

### **Short Summary:**

#### **Preamble:**

CoPoRI is a service tool for ESFRI to enhance communication and policy development for Research Infrastructures in Europe and support ESFRI in labour-intensive activities. The start of a series of CoPoRI workshops was in June 2012. The workshops should encourage and facilitate discussions and the sharing of best practices between ESFRI projects on issues of common interest. The 1<sup>st</sup> CoPoRI Exchange of Experience (EoE) workshop took place on 11-12 June 2012 in Hamburg at DESY (D3.2). The 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop held on 12-13 February 2013 in Brussels was hosted by the Commission to support the interaction between the Commission, ESFRI and its working groups, and the ESFRI projects.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> COPORI EoE workshop focused on:

- Perspectives and new developments for ESFRI projects based on reports by ESFRI representatives
- ERIC: experiences and new developments, reports by the Commission and a National Ministry
- Exchange of experiences between ESFRI projects on setting up and starting a legal entity, financial sustainability and on operational issues encountered by European RIs.

The workshop was attended by 61 representatives of 28 ESFRI projects. 24 projects filled in the feedback form (see below). A hand-out was provided to the participants concerning the exchange of experience panel discussions including the contributions of the panel members on the various questions of the panel discussions. This hand-out is available on-line together with all presentations, at: <https://indico.desy.de/conferenceModification.py?confId=6870>.

#### **Major findings were:**

For the ESFRI projects, it was very important to receive up-to-date information on ESFRI activities as well as to learn from the experiences, views and recommendations of the Commission and the representative of a national Ministry (the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research) on the setting up of ERICs. The ESFRI implementation working group identified important bottlenecks faced by ESFRI projects along the path towards implementation. These bottlenecks relate to governance and legal issues, technical issues, access to funding, access and data policy. Among others, the working group pointed out:

- Funding: difficulty to secure commitments early, increased competition in the access to funding, lack of coordination and synchronisation between national funding schemes, difficulty to secure funding for central management of distributed research infrastructures
- Legal and governance: still long duration for establishment of legal structure despite ERIC, reluctance of ACs and third countries to engage into ERICs, inherent complexity of aligning management / operational requirements and political interests when defining the governance model
- Other issues: interim phase between PP and implementation, site choice, mobility.

The following recommendations for the statutes of the legal entity were given:

- Setting clearly the objectives of the ERIC or legal entity,
- Making clear what the advantages of being a member are and allowing other countries as observers in a way (preferably for a limited time)

- Keeping the statutes concise (they should restrict to legal obligations only) and creating side documents for all other details,
- Getting ministries early informed and involved (an early Memorandum of Understanding between the countries/partners can help in this respect).

During the first EoE session on setting up and starting a legal entity, the representatives of five ESFRI projects with different legal entities gave very helpful and detailed answers on the predefined questions (see the hand-out). All of these five ESFRI projects experienced that it was essential for the setting-up process to involve the ministries early based e.g. on an MoU or letter of intent and to have a country “championing” the project and taking the lead to host and contribute to the seat of the European research infrastructure.

Achieving financial sustainability is a matter of trust and requires that the funders are involved early enough. It usually relies on a combination of cash and in-kind contributions, which should include contingencies typically between 10 to 30%. In some scientific fields like life sciences, the operational costs exceed the traditional rule of thumb of 10 % of the construction costs. The financing of the operational costs of the ESFRI RIs is still in many cases unclear. The possibility of using Structural Funds to finance operational costs should also be clarified. ESFRI asked for a certain percentage of operational costs to be financed by Horizon 2020.

There is a huge potential of exchange of experiences and bottom-up activities like workshops through the development of a network of large European RIs. Most projects would prefer not to start this network as a legal entity. But one should not lose momentum and keep the option of changing the structure later or merging it with other organisations open.

An example for the operation of a distributed European RI, a “united RI”, was given by LIFEWATCH where 15% cash contributions is given to the ERIC and 85% in-kind contributions to the distributed LIFEWATCH centres who run the hardware and software common facilities (like railway tracks) and who signed strict service level agreements. The national contributions to the operational costs are fixed for 5 years for which some countries use Structural Fund. The national contributions cover about 70% of the operational costs; 20 % are expected to be funded by EC projects and 10 % by commercial contracts to a spin-off of the ERIC.