

## **The Integral Mission Extension**

At its 105<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 5-6 November 2003 the ESA's Science Programme Committee (SPC) unanimously approved a 4-year "rolling" extension to Integral operations from 17 December 2004 until 16 December 2008. The Astronomy Working Group (AWG) and Space Science Advisory Committee had earlier expressed their general satisfaction with the current status of the mission, its initial science return and promise for the future. This "rolling" extension means that towards the end of the first two years the level of resources required for the third and fourth years will be reviewed by the SPC. Should the scientific return remain high and the technical status appropriate then at the same time the SPC would be asked to approve a further 2 years of Integral operations. Thus, a 4-year horizon would be established at each approval cycle. The planning for this 4-year extension maintains the current scientific capability of the mission. In any future mission extensions it may be appropriate to reduce the level of operational support, so decreasing costs, but at the expense of scientific capability.

Given that the first Integral scientific results are only just becoming available, the AWG wishes to review and endorse the science case for the latter two years of the 4-year extension in around two years time. At the start of the extension the Science Operations Centre (ISOC), responsible for Integral mission planning, will move from ESTEC to Vilspa. This will allow cost saving by sharing resources such as mission planning and helpdesk support between the Integral and XMM-Newton SOCs. The interactions between the larger team of high-energy astronomers based at Vilspa should also enhance the scientific productivity of both teams. The planning for this move is already underway.

The SPC also made two other decisions concerning Integral. They confirmed that the amount of observing time available to the astronomical community during the first three years of the extension will be 75%, with the remaining 25% being for the Integral Science Working Team (ISWT). The ISWT is composed of the instrument and data centre principal investigators, mission scientists, the project scientist, and representatives of the US and Russian scientific communities. During these 3 years, ESA will continue to issue Announcement of Opportunities for observing time, the 1-year proprietary data period will remain, and the Russian scientists will continue to be guaranteed their share of observing time. Data rights for extension years 4 and beyond will be discussed by those involved before a proposal is presented to the SPC. During the extension ESA proposes to establish an Integral User's Group in order to benefit from the best possible advice from a wide community of interested users.