

## INFRA\_DEV calls in Horizon Europe

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Life Science Research Infrastructures (LS RIs) on the ESFRI Roadmap, we write to reiterate our concern in relation to call topics available in Destination #1 of the Research Infrastructures programme (Pillar 1) in Horizon Europe.

We have previously raised our concerns that a topics supporting the operation of world-class research infrastructures that are already implemented, is absent from the first Horizon Europe RI Work Programme. Our concerns are articulated below:

- The types of activities that were funded through previous Horizon 2020 INFRA\_DEV-3 topics represent real European added-value, including: expanding membership; consolidation and expanding the scientific services (in ease of access, support and speed, service quality, federation of RI services through integrated pipelines across RIs); support to the outreach, internationalisation and global visibility; support to governance; and expanding innovation and industry- and SME-support activities. They help to coordinate the entities in a way that no other grant funding can; they are impossible to fund through alternative EC grants and very difficult through Member State-funded activities.
- INFRA\_DEV topics allow RIs to diversify, expand their capacities, respond to emerging challenges, and generally evolve to fit a constantly changing research landscape in the ERA. These changes cannot be implemented without substantial funding at the European level.
- The individual H2020 INFRA\_DEV-3 projects that were funded previously have received positive individual reviews, and we are not aware of any programme-wide ex-post evaluation of the INFRA\_DEV-3 scheme that calls into question its effectiveness. The outputs of INFRA\_DEV projects live long beyond the duration of the project, supporting the long-term sustainability of the RI for the benefit of the European research community, as well as of the EU's industrial competitiveness and strategic autonomy.
- The new topics in Destination #1 provide some support for new RIs in Preparatory Phase (through the INFRA\_DEV\_2021-02-01) and for ESFRI entries from 2016 onwards (through the INFRA\_DEV\_2021\_02-02) and these are a welcome addition. However for the many RIs that are already implemented and operating effectively to provide services for European Science, there is still a need for funding to support their further development and to help them maintain their foremost position as providers of specialist European infrastructures. The current experience is that Member State funding available to support RIs has not increased at the rate needed to accommodate the increasing number and scope of ESFRI projects and landmarks over recent years.
- The RIs already on the ESFRI roadmap are diverse, adaptive and accommodate new topics and research questions quickly and are cost-effective and efficient largely because of prior INFRADEV-3 funding. We strongly recommend that there should be a deliberate focus toward

maximizing the impact on the existing RIs and capitalizing on the excellent work already being carried out by those RIs.

- Finally, national support for RIs is a national priority and therefore Member countries find it difficult to fund access for users from other countries and while project funding for service provision is welcome through Destination 3, this is transient in nature and not sufficient to sustain the transnational use community demand in the long term. European RIs were designed as instruments for transnational and multinational co-operation, and should therefore be viewed as eligible for funding from any public funding source in EU Member States. However, there is no such provision in the ERIC Regulation. We understand that an Expert Working Group is being formed to review the ERIC Regulation and we will urge them to consider the need for public funding eligibility within the Regulation.

We ask you to support reinstating an INFRA\_DEV topic into the Horizon Europe Work Programme from 2023 onwards, for more mature ESFRIs in order to ensure continued delivery of high-quality services by these established Research Infrastructures.

Best wishes,

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*(Chair and Vice-Chair of the LS RI Strategy Board)*

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