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FIRST/ESA/N/0016.10

D/SCI/RMB/SV/2940

Paris, 3 October 1997



Dear Sir/Madam,

I hereby invite the scientific community to submit proposals in response to the Announcement of Opportunity (AO) for participation in the Far Infra-Red Space Telescope (FIRST) and Planck missions. FIRST, ESA's fourth cornerstone in the Horizons 2000 plan, is an observatory-class mission to investigate the Universe and the planets in the far infra-red and sub-millimetre wavelength band. Planck, formerly known as Cobras-Samba, is the third medium-sized mission of the Horizons 2000. Planck is a Principal Investigator (PI)-type project designed to study the anisotropies of the Cosmic Microwave Background radiation.

Proposals, **requested by 16 February 1998**, are solicited for the following:

For FIRST

- *Scientific instruments and associated Instrument Control Centres (ICC) / Principal Investigators (PI)*
- *Mission scientist positions*

For Planck

- *Scientific Instruments and associated Data Processing Centres (DPC) / Principal Investigators (PI)*

This call is open to candidates from ESA Member States and from the United States of America, in accordance with the ESA/NASA agreement on the principle of reciprocity.

As described in the Announcement of Opportunity proper, the baseline concept, presently under industrial study, consists of a single spacecraft accommodating both the FIRST and Planck instrument complements and PI proposals are solicited for this baseline. Parallel studies of separate FIRST and Planck missions are also being carried out to provide the information necessary to decide on the final mission option to be implemented.

Results of all these studies will be evaluated in Spring 1998. The final option will be approved by SPC in May 1998, taking due account of a strict financial limit.

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In parallel, the instrument proposals will be evaluated, leading to the preselection of the Pis and the instruments by SPC, also in May 1998.

If FIRST and Planck have to be implemented as independent missions, any necessary changes will have to be agreed between ESA and the preselected Pis, with due account given to the resulting technical and programmatic constraints of the two single projects at the time of approval by SPC.

In any case, the final payload complements will be confirmed by SPC not later than February 1998.

The full AO package will be available in PDF format for downloading from:

<http://www.estec.esa.nl/spdwww/first/html/first.html>

as from 3 October 1997.

For those not having access to *Internet*, a paper copy may be requested from the ESA FIRST/Planck Project Office, at the address given below.

The proposals for instruments and associated centres, fully completed according to the instructions in the AO package, must reach the FIRST/Planck Project Office by 16 February 1998 at the latest at the following address:

F. Felici  
ESTEC / PT  
P.O. Box 299  
NL-2200 AG Noordwijk  
Netherlands

The proposals for the FIRST Mission Scientist positions, fully completed according to the instructions in the AO must reach the FIRST Project Scientist by 16 February 1998 at the latest at the following address:

G. Pilbratt  
ESTEC / SA  
P.O. Box 299  
NL - 2200 AG Noordwijk  
Netherlands

A briefing meeting for prospective proposers will be held on 3 December 1997 at ESTEC, Noordwijk, The Netherlands.

In preparation for this meeting, written questions should be sent to the FIRST/Planck Project Office by 31 October 1997 (Fax: +31 / 71 565 5244).

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The planning for submission of proposals and the subsequent selection cycle is as follows:

Release of AO	3 October 1997
Submission of questions for briefing	31 October 1997
Clarification meeting	3 December 1997
Proposals due	16 February 1998
Evaluation phase	February to May 1998
Completion of selection process	28 May 1998
Final confirmation of instruments	February 1999

Yours sincerely,



Dr. R.M. BONNET  
Director  
Scientific Programme