



Consultation on possible topics for future activities for integrating and opening existing national research infrastructures

1. Aim of the consultation

This consultation is organised in order to prepare future EU activities supporting the integration of and access to existing national research infrastructures. These activities would correspond to the follow-up of the successful Framework Programme 7 (FP7) action currently named "Integrating Activities", conditional to the approval of the European Commission proposal for the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020¹, by the EU Parliament and Council. The aim of these activities is to provide a wider and more efficient access to, and use of, the research infrastructures existing in EU Member States, Associated Countries and at international level when appropriate.

This consultation addresses stakeholders, e.g. operators of research infrastructures and user communities, in a bottom-up manner, in order to map possible future topics of Integrating Activities. You are invited to suggest topics which will be analysed by a panel of high-level independent experts. A report mapping the needs and providing recommendations for the future will be prepared by the experts and will be made available via internet.

Research infrastructures are defined here as facilities, resources, systems and related services that are used by research communities to conduct top level research in their respective fields. This definition covers: major scientific equipment or sets of instruments, as well as knowledge-containing resources such as collections, archives and thematic data infrastructures, together with the associated human resources. Research infrastructures may be "single-sited", "distributed", or "virtual" (the service being provided electronically).

Please note that potential support to the operation of research infrastructures as identified by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) in its Roadmap (http://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/pdf/esfri-strategy_report_and_roadmap.pdf), or to the development, deployment and operation of e-infrastructure, is not covered by this consultation and will be addressed through other consultation mechanisms.

2. Objectives of Integrating Activities

Future EU activities in support to the integration of and access to national research infrastructures of pan-European and regional interest, would correspond to the follow-up of the above described FP7 "Integrating Activities". As under FP7, future EU actions are expected to:

- Bring together and integrate, on a European scale, key research infrastructures, in order to promote their coordinated use and development;

¹ COM(2011) 809/3

- Provide the users of research infrastructures with a harmonised, improved and optimised access to the best research infrastructures in a given field, independent of where the research infrastructures are located and by whom they are operated;
- Create the basis for a more rapid advancement of science in Europe, enabling the development of new advanced technologies and the associated growth of the European technology market as well as the creation of a new generation of researchers, ready to exploit in the best way all the essential tools needed for their research;
- Harmonise and organise the continuous flux of data collected or produced, by integrating major scientific equipment (telescopes, synchrotrons, research vessels, etc.) or set of instruments (sensors, microscopes, radars, etc.), as well as knowledge based resources (collections, archives, structured scientific information, data infrastructures, etc.);
- Structure the European Research Area, by developing synergies and complementarities between infrastructure operators, as well as a more co-ordinated approach with users and public authorities;
- Increase the potential for innovation and technology transfer of the related research infrastructures, in particular by reinforcing the partnership with industry and the use of research infrastructures by industrial researchers;
- Contribute to developing appropriate skills in Europe.

3. What are Integrating Activities

Under FP7, each project has to mobilise a comprehensive consortium of several research infrastructures in a given field and other stakeholders (e.g. user communities, public authorities, technological partners, research institutions), from different Member States, Associated Countries and other third countries when appropriate (at least 3 independent legal entities, each of which is established in a Member State or Associated Country, and no two of which are established in the same Member State or Associated Country).

Under FP7, each funded project (typically up to € 10 Million of EU contribution, over 4 years) is a combination of three mandatory types of activities:

- a) **Trans-national access and/or services Activities**, to provide trans-national access of researchers or research teams to one or more infrastructures among those operated by participants, and/or to provide access to scientific services freely available through communication networks (e.g. databases available via Internet). Trans-national access may be made available to external users, either in person ("hands-on") or through the provision of remote scientific services, such as the provision of reference materials or samples or the performance of sample analysis. EU financial support should cover only part of the annual operating costs of the infrastructure to prevent it from becoming dependent on the EU contribution and should not include capital investments. This financial support serves to provide access "free of charge" to external users, including all the infrastructural, logistical, technological and scientific support (training courses for using the research infrastructures, and travel and subsistence for users, are supported to).
- b) **Networking Activities**, to foster a culture of co-operation between research infrastructures, scientific communities and other key stakeholders, and help developing a more efficient and attractive European Research Area. Examples of activities are (non-exhaustive list): joint management of access; definition of common standards, protocols and interoperability; spreading of good practices, consultancy and training courses to new users; dissemination and/or exploitation of project results

and knowledge, outreach toward industry, fostering and measuring contribution to socio-economic impacts, promotion of innovation; strengthening of virtual research communities; development and maintenance of common databases for the purpose of networking and management of the users and infrastructures; foresight studies for new instrumentation, methods, concepts and/or technologies; promotion of clustering and coordinated actions amongst related projects; coordination with national or international related initiatives and support to the deployment of global and sustainable approaches in the field; promotion of long term sustainability, including the involvement of funders and the preparation of a business plan beyond the end of the project; etc.

- c) **Joint Research Activities**, to improve, in quality and/or quantity, the services provided by the infrastructures. Examples of activities are (non-exhaustive list): higher performance methodologies and protocols; higher performance instrumentation, including the testing of components, subsystems, materials, techniques and dedicated software; integration of installations and infrastructures into virtual facilities; innovative solutions for data collection, management, curation, annotation, deposition; etc.

4. How to propose a topic

Please prepare your proposed topic using the questionnaire attached in Word format, addressing all requested sections, and, only once final, submit your proposal by filling in the online questionnaire. Proposed topics will be in English, and will follow the size limitations described there, that, overall, correspond to proposals of about 4-5 printed pages maximum.

The deadline for submitting your proposed topics is **22 October 2012** (included). An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to the proposers.

5. Analysis of consultation results

All proposed topics received will be analysed collectively by a panel of high-level independent experts, which will produce a report mapping the needs and providing recommendations to the European Commission for the shaping of future actions. The evaluation will be based on the expected objectives as stated in section 3 above. The report will be made available on Internet. No individual feedback will therefore be provided to the proposers.

6. Contact for further questions

For further questions, please inquire by e-mail at RTD-RI-2012@ec.europa.eu

7. List of FP7 funded Integrating Activities

The list of Integrating Activities funded under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/index_en.cfm?pg=ri_projects_fp7