The YERAC Organisators’ guide

A living document for the YERCA Organisers developed by RadioNet project

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# YERAC History and Raison d’être

The Young European Radio Astronomers Conference (YERAC) has been held annually in different radioastronomical centers in Europe since 1968 and has enabled many graduate students and young post-docs doing radio astronomical research to meet and present their current work. For a history of YERAC, see http://www.yerac.org. Originally, YERAC served to overcome the still existing boundaries in Europe. It was for many young astronomers the first opportunity to make themselves visible at an international level.

## Reasons to become a YERAC organizer and how to become one

YERAC is cult! Almost every radio astronomer working in the field has been at last to one and can tell you anecdotes. YERAC is a great opportunity to promote your institute.

There is no one who is responsible for deciding on the next organizer of YERAC. It has always been worked out spon­taneously. But if you already know early in the year that you would like to organize one, just announce your intent, with the backing of your institute’s management of course, to the RadioNet management team.

## The YERAC format

The YERAC is addressed to Young European Radio Astronomers, as its name suggests. Young, nowadays means early career stage, and comprises mostly doctoral students, in some cases postdocs or master students.

While in the early days, radio astronomers were a distinct species, nowadays, one would also include mm and sub-mm astronomers, and maybe also people who observe in the mid and far infrared. There has always been an important participation of researchers working in theory and in the technical aspects of radio astronomy.

While YERAC, as its name suggests, is a European format, you are flexible to admit participants with a different nationality working at a European institute or Europeans working outside of Europe, or participants from institutions with a strong connection to European initiatives.

If you organize a YERAC aim at 20 to 40 participants. The idea is that each participant is giving an oral talk with plenty of time for discussions, which is needed because YERAC covers the whole breadth of radio astronomy from our atmosphere, the solar system, the galaxy and the universe as a whole; from the development of hardware and software to theory and modeling.

It is also a tradition that candidates must be nominated by institute directors and professors. This is to ensure a broad range of nationalities and topics, and the high-quality of the participants.

In the ideal case the conference is entirely run by young researchers. There might be highlight talks by senior members of the YERAC host, but senior scientists are not encouraged to chair the sessions of contributed talks not engage in the discussions nor to dominate the Scientific Organizing Committee.

A well organized YERAC also leaves plenty of time and space for informal interactions. Therefore

Traditionally, the participants or their institutes would pay for the travel and the YERAC host would finance the accommodation, the meals, and the social the program. It is acceptable that accommodations hostel like with shared bedrooms, or e.g. student residences. Part of the appeal of YERAC is that participants spend a lot of time together. Therefore it is less ideal to spread participants on different hotels.

You may offer some extra activities, for example to show them your institute or telescope, or a barbecue. Activities of a purely touristic value or gala dinners are not in the spirit of YERAC.

# Time Plan

**DATE** – YERAC is often organized in late summer in order to interfere neither with classes nor with vacations. But in this respect you as the organizer are flexible. You are encouraged to take into account the availability and prices of accommodations.

The organizers of a YERAC should know that they are willing to organize a YERAC by the first few months of the year the conference is organized. As soon as you know you want to and you are capable to organize YERAC, you may ask for support from the RadioNet Networking Activities (NA) and form a LOC and a SOC.

**LOCATION** – About five months before the conference starts you should look for suitable conference sites. These could be guesthouses and conference centers own by unions, churches or educational facilities. Sometimes one can get very good offers from hotels during the low season.

**ADNNOUNCMENT** – Send out the advertisements for the conference about 4 months before the conference starts.

**APPLICATION** – 1 month before the conference there should be the deadline for applications and 2 weeks before the conference, participants should have uploaded their talk titles and abstracts.

1 day before the conference starts, people will arrive at the site.

**DURATION** – You may want to organize a registration reception that day. A YERAC typically lasts 3 days with the following day reserved for departure.

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| **Time till event (months)** | **12** | **11** | **10** | **9** | **8** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **0** |
| Announcement at previous YERAC | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Determine SOC, LOC, financial budget |  |  | x | x | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ask for funding at various agencies |  |  | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |  |  |  |
| Identify conference site/ lodging |  |  |  |  |  | x | x | x |  |  |  |  |  |
| Send out advertisements |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | x | x |  |  |  |  |
| Application deadline |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | x | x |  |
| Abstract deadline |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | x | x |

# Finances

Participants, or their home institutes, are expected to pay for the travel expenses, and the organizers for the local expenses: overheads, board and lodging of the participants and the invited speakers; coffee breaks, lecture rooms and equipment, excursions, organized transportation to/ from the airport.

Part of the funding can be requested from the **RadioNet**. Note that RadioNet rules are quite strict regarding financing conference dinners or social events. Please try to obtain the additional funding from national funding agencies, from foundations or your institute.

If it is absolutely necessary, you can ask for a moderate conference fee. But foresee the possibility for a fee waiver for those participants who cannot afford it.

# Organizing committee

Choosing your Local and Scientific organizing committees from among early stage researchers (PhD students, postdocs) is a great way to promote their careers. These committees should decide on the maximum number of participants admitted and the invited speakers, who may come from among the emerging science leaders at your institute.

## Sending out the advertisements

**APLICATIONS** – The call for applications should be sent out about three month before the conference. Even though admission is via nomination by institute directors and professors, it is a good idea to make young scientist aware of the conference. There is no need for a conference poster, but spread the word by asking the RadioNet team to announce the conference in the RadioNet newsletter. You may send personal invitations to the directors of institutes and departments, and you may announce the conference electronically at <http://www1.cadc-ccda.hia-iha.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/en/meetings/> and via social media and on the [www.yerac.org](http://www.yerac.org) website (email [yerac@yerac.org](mailto:yerac@yerac.org)).

**PARTICIPANT LIST** – Interested young researchers may register themselves, but insist to receive a nomination from a director or professor. The SOC will decide, about 1-2 months before the conference on the definite list of participants, taking into account the scientific potential of the candidate based on the nominations, whether he or she has participated in the past in a YERAC. There should not be more than one o two nominees per institute/ department. Exceptions are possible for very large institutes.

## **Managing the conference**

Using a conference management system, like the free INDICO (developed at CERN) make things easy. INDICO lets you manage the registrations, lets participants upload presentations, contact participants, print badges etc., and in case you need to charge a conference fee also track the payments. The system can also be setup to receive feedback from the participants.

You may also put all the relevant information, e.g. on nearby airports and how to get from the airport to the conference site, and whether there is an organized transport from and to the airport.

## **The program**

The scientific program will include contributed talks by the participants (15-20 min including discussion). These talks should be grouped by topics (e.g. molecular gas, AGN). The sessions should be chaired by early stage researchers. There may be 3-4 invited talks of about 30 minutes by researcher from the host institute highlighting some hot topics in astronomy. You could also think of new formats, e.g. discussion rounds on career development or others.

Excursions should be preferentially on a science related topic (e.g. one of your facilities).

Almost as important as the science talks are possibilities for interactions between the early stage researchers and with researchers from the host institute. Therefore it is a good idea to foresee ample lunch and coffee breaks.