

Minutes contact person meetings, Tuesday October 10
and the final discussion at the midterm meeting on
Thursday October 12, 2006, Napoli, Italy.

Participants:

Besides the contact persons, the ER's and ESR's were invited as well.

Ioannis Bakas (Patras), Jose Barbon (Madrid), Marco Baumgardt (Zürich), Eric Bergshoeff (Groningen), Matthias Blau (Neuchâtel), Ilka Brunner (Zürich), Anna Ceresole (U. Piemonte Or.), Sophie de Buyl (IHES), Bernard de Wit (Utrecht), Eugen Diaconu (Craiova), Paolo Di Vecchia (NORDITA), M. P. Garcia del Moral (Torino), Luciano Girardello (Milano Bicocca), Joaquim Gomis (Barcelona), Marc Henneaux (ULB), Roberto Iengo (SISSA), Costas Kounnas (ENS-Paris), Alberto Lerda (Alessandria), Maria Lledo (Valencia & representing Barcelona), Yolanda Lozano (Oviedo), Dieter Lüst (coordinator, München, chairs second meeting), Carlo Maccaferri (VU Brussel), Emil Nissimov (Sofia), Niels Obers (Copenhagen), Thomas Ortin (Madrid), Silvia Penati (Milano Bicocca), Marios Petropoulos (Ecole polytechnique), Roberto Pettorino (Napoli), Franco Pezzella (Napoli), Alfonso Ramallo (Santiago), Diederik Roest (Barcelona), Alexander Sevrin (secretary, VU Brussels), Christof Sieg (Milano), Laura Tamassia (Leuven), Stefan Theissen (AEI Potsdam), Larus Thorlacius (Iceland), Toine Van Proeyen (Leuven, chairs first meeting), Jun-Bao Wu (Trieste),

Most absent contact persons apologized.

CAVEAT: whenever information on various activities (e.g. schools, workshops, ...) is distributed among contact persons, the contact person is responsible that this information is spread among the members in his or her group! Apparently this does not always happen.

1 Preparation of midterm meeting

The program of the midterm is presented. The morning – which is centered around the presentation of the ER's and ESR's – is open to everyone. The afternoon – which includes network presentations by Dieter, Daniela, Elias, Toine, Anna and Kelly followed by a general discussion – is closed.

2 Budget, financial declarations, forms

The financial situation is as follows (all amounts are given in kilo euro).

- Items A-E (exclusively for ER and ESR!!!), 2051,3 foreseen and 17,9 used after the first year.
- Item F (training and transfer of knowledge), 628,4 foreseen and 88,9 used after the first year.
- Item G (management: secretary, auditing, ...), 114 foreseen and 15,4 spent after the first year.
- Item H (overhead), 267,9 foreseen and 10,3 spent after first year.
- Total: 3061,8 foreseen and 132,5 used after the first year.

Note: the low declaration of expenses after the first year is understandable as the hirings only started after that year (currently we spent *all* the ER months).

Important: the declaration this year will happen online. Every contact person will have to fill in his or her own form directly online. After that it will be revised by Dieter. Upon receiving the green light from him, you print it, sign it and send it back to Dieter (this roundabout way is still needed as digital signatures have no legal standing in the whole of the EC yet). All necessary information will be sent by Dieter by the end of October¹. The deadline will be around the end of November.

Note: the time of the next payment is announced to be within two months of receiving the final declaration (they need time for auditing etc.). However be warned, in the past the EC typically made its payments only after 12 months instead of the suggested 2...

¹In particular, this will include the necessary password to enter *SESAM*, the online declaration facility. If a financial officer usually makes the declaration form, you should pass the password to him or her.

3 Announcement of positions (ER, ESR)

3.1 ESR

We remind everyone that we have almost no rules for the hiring of ESR researchers (predocs). However, the EC rules must still be followed (some of the more relevant ones: the candidate should be of a nationality different from the host institute. He or she should not have spent more than a year in the country of the host institute. The candidate should have received the highest university degree preceding the PhD within the past four years before hiring. He or she should preferably be a national of one of the EC countries.). You can find a summary of the eligibility requirements in the file “Main parts of the contract” on the network web page. After selecting an ESR, always send name, age, nationality and period of hiring to Dieter.

Note that you can commit ESR months in “quanta” of three months. So 3, 6, 9 or 12 month contracts are possible.

Important: while 128 ESR months were foreseen in the contract, up till now only 24 were spent (12 in Zürich and 12 in Brussels)! So two years are left to spend the remaining 104 months. Please note that spending *all* the months is a contractual obligation. Put differently, when your university signed the contract, they committed themselves to spend the allotted number of months. Not spending them by the end of the contract amounts to a breach of the contract which is sanctioned by an overall budget reduction, a fact which can have grave consequences for the node(s) involved. *If you have been awarded ESR months and you have problems with spending them, please let Dieter know NOW!* There might be two ways out:

- The easy way: a redistribution of ESR months (while keeping them as ESR) among the nodes is possible up to a maximum of 35 % of the total number of months. In our case this means that a maximum of 44 months can be redistributed.
- The hard way: a (limited) number of ESR months could be converted to ER months. This requires a revision of the contract which is a non-trivial procedure. However, the move of NORDITA from Copenhagen to Stockholm will already require a revision of the contract before the end of the current years, so this modification might be included at the same time.

It is clear that both ways require (very) quick action, so if you feel concerned with this problem, contact Dieter *immediately*. On a short term, the available positions will be advertised on the web page. Please contact Dieter and signal him particular details (e.g. you only want to hire people for periods of 6 months, ...).

3.2 ER

Toine signals that *all* ER months have been committed now. So the next round of hirings will only involve non-network positions. If you want your institution to figure on the list of potential hosts, communicate this to Toine *now*. Munich, Utrecht, Neuchatel, Ecole Polytechnique, Leuven and Brussels want to be mentioned on the hirings webpage (in meanwhile Toine got news from more nodes that they want to be on the list). Note that you can still pass your name even if you are not yet 100 % sure that you will really have one or more positions.

Just as last year, we will need (probably about 10 as each application should be reviewed by at least two readers) readers for the applications. We need volunteers. As information, last year we had the following readers: Belluci, Bergshoeff, Blau, Denef, Fré, Nekrasov, Obers, Stelle, Penati, Petropoulos, Vandoren, Van Hove. Toine will contact people for this task.

As was decided during the CERN school we will have the meeting on the postdocs before christmas this year. It will actually take place in Leuven from 14 through 15 December 2006.

A few remarks expressed during the discussion:

- The application page should make it very clear that if you apply via the webpage, no further (paper) applications are needed for these places.
- The nodes involved should still advertise their positions and point to the application web page.
- At present there is no list of the post-docs currently employed by the network. Dieter will take care that such a list will be added.

4 Meetings and schools

4.1 The present meeting

The Napoli meeting is very well organized and the scientific program is excellent. The contact people congratulate the local organizers. The feelings about the parallel sessions are mixed. Half of those present seem to think that there are way too many talks while the other half points out that that leaves more freedom of choice. No conclusion for future meetings is reached.

4.2 The next school

The next school takes place at CERN from January 15 through January 19 2007. The scientific committee of the school is composed by J. Barbon, S. Ferrara, A. Sevrin, K. Stelle, S. Theisen, A. Uranga and A. Van Proeyen. The topics and speakers (as far as known) are:

- Strings and QCD: Mateos confirmed
- LHC pheno for stringers: Lykken confirmed
- (Non-geometrical) flux compactifications: Wecht confirmed
- Dynamical susy breaking: speaker not known for sure yet.
- String cosmology: speaker not known for sure yet.

4.3 The next workshop

The next workshop will be held in Valencia in October 2007, perhaps a week earlier than the present one.

5 The midterm meeting on Thursday October 12

Many more contact persons were present than at the contact persons meeting on October 10.

5.1 Discussion

Some of the remarks by Dr. Erno Vandeweert:

- The young researchers are generally very happy. The only worry they seem to have is that positions within the various nodes of the network are usually for 2 years instead of 3.
- The recruitment procedure used in our network is remarkable and will be advertised to other networks.
- As the network is very large, the administrative overhead is quite considerable as well. Dr. Vandeweert urges all contact persons to promptly and fully answer any requests for information by Dieter.
- If for any reason the bank account of your university has changed (as happened recently in many French places), please communicate this to Dieter immediately.
- The declaration form C has been replaced by SESAM, an online declaration facility. Details were already discussed under section 2.
- This year the declaration should come with a completed audit form (covering the two initial years of our contract) as well. This is technical but very important, so you should request assistance from your local administration. Errors made here by a *single* node will considerably slow down the next payment to *all* nodes.
- Note that item E on the declaration can only be used for expenses by ER's or ESR's. Expenses by other scientists in a node fall under item F in the cost declaration.
- Whenever hiring an ER or ESR, do never forget to complete a *declaration of conformity* and send it immediately to Dieter. A template for this can be found in the section for contact persons on our website.
- Changes to contract. NORDITA move needs a revision. If other changes are needed, do it simultaneously! If (limited) shift from ESR to ER can be motivated, then it should be done at the same moment (see the discussion under section 3.1)!!

- Remark from the audience: now that we have a “tracking system” for the people employed by the network, it would be very interesting to see which fraction of the people we hired end up as faculty, which fraction eventually quits physics and where they went to.
- A remark from the audience to Dr. Vandeweert: it would be very helpful if the decisions concerning individual MC fellowships would be taken earlier (say around January). Dr. Vandeweert would signal this concern to the administration but warns that changes are not very likely to happen.

5.2 FP7: Building a Europe of Knowledge (2007-2013)

- Motivation = Lisbon: R&D expenditure has to grow with at least 50 % in order to catch up with the USA and Japan.
- This time the program will run over 7 years.
- While there is a substantial increase in the budget there is an even more substantial increase in the number of countries which participate...
- Just as was the case for FP6 the bulk of FP7 will go to what we consider to be applied or even industrial research. Fundamental science as we see it gets only a minor place.
- The new program will have four main subsections:
 1. *Cooperation*: collaborative research (9 vertical themes in which we do not fit).
 2. *Ideas*: frontier research, it is not yet fully clear how this will be filled in. Though chances are low that it will be useful to us, we should keep an eye on it.
 3. *People*: the analogue of the present Marie Curie actions. This is where we fit in.
 4. *Capacities*: large research facilities, not relevant to us.
- Some issues regarding the *people* action:

- There will again be individual fellowships, in- and outgoing fellowships and reintegration grants. The action will again be open to non EU individuals up to a maximum of approximately 30% of the allocated budget.
 - Cofinancing of fellowships given by regional or national institutions will be possible. The negotiations concerning this topic are going on right now. If you think that your favorite regional or national funding agency might be interested in this, then it might be a good idea to check whether they are aware of this.
 - The *people* program gets 7,129 billion euros out of the 72,726 billion euros for FP7 (compare this to the 4,727 billion euros the MC actions get out of the 50,521 billion euros allocated to FP6).
 - Hiring: only researchers with a maximum of up to 5 years of scientific training after their highest university degree leading to a PhD can be hired! This means that if a person finished his PhD in 3 years, you can hire him after his PhD as a post-doc for two more years, if he did his PhD in 4 years, you can hire him immediately after his PhD for one more year as a post-doc (so you will need other funding sources for additional years). You can also hire a freshly starting PhD student for 4 years... The distinction between ER and ESR will disappear in FP7.
- Talk to your local government: they have influence on the final picture!!! Your local funding agencies as well do have influence.
 - Women: no separate actions will be taken but integrated measures will be imposed, one expects an overall 40% (at least) participation of women to FP7. There will be strong promotion, no positive discrimination. Career breaks will be supported and other family friendly measures will be implemented.

For further questions you can contact our scientific officer Dr. Erno Vandeweert at Erno.Vandeweert@ec.europa.eu.