

## Factsheet United Kingdom prepared by Stephen Smartt

- The request for input from the UK was distributed to the 205 PIs of UK proposals during Periods 93-95, as supplied by ESO to the UC.
- There were 42 responses
- **Phase 1** : the majority of users happy with the latex form and Phase 1 process. There is an ongoing issue with figure insertion and compilation problems. The ESO Proposal acceptance system only accepts PDF versions 1.4 or below, but PDF v1.7 is now the latest (support for PNG files should be included). A latex proposal can compile perfectly well on users machine, but fail at submission because of this. Should be an easy fix for ESO. There are other minor issues with local compilation and failing on submission. All the ETCs should allow user spectra to be uploaded (works for some only)
- **OPC and proposal feedback** : roughly 50% found feedback valuable, 35% did not, with 15% neutral. Two main issues are that feedback is written before the outcome of time is known, which can lead to positive feedback but no time award (frustrating for the user). Secondly a number of inconsistent feedback reports on the same resubmitted proposal, or lack of understanding of the proposal. Finally, there should be some emphasis on what results have been produced by PIs or groups, so that time is not given to projects that continually do not produce science papers. More than 50% of respondents would be willing to serve on OPC.
- **Important issue with Phase 2** : the SkyCat software for producing finders appears to be out of date. It does not work on many of the latest operating systems. Since finders are mandatory for Phase 2 and are required in a very specific form, ESO should ensure there is an easy and uniform way to produce them from software that is maintained on latest Mac and linux OS. General documentation and user support was rated very good.
- **Visitor mode** : remote observing for La Silla would solve a lot of problems, such as the lack of service mode there, the travel restrictions imposed, poor computing and network facilities for visitors and it would allow for more flexible scientific exploitation (e.g. time domain work), therefore keeping La Silla competitive. A recurring theme is also the lack of a specific contact person at La Silla (e.g. instrument specialist) as then a lot of responsibility falls on the Night Assistant.
- **Data archive and data reduction** : the archive is seen as extremely important. Obviously for data retrieval, but also for archival research. A major issue is having the correct calibration files available and also to what extent the standard detrending can be done automatically (e.g. bias, dark, flat fielding, can be done easily – and then providing these data can make the later steps straightforward). The experiences with ESO data reduction is mixed. About 50% are satisfied and 50% have problems with installation and documentation. It is an area that should be addressed, as it is fairly inexpensive to make a major difference. Perhaps surprisingly, only ~10% of users had made use of, or had knowledge of data from the Science Archive Facility and these are probably Phase 3 contributors. This seems a very low take up of what is a very rich calibrated data source
- **User Portal**: no major issues
- **Operating system support** : around 70% of users require software to be supported on Mac OS. Around 30% are exclusive Linux users.
- **ESO Press releases and news stories** : around 20% had issued a press release with ESO PR service, generally very positive response. 90% of respondents regularly read the ESO PRs and Science Newsletters (either always or

sometimes). This falls to about 75% and 50% for The Messenger and ALMA Newsletter respectively.

- **General comments** : a feeling that there is a lack of flexibility within ESO in terms of being open to new and competitive ideas (outside the “big” projects). For example remote/robotic modes, flexible scheduling, fast response, longer term and larger scale ToO programmes. There is a positive feeling about interaction with ESO, but perhaps that the organisation is somewhat opaque in decision making, particularly with new instrumentation decisions and choices of instruments at the VLT foci. It is also not particularly clear how one can positively influence ESO operations and policy with novel ideas.

This final point resonates both with my personal experience at the ESO White Paper retreat and attending the ESO in the 2020s workshop in Garching. There is a strong community and scientific voice that ESO should be more flexible, open to ideas, take more risks, to exploit scientific opportunities when they come up and there should be procedures for the ESO science community to drive the process.