

**The First Meeting of the Sub-Regional European Astronomical Committee
within the framework of the UNESCO-ROSTE funded Project
ENHANCING ASTRONOMICAL RESEARCH AND OBSERVATION
IN SEE AND UKRAINE
Bucharest, Romania, 7–8 May 2004**

Participants:

Bulgaria: Dr. Renada Konstantinova-Antova, Dr. Lubomir Iliev (Institute of Astronomy of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia)

Romania: Dr. Magda Stavinschi, Dr. Vasile Mioc (Astronomical Institute of the Romanian Academy – AIRA, Bucharest)

Serbia and Montenegro: Dr. Gojko Djurasevi, Dr. Oliver Vince (Astronomical Observatory of Belgrade)

Ukraine: Dr. Yuri Protsyuk (Main Astronomical Observatory, Nikolaev)

Invited participants:

Prof. Alexander Boksenberg (UNESCO-ROSTE)

Prof. Helen Rovithis-Livaniou (University of Athens, Greece)

Dr. Alexandru Dumitrescu, Dr. Petre Popescu (chiefs of the two departments of AIRA, Bucharest)

Opening:

- M. Stavinschi (Director of AIRA and President of the Committee): introduction of participants and aims of the meeting;

- A. Boksenberg (Counselor for UNESCO-ROSTE): recommendations as regards the integration of the present cooperation in European programs, as well as the role of the astronomical education.

First Session:

Introduction to the situation of astronomy in the participant countries (present status and perspectives): Romania (V. Mioc), Bulgaria (R. Konstantinova-Antova), Ukraine (Yu. Protsyuk), Serbia and Montenegro (O. Vince).

The presentations pointed out huge difficulties faced by the astronomy of participant countries. Within this context, the message sent by Dr. Bohdan Hnatyk, Director of the Astronomical Observatory of the National University "Taras Shevchenko" of Kiev, Ukraine, emphasized the dramatic situation of this institution. It was read the message of Dr. Leonid Shulman (Main Astronomical Observatory NAS of Ukraine, with his points of view concerning the Scientific Committee.

Second Session:

Discussion of the provisional **Action Plan** of the Committee

1. Organization of sub-regional scientific workshops with the goals:

- to adopt the status report;
- to discuss possibilities for further activities;
- to discuss possible sources of funding of these activities.

2. Search for and identification of solutions concerning the astronomical training of young researchers and their stability via:

- definition of problems;
- identification of causes;
- identification of solutions;
- elaboration of practical proposals
- submission of proposals to the decision factors.

3. Elaboration of joint programs (bi-lateral, etc.) between working groups of participant research institutions:

- identification of joint research areas;
- nomination of participants to each working group;

- elaboration of concrete research programs and projects
- 4. Identification of ways and means for exchange of experience and sharing of research infrastructure:
 - inventory of the common interest fields that need exchange of experience;
 - inventory of the existing infrastructure;
 - concrete proposals for exchange of experience and sharing of research infrastructure.
- 5. Identification of projects of cooperation and large-scale projects to be submitted to important donor sources for the next future:
 - identification of projects;
 - identification of donors;
 - elaboration of projects and submission to donors.

The discussion revealed many necessities as regards:

- cooperation in a very large area, to have as many participants as possible;
- a large sub-regional cooperation that will include bi-lateral cooperation;
- participation attempts in European programs: FP6, FP7, COST Action 724, EUROPLANET, etc. (e.g. "Astronomy and World Heritage");
- attempts to sustain mobility and scientific passports for the young researchers;
- access to state-of-the-art information (via free access to on-line publications for astronomical institutions of the participant countries that have weak possibilities to subscribe);
- dedicated observation instruments (especially as regards small-sized telescopes), to appreciably increase their efficiency;
- substantiation of proposals concerning ground-based contributions to astrometry.

Third Session:

- Introduction and discussion about the main field of research in AIRA (variable stars, solar physics, astrometry), with the contribution of all participants as regards possible ways of cooperation.
- Stage of every involved country concerning the preparation of Venus transit (8 June 2004).
- Draft of program for the Second Meeting of the Committee (October, Bucharest, Romania), joint with the workshop "*Astrometry with Small Telescopes*". (Within this context, a proposal sent by L. Shulman – Main Astronomical Observatory of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev – concerning the inclusion of physics of the Solar system bodies in the topic list was also presented.)

General proposals:

- getting of free of charge access to on-line journals;
- getting of larger bandwidth for Internet access;
- a new workstation for the Romanian computing system;
- students' training to the 60-cm telescope of the Rozhen Observatory, Bulgaria;
- summer schools for young researchers from the whole sub-region;
- set up of a network of instruments supported by increased facilities as regards communication and computers (within this context, a proposal sent by B. Hnatyk concerning an international network of TV observation stations for occultations was also presented).

Conclusions:

- a proposal for getting EU funding for a EU-NonEU countries cooperation in astronomy is vital;
- the proposal has to bring convincing arguments as regards: (a) scientific capacity; (b) cooperation; (c) results;

- UNESCO-ROSTE will support such a proposal (given its catalytic and EU-program-initiation functions) to the European Science Foundation;
- UNESCO-ROSTE funds can financially support the accepted project for a while.

As **final conclusions**, two general needs were emphasized:

- going deeper into the bi-lateral and general cooperation of the actual participant countries;
- enlargement of cooperation (at sub-regional or higher level).

The participants have to discuss in their home institutions the above points of view to improve the action plan and the astronomical activity in the region.