WORKFLOW FOR THE INCLUSION IN CERIC'S OPEN CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

1. DEFINITIONS

Research Infrastructures

'Research Infrastructures' means facilities that provide resources and services for the research communities to conduct research and foster innovation in their fields, including the associated human resources, major equipment or sets of instruments; knowledge-related facilities such as collections, archives or scientific data infrastructures; computing systems, communication networks and any other infrastructure of a unique nature and open to external users, essential to achieve excellence in R&I; they may, where relevant, be used beyond research, for example for education or public services and they may be 'single sited', 'virtual' or 'distributed'; [1].

Access

'Access' refers to the legitimate and authorized physical, remote and virtual admission to, interactions with and use of Research Infrastructures and to services offered by Research Infrastructures to Users. Such Access can be granted, amongst others, to machine time, computing resources, software, data, data-communication services, trust and authentication services, sample preparation, archives, collections, the set-up, execution and dismantling of experiments, education and training, expert support and analytical services (Definition of "Access", European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures, 2016).[2]

Open Access

Open Access refers to `excellence-driven' access, as defined in the latest edition of European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures, that is Access mode exclusively dependent on the scientific excellence, originality, quality and technical and ethical feasibility of an application evaluated through peer review conducted by internal or external experts. It enables Users to get access to the best facilities, resources and services wherever located. This Access mode enables collaborative research and technological development efforts across geographical and disciplinary

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[1] REGULATION (EU) 2021/695 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013
[2] European charter for access to Research infrastructures - https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/78e87306-48bc-11e6-9c64-01aa75ed71a1/

boundaries. (Definition of "Excellence-driven Access", European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures, 2016).[2]

Representing Entity

The Representing Entity, appointed by a Member State, is a public entity, including regional or private entities with a public service mission, for the discharge of specific rights and obligations that have been delegated exclusively in direct connection with the scope and activities of CERIC-ERIC. The Representing Entity, in the case of CERIC, is an Institution that can support the scientific/technical operation of CERIC, including the provision of access to one Research Infrastructure ('**Partner Facility'**) of which it has ownership and which has the scientific and technical capability to contribute to the common strategic objectives, purposes and access capabilities.

Host Institution

The Host Institution is an Institution that supports the scientific/technical operation of CERIC, providing Open Access to one Research Infrastructure ('**Associated Facility'**) of which it has ownership and which has the scientific and technical capability to contribute to strategic and scientific objectives of CERIC.

In the text of the document, Representing Entity and Host Institution are both referred to as "Host institution".

CERIC Facilities

Research Infrastructure facilities which offer access to their laboratories through the CERIC Open Access program. "CERIC Facilities" (hereinafter, also "Facilities") **include both CERIC Partner Facilities** (a part of consortium) **and Associated Facilities,** which collaborate with CERIC and enlarge its capabilities, taking part in the overall offer proposed in CERIC's open calls. The conditions for the participation of the Associated Facility are agreed on a case-by-case basis

CERIC Call for Proposals

CERIC's Calls for proposals are open invitations for the international research community to submit research projects requesting access to one or more instruments and beamlines offered by CERIC facilities for excellence-driven access mode. CERIC issues two Calls for Proposals each year and has a rolling call for application to perform specific experiment, with access in a very short time (e.g. feasibility fast track, COVID-19, etc).

CERIC Proposal Review Panel (PRP)

The Proposal review panel is a group of peer experts qualified by training and experience in particular fields of science, education, or technology to give expert advice on the merit of grant applications in such fields, who evaluate eligible proposals in their professional area(s) of expertise, submitted to CERIC in relation to the Open Access program.

CERIC's Users Office

CERIC dedicated office for the planning, execution and management of Open Access to the CERIC facilities and any other task related to support researchers applying to the CERIC Open Access program.

Instrument/Beamline responsible

The Instrument/Beamline responsible is the scientist appointed by the facility as the responsible for a given instrumentation offered through CERIC. The list of the people covering this role has to be provided to CERIC's Users Office. Those indicated in the PMS (see definition below) as Instrument/Beamline responsible are allowed to manage all the submitted proposals for the assigned instrumentation, check their safety declarations, perform the technical assessment and add the scheduling of the experimental time in the PMS. Moreover, they can insert publications related to their instruments and visualize and download reports.

Local Contact

The Local Contact is the scientific contact point for the users requesting information for a given instrumentation offered through CERIC. The information may regard technical parameters of the instrument, additional equipment available, how to prepare the experiment description, etc. The local contact is expected to help researchers in the preparation of proposals and in their visit to the facility, especially for new users. The list of the people covering this role has to be provided to CERIC's Users Office. Those indicated in the PMS with this role can manage submitted proposals for the assigned instrumentation, including scheduling, check their safety declarations and perform the technical assessment. Moreover, they can insert publications related to their instruments and visualize and download reports.

Proposal

Description of a planned experiment that a user submits to apply for Open Access. It contains also information on the Principal investigator, research team, previous experiments, scientific motivation to perform the experiment and justification on the need to use the instrument requested.

Proposal Management System (PMS)

An interactive online system that manages the proposals workflow, from the registration of users, planning of the Call for Proposals, scheduling of the planned experiments, data management and publications. The PMS allows CERIC facilities to manage, record and report on all the steps of the lifetime of an experiment.

Users

Users of Research Infrastructures can be individuals, teams and institutions from academia, business, industry and public services. They are engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems and also in the management of projects.

Teams can include researchers, doctoral candidates, technical staff and students participating in research in the framework of their studies.[3]

Virtual Unified Office (VUO)

The VUO is the Proposal Management System (PMS) currently used by CERIC for the management of the proposals workflow (User registration, proposal submission, technical assessment, scientific evaluation, data management, etc).

1. GENERAL RULES

The facility proposed by the Host Institution[4] and positively evaluated by CERIC ISTAC will be added to CERIC open calls for proposals, managed by CERIC's Users Office through a Proposal management system (PMS), currently the VUO (Virtual Unified office, https://vuo.elettra.eu/), at the following conditions:

The instruments and facilities will be briefly described in CERIC webpages, with a link to their own webpages in the Host Institution (if available) for further information; The necessary contact information (emails and phone numbers) of the local contact and the Instrument/Beamline responsible will be shared on CERIC's website to facilitate the communication between the facility and the users applying for access.

The proposals will be submitted by researchers through CERIC's web proposal management system, currently the VUO, or any other system CERIC adopts for this purpose. CERIC has a two-step application procedure with two deadlines. A first step offers to less experienced researchers the possibility to submit the application for a technical pre-assessment one month before the second deadline. Host institution commits to perform the pre-assessment of the proposals received within the first deadline, submitting comments that help researchers improve their proposals. The pre-assessment will be followed by a final submission within the second deadline.

The Host Institution will perform technical assessments of the proposals in the time frame specified by CERIC indicating the feasibility of the experiments described and the recommended number of hours.

CERIC's Proposal Review Panel (PRP) will perform a Scientific Evaluation, resulting in a score that will lead to a ranking of the proposals. The CERIC Facility will schedule proposals that have requested the use of its instruments/beamline within the time frame specified by CERIC, according to the final ranking.

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[3] European charter for access to Research infrastructures - https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/78e87306-48bc-11e6-9c64-01aa75ed71a1/

[4] Hereinafter, Representing Entity and Host Institution are both referred to as "Host institution".

In agreement with existing CERIC's mobility support policy, CERIC will cover the travel and accommodation costs for two researchers for the time required for each measurement, according with the provisions of CERIC BoD.

The Host Institution shall appoint an Instrument/Beamline responsible for each instrument offered within the Associated Facility through CERIC Open Access that will be responsible for the technical assessment of the proposals submitted.

2.1 PLANNING OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

CERIC USER SERVICES

- Definition of the deadlines:
  CERIC User Office will identify the most suitable dates for the entire workflow, which includes the deadlines for the submission of the proposals in the PMS system as well as the deadlines for the assessment of the proposals.

- Draft of the promotional materials:
  CERIC User Office will prepare a draft of the webpage dedicated to the Call for Proposals on the CERIC website as well as all the promotional messages that will be used during the opening of the Call. All CERIC facilities are invited to comment.

- Update of the Peer Review Panel
  CERIC User Office will check the fields covered by the members of the PRP and in case of any scientific fields in the Facility not covered will proceed to contact new possible members based on the proposal by the Host Institution when available.

CERIC FACILITIES

- Feedback from the Directors:
  All Directors and Coordinators of CERIC facilities that are planning to participate in the calls for proposals (CFP) will be contacted by email by CERIC requiring to inform it on any instrument which may not be available in the upcoming CFP due to failures, upgrades, etc., or on any other changes that may be relevant for the CFP. Once all the details concerning the CFP are set, the draft of the promotional webpage will be updated and shared via email with the direct link with the Directors (or contact persons) from all the CERIC Facilities in order to collect their final feedback.

2.2 OPENING OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

CERIC USERS SERVICE

CERIC User Office, with the support of the CERIC Communications department will update the promotional webpage on the CERIC website and proceed to send promotional messages through different communication channels.

CERIC FACILITIES

CERIC facilities will be invited to participate in the promotion of the Call for Proposals using their own communication channels that should always refer to the main promotional webpage on the CERIC website.

2.3 TECHNICAL PRE-ASSESSMENT

Proposals submitted within the first deadline undergo a two-step procedure with a first technical assessment, called technical pre-assessment, of their feasibility, and in case of critical feasibility aspects, recommendations should be given to the proposer on how to improve the proposal. After solving eventual technical feasibility problems, proposals should be re-submitted within the 2nd deadline.

CERIC USERS SERVICE

- Communication about the technical pre-assessment:
  CERIC User Office will inform by email all the instrument/beamline responsible involved in the technical pre-assessment about the beginning of the process as well as when the assessment is due.

- Reporting:
  CERIC User Office will prepare and share with the Directors and Coordinators of CERIC facilities as well as the CERIC management a report about the results of the Call after the first deadline.

CERIC FACILITIES

- Technical Pre-Assessment of proposals:
  The instrument/beamline responsible from CERIC facilities that received proposals will have to perform the technical pre-assessment via VUO or any PMS adopted by CERIC, to define their feasibility and the number of hours requested. In this phase, instrument/beamline responsible should provide recommendations to researchers on how to improve the proposals if necessary. Evaluators can also provide internal comments for the PRP not visible to the users.

2.4 FINAL TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT (By the instrument/beamline responsible)

After the technical pre-assessment, the proposal form is opened to the proposers for editing in order to be updated based on the feedback received from the instrument/beamline responsible and then be re-submitted within the final deadline. Expert users can submit their proposals directly to the final deadline without the necessity to be pre-assessed
The final technical assessment will define the feasibility of all the proposals submitted in both the deadlines. Newly submitted proposals will be assessed for the first time, whilst the updated proposals from the first deadline will be assessed again.

CERIC USERS SERVICE

- Communication about the final technical assessment
  CERIC User Office will inform by email all the instrument/beamline responsible involved in the technical pre-assessment about the beginning of the process as well as when the assessment is due.

- Reporting:
  CERIC User Office will prepare and share with the Directors and Coordinators of CERIC facilities as well as the CERIC management a report about the results of the Call after the final deadline.

CERIC FACILITIES

- Final technical assessment of the proposals:
  The instrument/beamline responsible from the facilities that received proposals will have to perform the final technical assessment via VUO or any PMS adopted by CERIC to determine the feasibility both for newly submitted proposals or the edited ones. Instrument/beamline responsible can also provide internal comments for the PRP not visible to the users.

2.5 SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION (by the PRP)

CERIC USERS SERVICE

- Assignment of the proposals to evaluators:
  Together with the Chair/subchairs of the PRP, CERIC will assign the proposals to evaluators (PRP members)
- Communication about the Scientific evaluation:
  CERIC User Office will inform the members of the PRP about the beginning of the process as well as when the evaluation is due.

CERIC PEER REVIEW PANEL

- Scientific evaluation of the proposals:
  The PRP will have to perform via VUO or any PMS adopted by CERIC the scientific evaluation based on the scientific value of the proposal, also taking into consideration the internal comments provided during the technical assessment.

CERIC FACILITIES

- In case proposals submitted belong to an area outside the competencies of the existing PRP members, CERIC facilities will be asked to provide suggestions for recruiting additional PRP members.

2.6 ASSIGNMENTS

The results of the scientific evaluation will be shared in the form of a ranking list. Top ranked proposals that fit in the time committed by the facility to CERIC Open Access will be considered as successful. The allocation of time for proposals that fit partially in the time committed by the facility to CERIC Open Access or that are ranked below the suggested score cut-off, will have to be decided by the Directors and Coordinators of CERIC facilities.

CERIC

- Scientific evaluation report:
  CERIC User Office will report to the Directors and Coordinators of CERIC facilities on the results of the scientific evaluation, indicating the proposals to be granted access based on the available time dedicated to CERIC, and those being near the cut-off of the available time where some elasticity would allow their allocation. Should the time available not be completely allocated to proposals above the score cut-off proposed by the PRP Chair, Directors and Coordinators of CERIC facilities will be asked on their preferences for the allocation of time to proposals below the score cut-off. The report will be shared with the

Directors and Coordinators of CERIC facilities in order to have their feedback, especially on the proposals that fall partially within the available time dedicated to CERIC.

- Final assignment of the granted proposals:
Based on the feedback received from CERIC facilities, CERIC User Office will insert in the PMS the information about the time granted to proposals in the different instruments/beamllines requested and inform applicants about the outcome of the Call.

CERIC FACILITIES

- Feedback from Directors and Coordinators:
All the Directors and Coordinators from CERIC facilities will have to provide feedback on the proposals to be granted access based on the report sent by CERIC User Office, and on the amount of time granted to these proposals for each instrument requested in their facility.

2.7 SCHEDULING

Instrument/Beamline responsible define a date for the measurements with users and insert it in the calendar. It becomes visible for the user office, users and for the travel office.

CERIC FACILITIES

- Definition of the dates for the measurements:
Instrument/Beamline responsible will define the dates for the measurements with the researchers and add them to the calendar in the PMS. The scheduling should be done immediately after the scientific evaluation to allow for a proper preparation of the experiment, samples, travels, etc. The presence of the dates in the PMS will allow users to submit access requests and the CERIC travel office to plan the travels.

ACCESS to CERIC facilities

CERIC facilities with controlled access shall inform CERIC about their onsite procedures and try to coordinate with CERIC's User Office to facilitate the seamless access to the instrumentation, support laboratories and other services by users. Facilities should provide information on the services offered to users (canteen, printers, library, data analysis, etc).