



**EMBRC**  
EUROPEAN  
MARINE  
BIOLOGICAL  
RESOURCE  
CENTRE

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## Mutualising access with other ESFRI infrastructures

*Deliverable D10.5*

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November 2013

The EMBRC preparatory-phase



## D10.5 – Mutualising access with other ESFRI infrastructures

### Q1 – Is the present report addressing the objectives described in the DoW?

yes

### Q2 – Are there any deviations to the DoW? If so, why?

\_\_yes\_\_

DoW: “The main aspect of this work will be to define opportunities... for mutualising access.” This is done and described in the report. “...and define formal mechanisms...” This was not done. It was collectively discussed with the Steering Committee and work package 9, that no formal mechanisms or cooperation agreements with other ESFRI project are negotiated during the preparatory phase of EMBRC. Also no close interaction with work package 5 occurred about legal matters of cooperation. The omission was approved by the Steering Committee during their 19<sup>th</sup> meeting in Gothenburg, Aug 2013.

### Summary (internal for the MGT team)

The report describes possibilities to cooperate between EMBRC and EMBRC-external access providers in respect to user access to facilities and services. We recommend to focus collaborative efforts on sharing access protocols, enabling the transfer of users or access applications between RIs, enabling co-applications, and synchronising access calls. A workshop should be organised in the beginning of the implementation phase specifically aimed at mutualising access and harmonising procedures between EMBRC and other interested access providers.

Resources that could be made available by the EC or national bodies to enable mutualisation of facilities were explored. However, no direct national or EC funds specifically for cooperative activities between European RIs will be available. EC funding of the implementation and operational phases of EMBRC could encompass activities to plan, implement and conduct collaboration, thereby supporting collaboration indirectly.

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## Executive Summary

The report describes possibilities for EMBRC to cooperate with EMBRC-external access providers in respect to user access to facilities and services. Discussions with representatives of EMBRC-external access providers took mainly place during a 3-day workshop organised by ppEMBRC in Crete in May 2013. The authors of this report see advantages for EMBRC and its users in cooperating with access providers external to EMBRC. This interest in collaboration with the aim of harmonising access procedures and mutualising user access to research infrastructures is shared by different European access providers. We recommend focusing collaborative efforts on sharing access protocols, enabling the transfer of users or access applications between RIs, enabling co-applications, and synchronising access calls. A workshop should be organised in the beginning of the implementation phase specifically aimed at mutualising access and harmonising procedures between EMBRC and other interested access providers.

Resources that could be made available by the EC or national bodies to enable mutualisation of facilities were explored. However, no direct national or EC funds specifically for cooperative activities between European RIs will be available. EC funding of the implementation and operational phases of EMBRC could encompass activities to plan, implement and conduct collaboration, thereby supporting collaboration indirectly.

### 1. Terms of Reference

The aim of this report is to inform the Steering Committee of ppEMBRC about opportunities for mutualising access with other ESFRI projects, and about resources that could be made available by the EC or national bodies to enable mutualisation of facilities. According to a Steering Committee decision during their 19<sup>th</sup> ppEMBRC meeting, August 27, 2013, neither work package 9 nor 10 concretised formal cooperation agreements with other ESFRIs in the preparatory phase. Such agreements shall be established at a later stage. The report is part of task 10.5, and is due by M32 (September 2013). It is a public level document.

### 2. Background

The overall objective of work package 10 is to enhance and facilitate national, EU trans-national and international access to EMBRC through the definition of suitable user-friendly access mechanisms. Tasks 2 and 3 of work package 10 defined the mechanisms and procedures of access (see report D10.2 “Best practice guidelines for uniform access to institutions and research platforms”), and prepared recommendations, how user proposals should be submitted and evaluated (see report D10.3 “Outline for the preparation and submission of user proposals”). Both tasks involved an interaction with EMBRC-external access providers. Task 5 went one step further and focussed on possibilities to cooperate in access provision rather than just exchange best-practice guidelines between EMBRC and other EC projects and research infrastructures (RI).

Many research methods, analyses and equipment are the same for marine, biomedical and ecological research and could therefore be beneficial to researchers in many different fields. In

addition, some research studies may need support by the usage of more than one RI for collection (e.g. provision of ship-time, access to ecosystems or culture collections) and analysis (e.g. access to different but unique analytical tools and bioinformatics support). Therefore, EMBRC and its users could benefit by sharing methodologies and software regarding their access programmes with other RIs and projects, and by allowing applications for a single project at more than one RI (“co-application”). In this light, the Competitiveness Council conclusions from 11 December 2012<sup>1</sup> “notes the need for common standards and harmonized access rules and conditions for the use of research infrastructures and for continued EU support to transnational access activities.”

Therefore, possibilities for common standards, as well as harmonised access rules and conditions for the use of RIs were explored, and described in this report.

### 3. Methods

Task 10.5 was conducted in close collaboration with work packages 2 and 9. A three-day workshop was organised at the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research in Crete from 28-30<sup>th</sup> May 2013. Representatives of 13 research infrastructures, and EC projects and networks attended the meeting (see “EMBRC Research Infrastructure Workshop Report 2013”). During the meeting the strategic interests and possibilities for collaboration in respect to user access were discussed. In addition, the authors of this report discussed possibilities for cooperation in access provision when meeting representatives of access providers external to EMBRC during other occasions (see ANNEX).

Additional information was taken from two questionnaires prepared by work package 9, the online “EMBRC\_Crete Cooperation scheme” (see <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AjLJfrcc1SgadFpHcG8yc2k3ME8wYnlWWmZaeVVtrVE&usp=sharing>), and the “Cooperation scheme” sent to 15 ESFRI projects.

EC and national documents were studied and discussed to investigate whether financial and strategic resources could be made available to enable such cooperation.

### 4. Status

Besides EMBRC, various research infrastructures (RI) and projects (plan to) provide users with access to research facilities, data and services through an access programme. Users may have access to specific research infrastructures, habitats and organisms (on-site and remote access). The majority of RIs also offer training to the user community.

#### 4.1. Cooperation

The applied or foreseen access protocols overlap considerably, since protocols are based on former experience, especially by I3 projects (see also report D10.2 “Definition of mechanisms of access”). Nevertheless, further harmonisation of procedures and a standardisation of eligibility criteria and evaluation criteria that are used by reviewers were seen as possible and useful. Mutualised access

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<sup>1</sup> Conclusions on “A reinforced European research area partnership for excellence and growth”, 3208<sup>th</sup> Competitiveness Council meeting, Brussels, 11 December 2012

could be greatly beneficial for the user community, as familiarity with the process will allow them to repeatedly access RIs and facilities they do not have access to in-house.

At the current stage of RI evolution, there was no interest shown in planning to organise courses or staff training together. However, interest exists in an information exchange about what is done and offered by the RIs. This would

- i) avoid duplication,
- ii) help to disseminate information about courses and trainings,
- iii) facilitate the access to and the exchange with new user groups (every RI and programme has its own user group, that differ more or less from others).

The following projects, initiatives and networks expressed their general interest to cooperate with EMBRC related to access activities: AQUAEXCEL, BBMR-ERIC, EATRIS, EMBOS, EU-OPENSREEN, EUROFLEETS 2, EuroMarine, HYDRALAB IV, JERICO, Micro B3, MIRRI, as well as the research centre VLIZ.

#### 4.2. Funding cooperation actions

From the European Commission's (EC) perspective there are clear advantages in having European-wide RIs. These include in particular the reduction of duplication, exchange of best practice, increase in quality of research and innovation, and pooling resources to enable Europe to have a global impact. And it was stated that international cooperation will be an important cross-cutting priority of Horizon 2020<sup>2</sup>.

Horizon 2020 is the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation that runs from 2014 to 2020. Approximately, a budget of about 70 billion Euros is foreseen, but the whole budget as well as the exact specifications of the allocations of this budget is still under negotiation between the Council, the Member States and the European Parliament.

In brief, the priorities and vision of Horizon 2020 are to emphasise adequate operational governance models, reinforce regional capabilities, consolidate RIs and support strategic international cooperation. EC funding for RI cooperation will be possible for

- i. transnational access,
- ii. the RIs themselves, and
- iii. cooperation with RIs and non-European partners; the aim is to ensure global interoperability and reach, and to pursue international agreements of reciprocal use, openness or co-financing of infrastructures (funding programme for Excellence in Science, sub-activity: Reinforce European research infrastructure policy and international cooperation).

In Addition, the Horizon 2020 funding program for Societal Challenges – Inclusive, innovative and secure societies, foresees funding support to promote coherent and effective cooperation (bilateral or multilateral) with third countries or specific regions.

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<sup>2</sup>The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index\\_en.cfm?pg=h2020](http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=h2020)

The Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) recommended support to bilateral coordinated and joint activities with Third countries when a clear European added-value is identified<sup>3</sup>. A SFIC report highlights the importance of implementing and consolidating on-going strategic agendas and planned S&T agreements for international cooperation with India (besides others in the fields of bioresources, energy and health), China (e. g. in the fields of food security, health and ageing) and with the United States (besides others in the fields of health and energy). The SFIC identified also potential candidates for new geographical initiatives: Brazil, Russia, Japan, Africa and the ASEAN countries<sup>4</sup>.

- iv. It may be that cluster projects like BioMedBridges will be funded in future, but it is not clear yet.

National programmes to fund cooperation between multinational RIs are not known.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the authors of this report see advantages for EMBRC and its users in cooperating with access providers external to EMBRC. This interest in collaboration with the aim of harmonising access procedures and mutualising user access to research infrastructures is shared by different European access providers. Possibilities and areas of cooperation have been discussed mainly during the workshop organised by EMBRC in Crete, 28-30<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

No direct national or EC funds specifically for cooperative activities between European RIs will be available. However, EC funding of the implementation and operational phases of EMBRC could encompass activities to plan, implement and conduct collaboration.

## 6. Recommendations

We recommend organising a workshop specifically aimed at mutualising access and harmonising procedures between EMBRC and other access providers. The workshop with interested research infrastructures (RI) should be organised within the first 12-24 months of the implementation phase to allow a well-timed translation of decisions.

We recommend to focusing collaborative efforts on:

a) Sharing access protocols: similar procedures will encourage users to reapply and apply to more than one RI. Standardised eligibility and evaluation criteria increase transparency and improve the acceptance of decisions and thereby of the whole RI.

b) Enabling the transfer of users or access applications between RIs: in some instances applications may be better suited to a partner RI than the one applied for. Similarly, in some cases a partner RI may be able to provide access to the desired facility or service during the required period.

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<sup>3</sup> Third Report of Activities of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation, April 2012  
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st01/st01353.en12.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia, Brunei and Laos.

Transfer of users or applications will mean that a user will not have to reapply at the next round should there be a complication and will potentially result in more efficient use of facilities.

c) Enabling co-applications: some applicants may require use of more than one facility to complete a piece of work or carry out work that requires access to more than one RI. It is therefore highly beneficial for the RI community to develop a methodology for co-applications.

d) Synchronisation of access calls: in order to avoid confusion and to make it possible to transfer users/applications and allow co-applications, calls for access applications should occur at the same time.

To provide the best benefits for the user community in terms of training we recommend that the RI community periodically updates each other on their training activities to enable cooperation on training provision.

When EMBRC prepares an application for funding of the implementation of the resource centre, it should foresee resources (time and money) for collaborative activities, incl. workshop organisation, planning meetings and travel money.

In addition to negotiating collaborative activities with RIs that have a similar planned life expectancy as EMBRC, cpEMBRC should seek to establish collaboration with projects limited in funding and duration (e.g. AQUAEXCEL, MESOAQUA). If these projects prove to have high user demand, EMBRC may consider taking on a few key institutes or services from these RIs to compliment the services and facilities already delivered by EMBRC (see report D2.5 "Scientific Strategy Report").

## 7. ANNEX

Alphabetic list of research infrastructure projects, access providers, networks and EC projects, with which possibilities of cooperation in access provision were discussed for task D10.5.

ANAEE – Infrastructure for Analysis and Experimentation on Ecosystems  
AQUAEXCEL – Aquaculture infrastructures for excellence in European fish research  
ASSEMBLE – Association of European marine biological laboratories  
BBMR-ERIC – Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Research Infrastructure  
BioMedBridges – Building data bridges from biology to medicine  
BioVeL – Biodiversity virtual e-Laboratory  
COOPEUS – Connecting Research Infrastructures  
EATRIS – European Advanced Translational Research Infrastructure in Medicine  
ECRIN – European Clinical Research Infrastructures Network  
ELIXIR – European Life Science Infrastructure for Biological Information  
EMBOS – European Marine Biodiversity Observatory System  
EMSO – European Multidisciplinary Seafloor Observatory  
ERINHA – European Research Infrastructure on Highly Pathogenic Agents  
EU-OPENSREEN – European Infrastructure of Open Screening Platforms for Chemical Biology  
EURO-ARGO – European contribution to Argo program  
EuroBioImaging – European Biomedical Imaging infrastructure  
EUROFLEETS – Towards an Alliance of European Research Fleets  
EuroMarine – Integration of European Marine Research Networks of Excellence  
Instruct – Integrated Structural Biology Infrastructure  
ISBE – Infrastructure for Systems Biology Europe  
JERICO – Towards a joint European research infrastructure network for coastal observatories  
HYDRALAB IV  
LifeWatch – e-science and technology infrastructure for biodiversity data and observatories  
MARS – The European Network of Marine Research Institutes and Stations  
MESOAQUA – Network of leading MESOCOSM facilities to advance the studies of future AQUATIC ecosystems from the Arctic to the Mediterranean.  
MG4U - Marine Genomics for Users  
Micro B3 – Biodiversity, Bioinformatics, Biotechnology  
MIRRI – Microbial Resource Research Infrastructure  
SIOS – Svalbard Integrated Arctic Earth Observing System  
VLIZ (Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee) - Platform for marine research