

ESO Users Committee feedback on the Science Data Management Working Group report

*Prepared by the UC vice-chair (Olivier Absil),
based on the feedback of all UC members*

Scope

The report of the ESO Science Data Management Working Group (SDMWG), presented to the ESO Scientific and Technical Committee in October 2016, has been submitted to the ESO Users Committee (UC) for feedback. The present document summarizes the consensus opinion of the UC on the propositions and recommendations described in the SDMWG report.

UC feedback summary

In general, the UC supports the conclusions and recommendations presented in the SDMWG report. The UC recognizes that data management is of crucial importance in the current and future scientific exploitation of the ESO observing facilities. While the UC generally agrees with the recommendations formulated by the SDMWG, the UC found some parts of the report to be relatively vague. In the following sections, we give more detailed feedback on some specific recommendations described in the SDMWG report.

Detailed feedback

Recommendation 1 (Establish Science Data Program)

69% of the UC agrees with this recommendation, 8% disagrees, and 23% has no opinion. The main criticisms are the following:

- It is not clear how the Science Data Programme will interact with the data management activities already ongoing within the LSP, ALMA, and ELT programmes.
- The UC is worried that this new Programme will increase the amount of manpower needed for management and paper work, and divert it from other tasks that may be more useful for the ESO users community.

Recommendation 2 (Science Data Management at core of ESO's mission)

77% of the UC agrees with this recommendation, although its practical consequences (in particular in terms of usage of ESO resources) are a bit unclear to the UC.

Recommendations 3 (Support PI science) and 4 (Support archive science)

100% of the UC agrees with these recommendations. No specific comment.

Recommendation 5 (Establish collaborations)

62% of the UC agrees with this recommendation, 15% disagrees, and 23% has no opinion. While the need to establish collaborations, define data standards, and centralize processed data is recognized by the UC, it is not clear to the UC how much the community would be willing to develop pure data management functions. If the recommendation goes beyond pure data management tools and also concerns data analysis tools, the UC feels that it is not ESO's role (but the community's role) to coordinate the development of such tools.

Recommendation 6 (Host science archives) and 7 (Support data exploitation)

90% of the UC agrees with these recommendations. Yet, the UC would like to underline the caveat that creating a call for archival data projects, and allocating an ESO contact data scientist to (even only part of) the accepted archival projects, may require large amounts of manpower that may be more useful for other tasks. The UC is generally not in favour of creating a call for archival data projects.

Recommendation 8 (Participate in activities at global level)

62% of the UC agrees with this recommendation, while 23% does not agree. The UC expects ESO to be at the forefront of the global activities in a measure proportional to the needs of its community, without jeopardizing its current missions. The need to publish ESO data in the Virtual Observatory (in addition to the ESO archive) is not felt by the UC.

Recommendation 9 (Make periodic reassessment)

77% of the UC agrees with this recommendation. No specific comment.

Other comments

The majority of the UC disagrees with Actions 10 and 11 (placing accepted proposals on ADS or making them public in any way). This was already discussed at the UC40 and 41 meetings.