



Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2014-2015

Part “European research infrastructures”

Frequently asked questions (FAQ) – 28 March 2014

These FAQ aim to clarify the scope of the calls, topics and areas within topics. Opinion on the precise content of a draft proposal cannot be provided by the Commission services. In general, the potential applicants are encouraged to liaise with their national contact points (NCPs) – see the [NCP list on the participant portal](#)¹.

Please refer also to the [general FAQ on Horizon 2020 on the participant portal](#)².

There are several questions related to the **focus of a topic** (or an area within topic INFRAIA-1-2014/2015): there is in general no definitive answer to such a question, although as much guidance is given here as possible. Too broad a proposal might not be convincing in delivering concrete outcomes while too focused an approach might not be convincing on the impact on the European Research Area (ERA). Once there is a draft concept for a proposal, it is recommended to self-assess it versus 1/ specific challenge, 2/ scope and 3/ expected impact which are described for each topic of the work programme (WP). In particular the section on impact may tend to be neglected when preparing a proposal, but each section accounts for one-third of the score.

1. Can the methodology for costing of large research infrastructure (Art. 6.2.D.4 of the model grant agreement) be used within proposals under this part of the Work Programme?

As specified in the model grant agreement, this option is *not applicable* for all topics within calls under Part ‘Research Infrastructure’, except for e-Infrastructure topics. See page 22 of the December 2013 [model grant agreement](#)³.

2. Are the calls under the “European research infrastructures” part of the Work Programme open to all institutions, or only to ESFRI projects?

Only two topics are restricted to ESFRI projects: INFRADEV-2-2015 and INFRADEV-3-2015. A third one, the “cluster” topic INFRADEV-4-2014/2015, is also mainly addressing the need of ESFRI projects. These should represent the core component of the cluster, but as the topic calls for synergies with other appropriate research infrastructure

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/national_contact_points.html

² <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/faq.html>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/mga/gga/h2020-mga-gga-multi_en.pdf

initiatives, relevant non-ESFRI research infrastructures can of course be part of the consortium.

The description of Topic INFRAIA-1-2014/2015 does state: *“Integrating Activities are expected to duly take into account all relevant ESFRI research infrastructures to exploit synergies and to ensure that rationally designed, comprehensive and coherent overall concepts for European Infrastructures are being pursued”*. However this is to be interpreted within the context of the overall topic description. This topic is explicitly targeting key national and regional research infrastructures, i.e., non-ESFRI ones. However in some areas, the development of pan-European ESFRI projects implies the setting of common standards, common ICT solutions etc. When appropriate, the Integrating Activities should make use of these results, exploit synergies and ensure interoperability. Depending on what is most suitable to achieve the project goals, this could be achieved either by involving the relevant ESFRI projects in the Consortium or by appropriate networking activities.

3. Can the same organisation (university) file proposals at the same time under the same call topic, or under one more than one area and/or domain listed in the call for call H2020-INFRAIA-2014/2015; and hence be part of two different consortia either within the same call topic, or (in the case of H2020-INFRAIA-2014/2015) within one or several areas? In case of restrictions, do they apply at entity or department level?

The same organisation can participate in more than one proposal under the same call topic; there is no restriction on eligibility. Obviously, participants involved in several proposals under the same topic, or the same area in the case of H2020-INFRAIA-2014/2015, will be competing against themselves.

4. Is the exchange of staff between RIs addressed by the ‘Research Infrastructures’ section of the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2014-2015?

The exchange of personnel is explicitly mentioned as a possible activity under the three first calls and in particular the following topics:

- INFRADEV-3-2015: Individual implementation and operation of ESFRI projects;
- INFRADEV-4-2014/2015: Implementation and operation of cross-cutting services and solutions for clusters of ESFRI and other relevant research infrastructure initiatives;
- INFRAIA-1-2014/2015: Integrating and opening existing national and regional research infrastructures of European interest; and
- all topics under the e-Infrastructure call except EINFRA-6-2014.

Complementary to the Research Infrastructures actions, the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie action such as the “Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE)”** might be considered. The organisations constituting the partnership contribute directly to the implementation of the joint research and innovation activities by seconding and/or hosting eligible staff members. Staff members in RISE are researchers (early-stage researchers and experienced researchers), administrative, managerial and technical staff supporting the research and innovation activities of the project. Only inter-sectorial or international mobility is supported.

5. Which rules apply to depreciation of durable equipment and capital investment?

Answer: Please refer to the [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#)⁴ and in particular to article 6.2 and related annotations. There is however an exception to option D.2 of article 6.2 on depreciation costs of equipment, infrastructure or other assets: “*for trans-national and virtual access to research infrastructure: as an exception, the beneficiaries must not declare such costs (i.e. costs of renting, leasing, purchasing depreciable equipment, infrastructure and other assets) for providing trans-national or virtual access to research infrastructure (see Article 16)*”.

Please also note that option D.4 (on capitalised and operating costs of ‘large research infrastructure’) of article 6.2 is not applicable for calls under the Work Programme Part ‘European research infrastructures’ other than e-Infrastructure calls.

6. Are there funds for only one cluster project per area under topic INFRADEV-4-2014/2015, or is there room for more than one cluster proposal to be supported? How do they relate to ESFRI projects and e-infrastructure topics? Could Integrating Activities be involved in clusters?

Unlike under the corresponding call under FP7, the topic “Implementation and operation of cross-cutting services and solutions for clusters of ESFRI and other relevant research infrastructure initiatives” does not restrict clusters to follow the thematic areas of the ESFRI roadmap 2010. The scope of this topic states that “*Proposals must be centred and built around ESFRI projects in a specific thematic area that is broad enough to gather critical mass*” (p. 10 of the [“European research infrastructures” part of the Work Programme 2014-2015](#)⁵). The thematic areas quoted (“e.g. Biomedical Science, Advanced Light Sources, Astronomy, Environment and Earth Sciences”) are merely examples, and the list is non-exhaustive.

There is thus no restriction on eligibility of several projects under the same thematic area. Several clusters in the same thematic area could in particular be possible if they address different commonalities between different sets of ESFRI (and potentially national/regional) research infrastructures.

Based on the specific challenge and expected impact of the topic, the experts will consider the “*risk of fragmentation, lack of interoperability... and parallel development of divergent solutions to same problems*” in case of a very focused proposed cluster (and possibly several clusters per area) or, conversely, the feasibility of the proposed common activities to implement “*common ready-to-use services, systems, standards etc.*”, to ensure interoperability etc. in case of a very broad cluster.

A practical suggestion is to cross-check the possible activities (listed in part C of “Specific features for Research Infrastructures” of the WP) and assess the most appropriate option for each relevant activity. This should help identify the best concept overall.

How do clusters relate to ESFRI projects?

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/doc/call/h2020/common/1597686-part_04_research_infrastr_v1.1_en.pdf

As stated under the scope, *“This topic will contribute to the construction and operation of the research infrastructures identified in the ESFRI roadmap, therefore proposals must be centred and built around ESFRI projects in a specific thematic area that is broad enough to gather critical mass”*. In particular, the needs of the participating ESFRI projects will drive the scope of the proposal.

How do clusters relate to e-Infrastructure topics?

As stated under the scope, *“This topic is complementary with topics EINFRA-1-2014, Big research data, and EINFRA-9-2015, Virtual Research Environments - VRE: EINFRA-1-2014 addresses services that are potentially transversal and generic, VREs integrate data, network and computing resources for interdisciplinary communities whereas INFRADEV-4-2014/2015 address interoperability of services and common solutions for cluster of ESFRI and other research infrastructure initiatives in thematic areas.”*

However, as *“proposals should build upon the state of the art in ICT and e-infrastructures for data, computing and networking and work in cooperation with e-infrastructure service providers”*, specific expertise similar to the one present in the e-Infrastructure topics might be necessary to achieve some of the activities planned by the cluster.

Could Integrating Activities be involved in clusters?

As stated under the scope, *“Consortia should include key participants of the involved infrastructures initiatives as well as other partners needed to develop the required solutions. Proposals should build upon the state of the art in ICT and e-infrastructures for data, computing and networking and work in cooperation with e-infrastructure service providers.”* The evaluation experts will carefully assess the appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources as well as the complementarity of the participants.

7. The Integrating Activities call addresses “Advanced Communities’ whose research infrastructures show an advanced degree of coordination and networking at present, in particular, through Integrating Activities awarded under previous Framework Programmes. The strongest impact for these communities will be expected typically to arise from focusing on innovation aspects and on widening trans-national and virtual access provision.” Does this mean that it is assumed that networking activities are considered to have already exhausted their role in the previous IA and that the strongest impact is indeed expected from innovation actions, read Joint Research Activities?

“Innovation aspects” do not automatically equate to “innovation actions” or “Joint Research Activities”. For further guidance, please consider in detail the statements on innovation in text of the call, in particular:

1. The “scope” section of the IA call on p. 15: *“Integrating Activities in particular should contribute to fostering the potential for innovation, including social innovation, of research infrastructures by reinforcing the partnership with industry, through e.g. transfer of knowledge and other dissemination activities, activities to promote the use of research infrastructures by industrial researchers, involvement of industrial associations in consortia or in advisory bodies.”*
2. The “expected impact” section on p. 22: *“Innovation is fostered through a reinforced partnership of research organisations with industry.”*

“Industry” can be interpreted as all industry including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It is up to the proposers to determine which kind of activity within a project and consortium would be best suited to make such a contribution and to achieve the desired impact, including on innovation aspects. It should be kept in mind also that Integrating Activities as before need to include all three kinds of activities: Joint Research, Networking, Trans-national/Virtual Access.

8. We are discussing a focused regional action in one part of Europe to accelerate the HPC uptake and were wondering whether INFRAIA-1-2014/2015 would be a possible instrument for this.

While this question refers to a specific area under INFRAIA-1-2014/2015, similar questions may arise for other areas under the same call. The answer applies analogously there.

This call aims to address the following specific challenge: *“European researchers need effective and convenient access to the best research infrastructures in order to conduct research for the advancement of knowledge and technology. The aim of this action is to bring together, integrate on European scale, and open up key national and regional research infrastructures to all European researchers, from both academia and industry, ensuring their optimal use and joint development.”*

Furthermore *“As the scope of an integrating activity is to ensure coordination and integration between all the key European infrastructures in a given field and to avoid duplication of effort, at most one proposal per area is expected to be funded.”*

In this context, experts will be asked in particular to assess and compare between proposals the expected impact as described in the WP for the INFRAIA topic. Integrating activities are open to relevant regional infrastructures. However the structuring impact on the ERA remains essential therefore the European scale is essential.

The area you are mentioning is for an advanced community, therefore the strongest impact for these communities will be expected typically to arise from focusing on widening trans-national and virtual access provision and a focus on innovation aspects.

9. Under Integrating Activities, what is the difference between trans-national access and virtual access? Which rules apply for claiming costs for these?

For the definition of the two access categories, please refer to the section “Specific features for research infrastructures, D. Integrating Activities, (ii) Trans-national and/or virtual access activities” on pp. 56-57 of the [“European research infrastructures” part of the Work Programme 2014-2015](#).

Virtual Access means *“access to resources needed for research through communication networks without selecting or even identifying the researchers to whom access to resources is provided. Examples of virtual access activities are databases available via Internet, or data deposition services. Only virtual services widely used by the community of European researchers will be supported, therefore the services offered under a project shall be periodically assessed by an external board”*. As these services are already freely available, there is no need for a competitive selection of users and therefore no need to set up a selection panel. There is no need to identify users either. However, user identification may still be necessary as part of virtual access when this is subject to

specific requirements such as registration, authentication and/or authorisation of users (e.g. for access to sensitive data). Clearly there is no need for users to visit the infrastructure to get access and no need to define a unit of access. The access provider will still need to publicise widely the access offered and set up an external board to periodically assess the services offered, as only virtual services widely used by the community of European researchers will be supported. The assessment report must be provided to the EC together with statistics on the access offered during the project, e.g. quantity, geographical distribution of users and, when possible, information/statistics on scientific outcomes acknowledging the use of the infrastructure (publications, patents, etc.).

Trans-national Access means *“To provide 'free of charge' trans-national access to researchers or research teams including from industry to one or more infrastructures among those operated by participants. These access activities should be implemented in a coordinated way such as to improve the overall services available to the research community. 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, the performance of sample analysis or sample deposition. ... The selection of researchers or research teams shall be carried out through an independent peer-review evaluation of their research projects.”* (pp. 56-57 of the [“European research infrastructures” part of the Work Programme 2014-2015](#).)

Note therefore that access provided through communication networks is *not* automatically virtual access: if such access requires a competitive selection of the users to be served, it is not “virtual access” but “**remote trans-national access**”. An example of this would be access to a high-performance computer, where the computing cycles are not unlimited and you need to allocate them competitively. Other cases could include services that need project-specific preparatory work (e.g. anonymisation) to enable access to resources via internet. Remote trans-national access requires the definition of a unit of access, the set-up of a selection panel for the selection of users and all the other obligations specified in the Grant Agreement for trans-national access.

The **funding rules** are laid down in Article 16 of the [Model Grant Agreement](#)⁶. Additional information will be contained in the [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#)⁷ (annotations on Article 16 are under preparation).

Note that there have been important changes to the funding rules for trans-national access compared to FP7: *“Access costs can be supported through the reimbursement of the eligible costs specifically incurred for providing access to the research teams selected for support under the project, or on the basis of unit costs calculated according to the methodology indicated in the Commission Decision C(2013)8199. In the latter case the access costs will be calculated multiplying the unit cost by the quantity of access provided under the grant. The cost of the unit of access to the infrastructure, the unit cost, shall then be indicated in the proposal. A combination of the two methods mentioned above will also be possible.”* (footnote 45 on p. 57 of the [“European research infrastructures” part of the Work Programme 2014-2015](#)). The [relevant sections of the](#)

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/mga/gga/h2020-mga-gga-multi_en.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

[Commission Decision on the use of Unit costs](#)⁸ are now available on the Participant Portal.

Note also that “a unit of access to the infrastructure shall be identified and precisely defined in the Grant Agreement” to satisfy the reporting requirements (p. 57 of the [“European research infrastructures” part of the Work Programme 2014-2015](#)) even if trans-national access costs are to be reimbursed exclusively as direct costs.

10. In call H2020-INFRAIA-2014/2015, does the area “Research infrastructures for hydrological/ hydrobiological research” address freshwater only, or transitional and coastal waters as well (as defined under the Water Framework Directive)?

The project should mainly address observatories of European freshwaters (in the strict sense). Transitional waters ("substantially influenced by freshwater flows") should be included when possible (appropriate observatories in place).

Associated coastal waters (as defined by the Water Framework Directive 'WFD') are not targeted by this call.

However, and in general, the integrating activities are not expected to develop in isolation. Therefore, if appropriate, networking and coordination with other relevant (networks of) observatories should be considered.

Finally, while synergies should help supporting the WFD and related monitoring requirement, it is reminded that the aim of the activity is firstly offering the best scientific services to researchers (to conduct research for the advancement of knowledge and technology).

11. Under Integrating Activities, which rules for indirect costs apply to travel and subsistence in trans-national access funded under H2020?

The rules on indirect costs have changed significantly compared to FP7. The [Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation](#)⁹ (RfP) stipulate in Article 29.1: "*Indirect eligible costs shall be determined by applying a flat rate of 25 % of the total direct eligible costs, excluding direct eligible costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the beneficiary, as well as financial support to third parties.*" Note that the Unit costs for trans-national access costs already include indirect cost (compare RfP Article 29.2 and question 9 above).

12. Topic INFRASUPP-3-2014 – Strengthening the human capital of research infrastructures: in case a proposal is targeting training needs of staff managing and operating a specific type of RIs (or in a specific domain), is such proposal eligible?

If this proposal complies with the other eligibility conditions, its content would correspond, “wholly or in part, to the topic description against which it is submitted, in the relevant work programme part”; it would therefore be eligible.

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/legal/unit_costs/unit-costs_tna-infra_extr_en.pdf

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/legal_basis/rules_participation/h2020-rules-participation_en.pdf

However, the specific challenge of this topic makes it clear that the extent to which proposals “*foster coordination across domains and types of infrastructures*” will be evaluated. In particular, the evaluation will consider to which extent a proposal is addressing the “*intercultural and interdisciplinary nature as well as the diversity*” of the pan-European research infrastructures.

As reminded in this topic, potential applicants should notice that specific training of staff is actually encouraged under other calls and topics for research infrastructures, for example under topic INFRADEV-4-2014/2015, “Implementation and operation of cross-cutting services and solutions for clusters of ESFRI and other relevant research infrastructure initiatives”: “*Proposals may address the development of skills and the **specific training of staff managing and operating the research infrastructures**, as well as fostering the innovation potential of research infrastructures, in complementarity with the horizontal activities supported under Call H2020-INFRA SUPP-2014/2015 (in particular topics INFRA SUPP-3-2014 and INFRA SUPP-4-2015)*”.