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NuPNET looks to future nuclear physics in Europe

Representatives from NuPECC, the EU Commission and national funding agencies have launched a network to allow for more transnational activities in nuclear physics.

Résumé

NuPNET, un réseau européen pour la physique nucléaire

Lors d'une réunion à Paris le 27 mars, des représentants du Comité européen de collaboration pour la physique nucléaire (NuPECC), la Commission européenne et dix-huit organismes de financement nationaux ont lancé un nouveau réseau de physique nucléaire, le NuPNET (Nuclear Physics Network). Ce réseau jouera un rôle considérable pour l'avenir de la physique nucléaire parce qu'il vise, pour la première fois dans cette discipline, à coordonner les organismes de financement afin d'améliorer l'organisation du soutien aux infrastructures de physique nucléaire au niveau européen.

At a meeting in Paris on 27 March, representatives from the Nuclear Physics European Collaboration Committee (NuPECC), the EU Commission and 18 national funding agencies launched a network in nuclear physics to enable the community to pilot joint transnational activities.

Consortium

The idea to create a European network in nuclear physics arose two years ago, when more than 15 representatives of nuclear physics funding agencies and/or similar organizations, a NuPECC delegation and EU officers met in Paris to discuss the possibility of co-ordinating the existing national funding procedures through a new tool of the European Commission. The tool – the European Research Area Network, or ERA-Net – would focus on networking, mutual opening, development and implementation of joint activities. The participants at the meeting unanimously agreed to prepare a proposal, based on the scientific recommendations made by NuPECC in its latest long-range plan with a view to the ERA-Net scheme, for submission as soon as the EU Commission launched the appropriate call within the Framework Programme for European Research and Technology.

The proposal took the name of NuPNET, for Nuclear Physics Network. Under the scientific co-ordination of the French partner, the co-ordination committee composed of members of

funding agencies from France, Germany, Italy and Spain, had the responsibility of working out the full proposal. Thanks to the excellent collaboration between the co-ordination committee and the managers of the 18 European institutions that agreed to be part of this new venture, the final proposal was submitted in May 2007 at the first call of the Seventh Framework Programme for European Research and Technology (FP7). Evaluated during the summer of 2007, the NuPNET proposal was accepted by the European Commission in September 2007. Contract negotiations were completed by 11 March 2008 and a budget of €1.3 m has been granted for three years, from March 2008 to February 2011.

The NuPNET project comprises 18 regular members representing 14 countries (see figure 1). NuPECC is an associated member and acts as the Scientific Advisory Body of the NuPNET consortium to provide independent views on the direction of nuclear physics within Europe through its long-range plans, to give advice on scientific issues, and to inform NuPNET on the views of the scientific community.

Fig. 1.

On 27 March 2008, the founding member institutions of NuPNET, the representatives from NuPECC and the EU Commission came together for the traditional “kick-off” meeting. Organized by CNRS/IN2P3, the co-ordinator of the NuPNET project, this first official meeting took place in Paris. The participants agreed that NuPNET’s programme will have an important impact on the future of nuclear physics, especially since the ERA-Net proposal – as adopted by the partners and as accepted by the EU Commission – aims, for the first time in the history of nuclear physics, to co-ordinate the various national funding agencies in order to organize better the financing of nuclear physics infrastructures at a European level.

Implementation and governance

The NuPNET project has outlined a stepwise approach to project implementation in the form of four goals. The first is to compare reviewing and funding systems in participating funding agencies; provide a census of resources and agents in nuclear physics and infrastructures that paves the way to common decisions; and liaise with Integrated Infrastructure Initiatives and design studies in FP7 and other European and international initiatives, in particular the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This work package is led by Germany.

Fig. 2

The second goal is to propose a set of joint transnational activities (based on the science

priorities set in the long-range plan of NuPECC) that can be launched by funding agencies thanks to NuPNET co-ordination. Italy leads this work package. The third goal is to launch one or more of those proposed joint transnational activities in the field of nuclear physics infrastructures, in a work package led by Spain. The fourth and final goal is to provide Europe with a sustainable scheme beyond the project duration.

The project is managed by the co-ordinator (CNRS/IN2P3); the governing council (NuPNET member institutions); the co-ordination committee (CNRS/IN2P3) and work package leaders from France, Germany, Spain and Italy; and the Scientific Advisory Body (NuPECC). All parties are involved at the relevant level; however, the governing council is the main decision-making body of the consortium, where only authorized members can vote in the name of the represented member institution. Public bodies interested in joining NuPNET may be invited to attend a meeting of the governing council. The co-ordinator, together with the co-ordination manager, ensures the overall management of the project, whereas the co-ordination committee implements the decisions taken by the governing council and supports the co-ordinator. Now, the work has started. NuPNET has its own logo, a website is being constructed and the first session of Open Days (see figure :2) took place in Athens on 8 September.

About the author

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