

**Announcement
by the Greek ESA/SPC Delegation**

6 October 2011

The Greek Delegation to the Science Programme Committee (SPC) of the European Space Agency (ESA) has the pleasure to inform the Hellenic astronomical, astrophysical, and space-science community on the results of the Extraordinary SPC Meeting that took place on 4 October 2011 at ESA's Headquarters in Paris.

The sole purpose of the meeting was to select two medium-class (M-class) missions for launch before 2020. The candidate concepts were Solar Orbiter, Euclid, and the PLANetary Transits and Oscillations of stars (PLATO). Solar Orbiter will explore the connection between the Sun and the Heliosphere, Euclid will map the geometry of the dark matter in the Universe and PLATO will investigate the conditions for planet formation and the emergence of life. Only two of the three missions were to enter into implementation phase.

The SPC unanimously approved Solar Orbiter as the first (M1) M-class mission, with a tentative launch date in January 2017. Following a discussion and debate, Euclid was selected as the second (M2) M-class mission, with a tentative launch date in 2019.

We trust that the news of the Solar Orbiter selection come with a great joy to many of us, especially those numerous colleagues who have worked tirelessly and consistently to this purpose for the past several years. This selection is in the best interests of the Greek heliophysics community and there is vivid scientific and technological involvement from the Greek side. Several Greek scientists are involved, proposals for instrument development are currently under review, and in a recent session sponsored by the General Secretariat of Science and Technology the company in charge of the spacecraft bus, UK Astrium, detected ample interest by capable Greek companies for technological involvement. Bilateral communication is now in progress. Opportunities for a significant increase of ESA's geographical return to Greece now emerge, therefore, and it is in our best interests to materialize these favorable odds with dedication and commitment.

The other selected mission, Euclid, should also spawn active interest from Greece given our country's sizeable astrophysical, cosmological, and theoretical-physics communities. Let this mission, too, work for Greece in the best possible ways!

The Greek ESA/SPC Delegation,

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