

Helping to Build ASTRONET Science Vision: A Unique Opportunity to Contribute to the European Astronomical Scientific Strategy for the Next 20 Years

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In the very short period of two months only (December 2006 and January 2007), every European astronomer is invited to add her/his stone for the building of a common European astronomical “Science Vision” for the next 20 years. You are strongly encouraged to register immediately to the 23–25 January 2007 Science Vision Symposium, and as of 1 December 2006 to contribute to a web-based forum on future scientific challenges in astronomy. Please do not miss this unique opportunity to steer European astronomy towards a vibrant future!

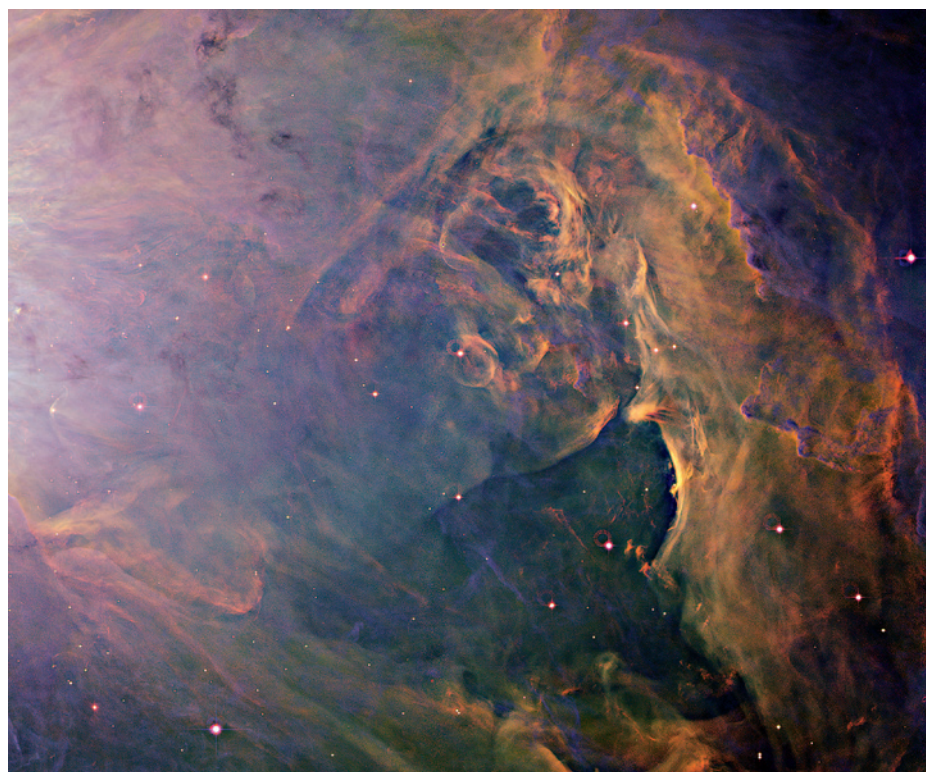


Establishing a Science Vision is the first crucial segment of a whole process conducted by ASTRONET (<http://www.astronet-eu.org/>), the consortium created by a group of European funding agencies, and financed by the European Commission, in order to establish a comprehensive long-term planning for the development of European astronomy. The Science Vision (<http://www.astronet-eu.org/-Science-Vision->) will cover all wavelengths and observing means from ground and space and is currently being distilled by thematic panels drawn from the astronomical community. On 1 December 2006 a discussion forum on “Future Scientific Challenges in Astronomy” will be opened on the ASTRONET web site. Your input will be incorporated by the relevant panels for the presentation of their preliminary conclusions at the 23–25 January 2007 Science Vision Symposium in Poitiers, France (<http://www.eso.org/gen-fac/meetings/SciChall07>). At registration you will be required to sign for the thematic panel closest to your scientific area, and the preliminary conclusions of each panel (including the inputs from the web-based discussion forum) will be re-discussed at the Symposium



venue by these much-enlarged panels. A special general discussion is also organised to bring forward any missing or overlapping science themes. Through this process, for which your advice is absolutely essential, ASTRONET will then deliver its final Science Vision report to the Commission by the end of March 2007.

The next crucial phase will be the building of a detailed “Infrastructure Roadmap” to attain the scientific goals as defined in the “Science Vision”. This process is now just starting (<http://www.astronet-eu.org/-Infrastructure-Roadmap->), again from thematic panels soon to be installed. Active participation from the whole community in a rather similar setting will again be actively sought, most probably in a year or so: please bookmark the ASTRONET home page and stay tuned!



A less well-known region of the famous Orion Nebula HII region (M42, NGC 1976) is shown in this image obtained with the WFI instrument on the 2.2-m telescope at La Silla. The ionising star cluster (‘The Trapezium’) is to the east (left) of the area shown. The combination of three narrow band filters, centred on the strong emission lines of [O III], H α and [S II], provides the colour image and the impression of depth to the picture. The orange and red (low ionisation) regions trace a great bay where the gas and dust of the local cloud has been sculpted by the ionising radiation of the hot young stars. A haze of blue filaments (high ionisation gas) wash over the image from the left and are between the molecular cloud and the observer. The original observations were taken by Massimo Roberto and colleagues in December 2001 and the image was reduced by Benoît Vandame (ESO). The cover picture on The Messenger 122 (December 2005) derives from another region of the same image.