WP1: Management of Consortium

Introduction

NEXPReS is comprised of 15 partners from 11 countries coming from the astronomy, computing and NREN communities. The partners are now familiar with one another not only because of the project (and its predecessor EXPReS), but because the radio astronomy community has worked together for years to help push the overall science infrastructure forward. The community has grown over recent years to expand from only radio astronomers and now includes networking organizations and computational centers.

Participating Partners

JIVE is the sole participant in WP1.

Progress: Consortium Overview

The consortium and overall project structure is defined in the Description of Work; there are no deviations from the original construction. When visualized, a few features of the consortium become more obvious. The breakdown of the partner participation for the project as whole is shown in the below table. Partners who are leading work packages are highlighted in blue and bold; participation in a work package is shown by the number of the work package.

#	Name	Country	Type	Participating in work package #							
1	JIVE	EU	Coordinator	**1**	2	3	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	8
2	ASTRON	NL	Astronomy						6		8
3	INAF	IT	Astronomy								8
4	MPG	DE	Astronomy					5			
5	UMAN	UK	Astronomy						6		8
6	OSO	SE	Astronomy						6	7	8
7	VENT	LV	Astronomy							7	
8	FG-IGN	ES	Astronomy			**3**					
9	NORDUNet	DK	NREN						6		
10	SURFnet	NL	NREN						6		
11	PSNC	PL	NREN/Computation							7	8
12	DANTE	UK	NREN		**2**				6		
13	AALTO	FI	Astronomy					5			**8**
14	TUM	DE	Astronomy					5			
15	CSIRO	AU	Astronomy						6		

As you can see, the first four work packages are lightly populated as is expected for networking and management work packages. The other work packages have larger groups, with WP6 and WP8 being the largest. From a participant perspective, one can see how the NREN and astronomy partners aggregate. JIVE is represented in all of the work packages as expected for the coordinating organization.

Project Board, Management Team

The NEXPReS Board is made up of one representative from each partner organization. A mailing list was established which also includes proxies (if requested by the partner) and support staff to ensure effective communication. The first Board Meeting was held in Manchester on 20 September 2010. The meeting minutes are available via the project wiki.

The Management Team consists of the work package leaders along with the Project Coordinator and Project Assistant. The Management Team worked closely together during the construction of the project proposal and the mailing list and discussions transitioned immediately once the project was initiated. In addition to regular email contact, the Management Team has held several in-person meetings and tele-cons. The in-person meetings have been schedule to coincide with other project meetings (e.g., the Board Meeting, e-VLBI/SKA meeting in Aveiro).

Project Communication, Website, Online Materials

NEXPReS quickly set up a project web site and wiki (online, dynamic, editable repository that is viewable by the public). Almost all actions are announced, posted and archived to the site. You can visit the project website at <http://www.nexpres.eu/> or the project wiki at <http://www.jive.nl/nexpres/doku.php?id=nexpres:project>. Additional detail about the online presence is available in the WP4 section of this report.

Interim Reports to the Commission

In addition to the formal Period Reports, NEXPReS provides the commission with interim reports. Early in the project, NEXPReS and the Commission agreed that quarterly interim reports would be appropriate. Note that during the first quarter, reports were provided on a monthly basis; after the first quarter, the reports are provided every three months.

NEXPReS has provided these reports to the commission directly, and they are also available on the project wiki at <http://www.jive.nl/nexpres/doku.php?id=nexpres:nexpres_wp1>.

Deliverables and Milestones

Table of completed deliverables during period 1:

D#	Title	Partner	Due (month)	Status
D1.01	Appoint Programme Manager	1	1	4
D1.02	Appoint Project Assistant	1	1	4
D1.03	Form Board (protected due to email addresses)	1	1	4

D1.04	Create Project contact lists (multiple lists collected on that page)	1	1	4
D1.06	Form Management Team	1	1	4
D1.07	Convene Advisory Board	1	3	4
D1.08	Convene Management Team	1	3	4

A brief summary of the deliverables:

D1.1 Appoint Programme Manager- T. Charles Yun was selected for the project and began work immediately.

D1.2 Appoint Project Assistant- Yvonne Kool was selected as project assistant and began work immediately.

D1.3 Form Board- The NEXPReS Board was formed from a representative of each partner. See Deliverable 1.7 for additional details.

D1.4 Create contact lists- The project has created a set of mailing lists which are used for project internal and external communications. To prevent spam, the membership of lists are not made public. The lists are:

- activity- work package leaders
- announcement- general announcement list
- board- board members and their support staff (to ensure that information is received in case board members are not in email contact)
- financials- finance officers those in the accounting process
- PR Officers- public relations and communication (this includes individuals who are not part of the project)
- staff- staff list for project-internal use
- WP#- work package specific lists, for work package-internal use

D1.6 Form Management Team- the Management Team was formed based on the activity leaders and support staff. Minutes from meetings are available on the wiki.

D1.7 Convene Advisory Board- The Board had their first meeting on 20 September 2010 in Manchester. Ralph Spencer was selected as chairman with Norbert Meyer selected as Vice-Chairman. Minutes are available on the project wiki.

D1.8 Convene Management Team- The management team was formed and formal meetings are documented via minutes on the project wiki.

Table of completed milestones during period 1:

M#	Name	Expected (month)	Verification
M1.01	Prepare Period 1 Report to EC	11	D1.09

The delivery of the period reports signals the completion of the milestones for this project.

Timeline and Planning

At the moment, WP1 has two outstanding deliverables: the Consortium Agreement and the Period Report.

The Consortium Agreement is being discussed actively. After initial discussion, the DESCA template was adopted. However some aspects of the template have required required repeated rounds of fine-tuning. Because each revision requires the input from the legal department of all partners, progress is slow. As we now have 13 of the 15 partners agreeing on the text, we hope that the remaining issue can be resolved by the next Board meeting. We will keep the Commission informed of progress on this item.

The period report can be considered to be late, but the delivery date should really have been listed as the date that the document was due. During the construction of the project, it was deemed more obvious to have the period report due date set at the end of the period as opposed to 60 days after. The delivery of this report signals the completion of the deliverable.

The remaining deliverables all deal with the periodic reports for the project and we expect to deliver them as listed.

Resources

JIVE had both managerial and support staff begin at the outset of the project as expected. We do not see any deviation from the originally planned effort levels.

Resource Distribution

From the project point of view, JIVE is heavily represented. This is to be expected from JIVE's status as a consortium representing the VLBI community. In this regard, JIVE's participation in all of the work packages is proof that JIVE is following its mandate to support the development of the VLBI community. The following figure provides an overview of the resources distributed during pre-financing and the Proposed P1 distribution. Note that there are several partners who are by design not receiving any funds from the project.

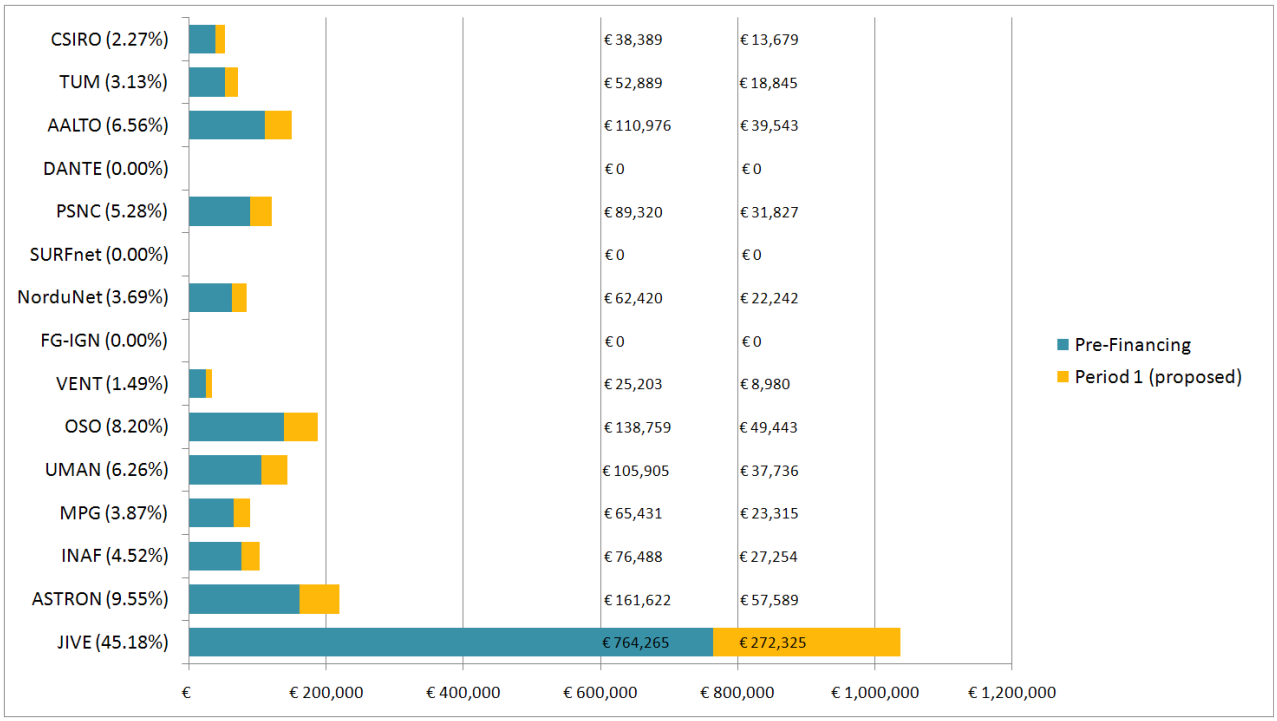

Figure: Breakdown of finances, by partner

For each of the partners, manpower is the primary cost. Several of the partners have had a slow start with new hires. The financial effect of this slow start will be better understood in the next period. Discussions on the movement of effort and funds will be discussed in the next Board meeting. The respective work package reports indicate the extent to which slow starts will impact their efforts.

Overall, the project is moving along well. However, it should be noted that the project deliverables are heavily weighted towards the end of the project; many of the deliverables due during Period 1 were for the networking and management activities. The figure below shows the quick falloff in the networking and management work package deliverables. Also note that WP3 and WP6 did not have deliverables due at all during the first period.

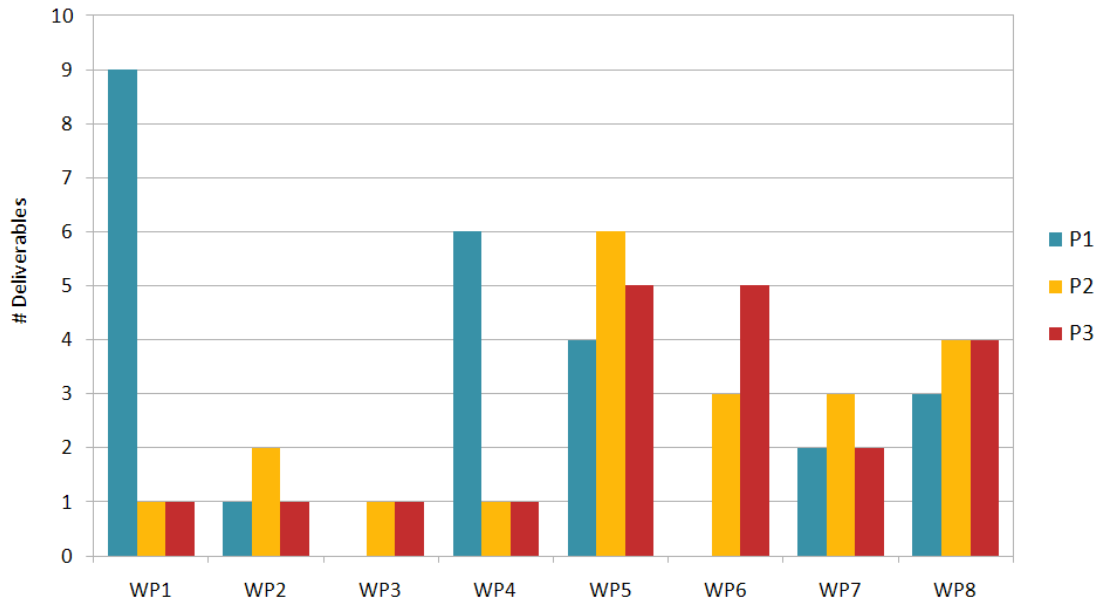

Figure: Number of deliverables per work package per period

The project as a whole is making good progress and while there are some slight modifications to delivery dates, none of these are seen as problematic to the overall success of the project.

Resource Consumption

As reported in this document, the project is progressing with some minor deviations. The deliverables are one way to measure progress, with resource consumption being another. The table below shows each of the partners, their Total Requested EC Contribution, the P1 Requested Contribution (data available as of mid-August), and the percentage that the P1 request represents compared to the total.

#	name	Total Req EC Contrib (EUR)	P1 Req EC Contrib (EUR)	% total
1	JIVE	€ 1,581,240	€ 433,956	27.44%
2	ASTRON	€ 334,390	€ 7,687	2.30%
3	INAF	€ 158,250	€ 152,868	96.60%
4	MPG	€ 135,375	€ 54,628	40.35%
5	UMAN	€ 219,113	€ 21,093	9.63%
6	OSO	€ 287,088	€ 69,618	24.25%
7	VENT	€ 52,144	n/a	n/a
8	FG-IGN	€ 0	€ 0	100%

9	NORDUNet	€ 129,145	€ 8,019	6.21%
10	SURFnet	€ 0	€ 0	100%
11	PSNC	€ 184,800	€ 68,314	36.97%
12	DANTE	€ 0	€ 0	100%
13	AALTO	€ 229,605	€ 92,730	40.39%
14	TUM	€ 109,425	€ 30,945	28.28%
15	CSIRO	€ 79,425	n/a	n/a
Total		€ 3,500,000		

As NEXPReS is heavily weighted to P2 and P3, one should not expect to see an even one-third consumption rate at the end of P1. Looking at the table in a bit more detail, we can identify some patterns that help explain the numbers.

First, remove the three partners FG-IGN, SURFnet and DANTE as they request 0 EUR from their participation in the project.

The next group of six partners are those who are fairly close to the one-third consumption rate. Partners JIVE, MPG, OSO, PSNC, AALTO and TUM all participate in WP5 and WP7. These two work packages had effort and deliverables due during the first period. Those activities have been making progress and it makes sense that the partners associated with these work packages have begun expending effort on the project.

The group of partners who are consuming noticeably low levels of resources are: ASTRON, UMAN and NORDUNET. These partners participate only work packages 6 and 8. These are the work packages that are most heavily weighted to the end of the project. It is understandable that these work packages are consuming at a lower rate. Work packages 6 and 8 have both indicated that applied effort will increase in the next period and consumption will increase.

The project office will monitor the effort applied to work packages 6 and 8 along with the respective work package leaders to ensure that sufficient effort is applied not only to complete the deliverables but also to ensure that the partners do not over- or under- spend.

Remaining Timeline

Table of remaining deliverables:

D#	Title	Partner	Due (month)	Status
D1.5	Conclude Consortium Agreement	1	17 ✝	3
D1.9	Period 1 Report to EC	1	12	3
D1.10	Period 2 Report to EC	1	24	0
D1.11	Period 3 Report to EC	1	36	0

Table of remaining milestones:

M#	Name	Expected (month)	Verification
M1.02	Prepare Period 2 Report to EC	23	D1.10
M1.03	Prepare Period 3 Report to EC	35	D1.11

D1.5 Conclude Consortium Agreement- The consortium agreement process started immediately and was based on the DESCA template[1] for FP7 projects. The revision process has taken longer than expected. The Board was presented with a fourth draft in month 11, but there are still two specific elements in which two partners disagree; the other 13 partners are satisfied with the draft presented. We continue to work with the partners and their respective lawyers to complete this document. The fact that the other partners are pleased with the draft and have no issue with the two points leads us to believe that the final issues should be easily addressed. Our expectation is to have the Board sign the final agreement at the next board meeting (planned for November 2011).

We expect the remaining deliverables and milestones to be completed on schedule.

1 Additional information about the DESCA template is available from their website <http://www.desca-fp7.eu/>.