



# Announcement of Opportunity for Community Scientists in the PLATO mission

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose and scope

This Announcement of Opportunity (AO) solicits the participation of the scientific community in the role of Community Scientist (CS) in the PLATO mission. Through the appointment of the CSs, ESA intends to gather independent advice for optimising the exploitation of the mission by the general scientific community.

The PLANetary Transits and Oscillations of stars mission (PLATO) is the medium mission “M3” in ESA’s Science Programme. PLATO aims at finding and studying a large number of extrasolar planetary systems, with emphasis on the properties of terrestrial planets in the habitable zone around solar-like stars. PLATO aims also at investigating seismic activity in stars, enabling the precise characterisation of the planet’s host star, including its age. In addition, PLATO will address a large number of complementary science topics in various areas of astronomy.

The Science Programme Committee adopted the PLATO mission at its meeting in June 2017, therefore the mission is now in its implementation phase.

ESA aims to appoint up to two CSs. The CSs will be appointed for a first period of three years, renewable. With the exception of expenses incurred while travelling to SWT meetings, ESA will not fund the activities of the CSs and each proposer is responsible for securing his/her own funding from other sources.

The schedule for this AO cycle is given in Table 1.

**Table 1: AO schedule and deadlines**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
11 April 2018	Release of this AO
26 April 2018, 12:00 hrs (noon) CEST	Mandatory Letters of Intent due
23 May 2018, 12:00 hrs (noon) CEST	Proposals due
3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 2018	Appointment of Community Scientists

### 1.2 AO documentation package

[AO-D1] PLATO Science Management Plan; ESA/SPC(2017)33

[AO-D2] PLATO Definition Study Report; ESA-SCI(2017)1



### **1.3 Mission summary and CSs tasks**

A mission summary is included in Section 2 of [AO-D1]. A more detailed description of the PLATO mission science objectives, science measurements and mission requirements, payload, observation strategy and management organisation can be found in [AO-D2].

The PLATO Science Management Plan (SMP, AO-D1) describes the approach that will be implemented to ensure the fulfilment of the scientific objectives of the PLATO mission and to optimise its scientific return, with special emphasis on payload procurement, science operations and data generation and management. The SMP also outlines the data generation approach and data rights, and how the scientific community can participate in the mission. It describes the tasks and responsibilities of PLATO mission stakeholders up to the data distribution and archiving, and the principles for the publication policy and public relations. The responsibilities and tasks of the CSs are described in Section 5.2.1.

## **2 APPOINTMENT REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS**

This call is open to scientists based in ESA Member States. Scientists involved in the PLATO Mission Consortium (PMC) management (programmatic, scientific, or technical) or being responsible for hardware or software development and procurement activities are not eligible.

The CSs will join the PLATO Science Working Team (SWT). Their main responsibility will be to advise ESA on the means to optimise the use of PLATO data by the general scientific community. This includes looking after the interests of the scientific community that will be involved in the PLATO complementary science programmes (see Section 5.2.2 of [AO-D1]). The CSs are expected to provide support to the communications activities of ESA. In particular, the CSs will advise ESA on:

- Communicating the mission capabilities to maximize the community involvement and the mission scientific return;
- Defining the user requirements for the mission archive;
- Optimising the capabilities for complementary science within the mission constraints;
- Preparing the guest observers open calls (e.g. documentation, tools, support);
- Releasing of scientific data products to the community;
- Optimising the exploitation of the PLATO mission data by the general community.

The CSs, as part of their role, will interact with the SWT members, the Project Scientist, and the Science Operations Centre.

Candidates will have to describe in the proposals their expertise relevant to the PLATO science objectives described in Chapter 2 of [AO-D2] and/or to other complementary science fields that PLATO could address. Candidates will also have to describe their proposed contribution to the responsibilities and tasks defined above, and the relevance of their contribution to the mission. Candidates will have to declare their time commitment to the



SWT activities and their willingness to take up specific and time-limited tasks as assigned by the SWT. The applicants shall guarantee participation in the SWT meetings (3 meetings per year are expected). The proposals should include the explicit endorsement and support from their institutes.

The successful candidates will be appointed by the ESA Director of Science. The CS appointment is *ad personam*. Each selected CS will be required to submit short annual reports of his/her PLATO related activities to ESA.

The CSs will be full members of the SWT with the same rights and responsibilities as the other SWT members, as described in [AO-D1]. In particular, the CSs will have the same publication rights and rules as the members of the PMC ([AO-D1], Section 8).

### **3 LETTER OF INTENT**

Prospective proposers must submit a mandatory Letter of Intent (LoI) by the deadline indicated in Table 1. Proposals not preceded by a corresponding LoI will not be considered. LoIs are limited in length to 2 A4 pages (minimum font size 11 pt), and their purpose is to allow ESA to perform an initial assessment of the expected range of proposals, and to prepare for the evaluation process.

Letters of intent must be structured to contain the following information:

- Name and contact information of proposer;
- Short description of the proposer's expertise and its relevance to PLATO.

### **4 CONTENTS OF THE PROPOSAL**

Proposals submitted in response to the AO are limited in length to 9 A4 pages (minimum font size 11 pt), and must contain the following information:

- A cover letter stating the proposer's name and affiliation and explicitly mentioning the proposer's title, position, institute, address, telephone number and e-mail address (max. 1 page).
- A brief curriculum vitae also including the 10 most relevant publications (max. 2 pages).
- A description of the scientific expertise relevant to the PLATO science objectives (max. 2 pages).
- A description of the scientific areas of interest and a statement concerning the time availability (max. 3 pages).
- A Letter of Endorsement, signed by the proposer's Head of Institute, with the endorsement to the proposer's application and the explicit support with respect to the proposed activities and the availability of facilities and infrastructure, as needed by the proposer for the accomplishment of the CS tasks (max. 1 page).

## **5 EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The following criteria will be used (in no particular order) in assessing and evaluating individual proposals:

- Candidate's competence and experience relative to the PLATO science objectives.
- The level to which the proposal identifies specific competences and addresses the contribution to the tasks described in Section 2.
- Adequacy of the time that the candidate intends to devote to activities related to the CS role.
- Adequacy of resources available to the candidate to carry out activities related to the CS role.

## **6 LETTERS OF INTENT AND PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

Letters of Intent and Proposals shall be submitted electronically in PDF format (file size cannot exceed 5 MB) according to the instructions on the following webpage:

<http://cosmos.esa.int/web/plato-cs-2018>

and according to the deadlines listed in Table 1.

Proposers will receive confirmation upon successful receipt of their Letters of Intent and of their Proposals.

Further queries should be addressed to:

Luigi Colangeli  
Head of the Coordination Office for the Scientific Programme  
ESA/ESTEC (SRE-CS)  
P.O. Box 299  
2200 AG Noordwijk  
The Netherlands  
e-mail: [Luigi.Colangeli@esa.int](mailto:Luigi.Colangeli@esa.int)



## ACRONYMS

AO	Announcement of Opportunity
CEST	Central European Summer Time
CS	Community Scientist
ESA	European Space Agency
LoI	Letter of Intent
PLATO	PLANetary Transits and Oscillations of stars
PMC	PLATO Mission Consortium
SMP	Science Management Plan
SWT	Science Working Team