

Matera CGS VLBI Station

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Abstract

This report summarises the VLBI activities performed at the Matera VLBI station. Also an overview of the technical characteristics of the system and some staff addresses will be given.

1. General

The Matera VLBI station is located at the Italian Space Agency “Centro di Geodesia Spaziale” (CGS) near Matera, a small town in the South of Italy.



Figure 1. The Matera “Centro di Geodesia Spaziale” (CGS)

The “Centro di Geodesia Spaziale” (CGS) of the Italian Space Agency came into operation in 1983 when a Satellite Laser Ranging SAO-1 System was installed at CGS. Fully integrated in the worldwide network, SAO-1 is in continuous operation since 1983, providing high precision ranging observations of several satellites. Next year the new Matera Laser Ranging Observatory (MLRO), the most advanced Satellite and Lunar Laser Ranging facility in the world, will be installed at the CGS. CGS hosted also mobile SLR systems MTLRS (Holland/Germany) and TLRs-1 (NASA).

In May 1990 the CGS extended its capabilities to Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLBI) installing a 20-m radiotelescope. Since then, Matera performed 340 experiments up to August 1998. Besides the participation in the network programs listed above, Matera has been involved also in some Intensive IRIS Campaigns (also during 1998) and in several astronomical experiments. In 1996 the receiver was upgraded to standard wideband and the Mark IV upgrade is now in progress (installation during 1999 planned). The installation of the new Linux PC FS with FS 9.x is in progress too.

In 1991 we started GPS activities, participating in the GIG 91 experiment installing in Matera a permanent GPS Rogue receiver. In 1994 six TurboRogue SNR 8100 receivers were purchased in order to create the Italian Space Agency GPS fiducial network (IGFN). The receivers were

installed at Cagliari, Medicina, Noto, Genova and Venezia. Currently the IGFN is included in the IGS global network. All the GPS stations are managed by CGS and the data are archived and made available by the CGS WWW server GeoDAF (<http://geodaf.mt.asi.it>).

At the beginning of 1996 the operations of the Precision RAnge and Range-rate Experiment (PRARE) started. Thanks to the colocation of all precise positioning space based techniques (VLBI, SLR, GPS and PRARE), CGS is one of the few “fundamental” stations in the world. With the objective of exploiting the maximum integration in the field of Earth observations, in the late 1980s ASI extended CGS involvement also in remote sensing activities for present and future missions (ERS-1, ERS-2, X-SAR/SIR-C, ENVISAT).

2. Technical/scientific

The Matera VLBI antenna is a 20-meter dish with a cassegrain configuration and AZ-EL mount. The AZ axis has ± 270 degrees of available motion. The slewing velocity is 2 deg/sec for both AZ/EL axis.

The technical parameters of the Matera VLBI antenna are summarised in Table 1.

The Matera Time and Frequency system is composed of three frequency sources (two Cesium beam and one H-maser standard) and three independent clock chains. The EFOS-8 H-maser from Oscilloquartz is used as frequency source for VLBI.

The control computer is a SWT Pentium/233 PC running Linux and FS version 9.3.23.

Table 1. Matera VLBI Antenna Technical Specifications

Input frequencies	S-band X-band	2210 MHz to 2450 MHz 8180 MHz to 8980 MHz
Noise temperature at dewar flange	S-band X-band	<20 K <20 K
IF output frequencies	S-band X-band	190 MHz to 430 MHz 100 MHz to 900 MHz
IF Output Power with 300 K at the input flange	S-band X-band	0.0 dBm to +8.0 dBm 0.0 dBm to +8.0 dBm
Gain compression	S-band X-band	<1 dB at +8 dBm output level <1 dB at +8 dBm output level
Image rejection	S-band X-band	>45 dB within the IF passband >45 dB within the IF passband
Inter modulation products	S-band X-band	At least 30 dB below each of 2 carriers at an IF output level of 0 dBm per carrier At least 30 dB below each of 2 carriers at an IF output level of 0 dBm per carrier
T_{sys}	S-Band X-Band	55 K 65 K
S_{SEFD}	S-Band X-Band	800 Jy 900 Jy

3. Staff

The list of the VLBI staff members of Matera VLBI station is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Matera VLBI staff members

Name	Agency	Activity	E-Mail
Dr. Giuseppe Bianco	ASI	CGS Director	bianco@asi.it
Dr. Francesco Vespe	ASI	CGS Geodesy Manager	vespe@asi.it
Domenico Del Rosso	Telespazio	Operations Manager	domenico_delrosso@telespazio.it
Luciano Garramone	Telespazio	Station Engineer	garramone@asi.it
Giuseppe Colucci	Telespazio	VLBI contact	colucci@asi.it

4. Status

The Matera station is involved in CORE-A and EUROPE experiments. During 1998 Matera performed also NEOS-A, INTENSIVE and some astronomical experiments coordinated by EVN.

Figure 2 shows the summary of acquisition up to March 1999 in terms of hours of acquisition.

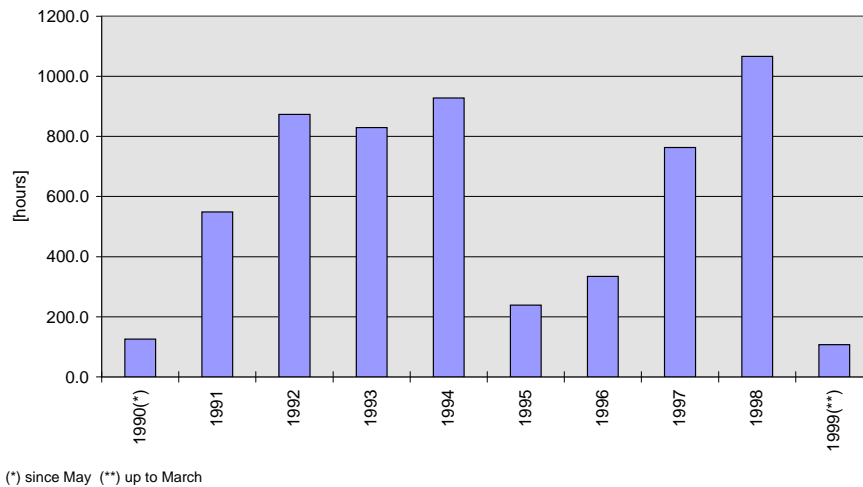


Figure 2. Summary of acquisition from May 1990 to March 1999

5. Outlook

During the second half of the 1999, the system will be upgraded to Mark IV and thin tape operation by MIT Haystack.

References

- [1] G.Colucci, D.Del Rosso, L.Garramone: "Matera VLBI Station Report on the Operational and Performance Evaluation Activities from January to December 1998", available on-line at this address: <http://geodaf.mt.asi.it/GDHTL/matera.html>