database.

In its new phase, Europlanet will use Framework 7's Research Infrastructure programme to provide trans-national access to its leading research facilities and organise highly focused joint research activities, while maintaining the momentum of the networking activities developed under Framework 6. The Europlanet Research Infrastructure is a large and complex project involving 27 participants and 74 associates from 20 European countries, Brazil, Japan, the USA and the Russian Federation. It will supply access to 20 different laboratory facilities, six field sites and access to the world's largest data bank and modelling consortia in planetary science, creating a European structure greater than the sum of national and local activities and facilities.

The outreach activities within EUROPLANET RI

From the beginning, Europlanet identified outreach as a vital component of the Framework 6 project. In its first three years, Europlanet carried out a range of outreach activities based on bringing existing resources to a wider European audience and using national contact points to carry

out Europe-wide outreach projects. These activities included the creation of the Europlanet outreach website (www.europlanet-eu.org), multilingual DVDs, astronomy-inspired recipes, bestpractice guides for outreach, and a competition for children, artists and amateur astronomers with participation from eight European countries.

In addition, Europlanet worked to raise the profile of European planetary science through the local, national and worldwide media. Press activities were focused on the annual European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC), which attracts around 450 professional and academic scientists from around the world.

Under Framework 7, Europlanet will build on these activities to provide a dynamic network of people engaged in planetary science outreach across Europe. Underpinned by a network of national nodes in each Europlanet country, Europlanet's NA3 outreach activity will provide multilingual information and resources demonstrating European involvement in planetary science. It will develop a forum for the development of new outreach ideas and sharing best practice through outreach sessions at the annual EPSC meeting and through a dedicated section of the Outreach Website.

To further stimulate Europe's planetary science outreach programme, a small number of highlyfocused projects will be supported through the Outreach Innovation Laboratory (OIL). The Outreach Innovation Laboratory has a small amount of funding for outreach activities in planetary science. There will be an annual call for ideas, which will be issued in September at the EPSC with a submission deadline in January. Proposals will be judged at the OSC annual meeting in March. There is a total budget of 40

000 Euros and there will be a budget of 15 000 Euros for the first call issued at EPSC 2009.

In addition, an annual prize will be established to recognise the contribution and efforts of outreach providers. The annual prize is intended to recognise the achievements of outreach providers in planetary science in Europe and to raise the profile of outreach as an activity within the scientific community. The winner will be invited to the EPSC to attend an award ceremony and share Best Practice techniques with the outreach community. The total prize budget is 15 000 Euros, so the annual prize will be 4 000 or 4 500 Euros (TBC).

These initiatives will assist outreach providers in sharing the excitement of planetary science, engaging in dialogue with European public and, crucially, the younger generation who must be encouraged, for the sake of future security of the EU economy, to pursue careers in science and technology.

Europlanet RI will have a dedicated European Planetary Media Centre (EPMC), which will aim to Europeanise planetary and space science media communications, and to bring them down to a national and local level. The EPMC will support the European planetary community in drafting and distributing press releases on important results. It will also act as a focal point for putting journalists and broadcasters in touch with local planetary scientists, who can provide comment and give a regional viewpoint on planetary science stories (even if they are not directly involved in the story) thus giving a local dimension that will make stories more immediately relevant to the public.

In addition, the EPMC will work to engage industrial and commercial partners and disseminate the dynamism and excitement of the field to governments and other policy forming stakeholders.

Purpose of the National Nodes

A national node is the contact point for all outreach activities related to Europlanet in their country. Their role is to respond to queries from the general public about planetary science in their

country and be aware of outreach and media opportunities for planetary science in their country and be proactive in offering support from Europlanet. In addition, the nodes are responsible for translating, expanding and maintaining their national page on the Europlanet outreach website.

Nodes should participate in regular teleconferences with the other national outreach representatives and the Europlanet outreach team. The teleconferences provide a forum for updating the outreach network on activities in their country, sharing ideas, experiences and best practice techniques, as well as discussing ways of promoting the outreach activities of Europlanet, including the EPMC, the OIL funding and the award scheme.

Together with the EPMC, nodes will develop links with their national media to promote planetary science and will assemble a comprehensive list of experts who are able to comment on stories. Nodes will also help to identify scientists from their country who feel that they might benefit from the media training offered by Europlanet.

This poster will present the currently established networks of nodes. It will detail the various resources available in terms of outreach activities in each country, the capacities and facilities in planetary science present in each country, and the press and media that offer to reach the large public through mass media communication.