

Extremely Large Telescopes: open questions

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Extremely Large Telescopes: science objectives and open questions

In the last decade we have seen the development of a generation of large (8-10 m) telescopes and of new techniques while, at the same time, our understanding of the Universe was evolving in a dramatic way.

The next big instrumental step for ground based astronomy, has already been the subject of preliminary proposals for a future generation of extremely large telescopes in the size range of 30-100 m on either side of Atlantic.

The preliminary work on these ELTs is based on the assumption that the essential technology is already nearly available. The approval of the "European Extremely Large Telescope design study" (EELT) under FP6 gives to the European astrophysical community a good occasion for a deeper debate and for proposing new ideas and approaches concerning the EELT. I will summarize the strong and weak points of the current approaches concerning extremely large telescopes.

I will try to be objective but I certainly will not try to draw conclusions. My intention is to favor the start of a real and frank discussion on science objectives, requirements on size and performances, time-scales.

(résumé plus long sur www.obspm.fr/campus)

