

I hope you all got the message that we scientists are extremely excited about this entirely new field recently unveiled by the first direct observations of gravitational waves. Last year's Nobel Prize is just the beginning of our journey to listen to the universe using gravitational waves. So much for the science.

The chance to site Europe's next generation infrastructure – *Einstein Telescope* – in our region is in my opinion a unique opportunity. Also unique for me is the overwhelming interest from dignitaries, policy makers, officials, funding agencies as well as the general public. As someone from above the rivers in The Netherlands, I had never guessed to spend so much time in this region. And frankly stated: I love it! And not only because of the Belgian beers.

To realize the Einstein Telescope dream an excellent science case is half of the job. The other half will be a convincing business case i.e. the socio-economic impact. Many outstanding research institutes are present in our region. The same applies to the presence of high-tech industry. An ideal way to connect these partners soon, is to embark on a challenging prototype coined miniET. This we vigorously pursue and anyone interested is welcome to join!

Apart from construction activities, we also need to quantify the socio-economic impact during the exploitation phase. Similar big-science endeavors like CERN near Geneva, the ESS in Sweden and XFEL near Hamburg, all boosted local economies. I have no doubt that Einstein Telescope will do so as well, but we need to make this concrete. We are working on it. Science-wise I can only look forward to the exploitation phase. At that time our biggest problem will be: how do we get sufficient compute power to analyze all the signals we are going to collect?

Before I get carried away too much, there are two crucial milestones we should pass soon:

1. In 2018, we will unambiguously assess the seismic noise level at a few hundred meters underground in our region. Ideally at two locations: one in The Netherlands (Terziet) and one in Belgium (De Plank);
2. In 2019 our community should position Einstein Telescope to acquire ESFRI status.

We are working hard on both milestones. And the 'we' certainly welcomes other interested parties. Irrespective whether they are from our region or from elsewhere. That is: everyone is welcome to join!

Finally I like to thank our Belgian hosts and notably Jean-Renee and Christophe for organizing this event. I like to thank all speakers and in particular all those who support and push us in realizing Einstein Telescope. And I like to thank all participants.

I am looking forward to making lots of progress, today, tomorrow and the days after and I am looking forward to follow-up events in Germany, The Netherlands, etc.

Thank you and please continue to discuss Einstein Telescope over lunch.