Mutual Learning Exercise – Pilot Actions:

Open Call for the involvement of research infrastructures and thematic experts

Terms of References

Mutual Learning Exercise within the project ResInfra@DR:
http://www.interreg-danube.eu/resinfra-dr

BACKGROUND

The ResInfra@DR project is designed to strengthen Research Infrastructures (RI) in the Danube macro region (DR). As part of its activities, the project develops a **mutual learning activity** (MLA) resulting in **practical recommendations** for Research Infrastructures (RI). In order to allow for the best interaction between and among RIs, the project aims to set up **(broad) thematic pairs/trios** of research infrastructures within the Danube macro region. Overall, 9 to 10 research infrastructures can participate in the MLA. In case thematic pairs or trios of RIs cannot be established within this call, a follow up to this call may be released to establish thematic pairs/trios of RIs.

The mutual learning will provide individual recommendations for the interested and selected research infrastructures which will be developed by experts. At the same time, the MLA goes beyond these individual recommendations. In order to allow a region-wide sharing of identified appropriate practices, a dedicated macro regional meeting will be organised.

Generally, the following countries and thematic topics are addressed, but this list does not exclude other applications by research infrastructures from different thematic fields:

Countries addressed to participate	Thematic focus of Research infrastructure
Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary	Social science research infrastructures
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia	Research infrastructure focusing on electrical engineering
Bulgaria, Croatia	Research infrastructures on water issues, i.e. marine biology orfocusing on other water bodies
Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia	Research infrastructures in the fields of food and nutrition, food safety, molecular biology and translational research

The current ToR describes the following two processes which go hand in hand to ensure mutual learning between and among research infrastructures. The tasks below are **inseparable elements of the mutual learning activity**:

(1)   **TASK 1**: Interested **RIs need to express their commitment to participate in this mutual learning activity and to act as a HOST RI**. Specific scientific fields are suggested according to the focus areas listed in the table above, but they shall not limit applications from other research fields. The following preparatory steps shall be supported under this task to ensure adequate and practical recommendations:
a) answering a short self-assessment questionnaire;
b) a visit by a peer team of experts to the HOST RI;
c) selection of stakeholders important for the RI to support the visit of the peer team;

d) contributing to a feedback visit of the peer team to the HOST RI.

Confidentiality is assured through specific forms prepared by ResInfra@DR. To answer this call appropriately, a specific form in Annex 1 is provided with this ToR to confirm the commitment of applicant RIs. This form needs to be completed by applicant RIs. The ResInfra@DR partner from the country where the applicant RI is situated will cover the necessary costs of meetings.

(2)   **TASK 2:** The commitment to participate as a Research Infrastructure (RI) in TASK 1 goes **hand in hand with the nomination of a RI expert strongly involved in the HOST RI** who will contribute to developing practical recommendations for *another* committed RI which is called herein the **PAIR RI**. Experts from the HOST RI shall demonstrate the necessary qualification and knowledge when answering to the Call and this ToR. Further guidance is provided below. The expert becomes a member of a **team** which is set up by the ResInfra@DR project. Costs associated with the accomplishment of TASK2 will be covered by the ResInfra@DR partner from the country where the visited PAIR RI is situated. An expert fee is foreseen. In addition, travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the ResInfra@DR project.

By forming thematic pairs/trios of RIs, a mutual exchange of experience will be ensured by the ResInfra@DR. The above list identifies some thematic fields where the experience can be shared. The thematic focus is necessary as the thematic insight in field-specific challenges and practical solutions is a precondition for joint work and practical recommendations.

Note:
Formal **working pairs and trios** of RIs will be established *after* the closure of the call and the evaluation of the applications. Applicants will be contacted to reach an agreement on the pairs/trios formed.

A concluding event is organised at the end of this exercise to disseminate and discuss the cross-thematic recommendations and reconfirm some findings important for similar situations across the Danube macro region. This event will be open to all participating RIs.
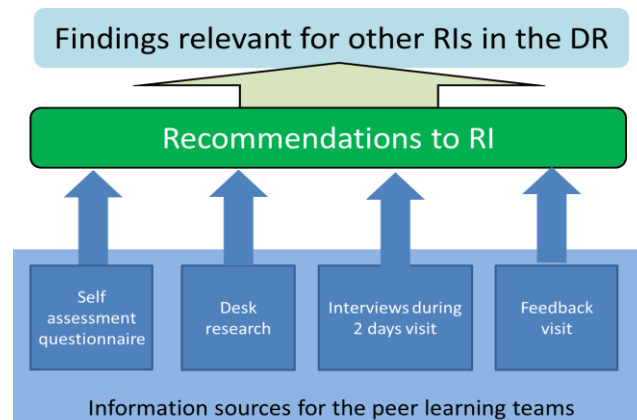
THE PROCESS

International mutual learning teams – the peer teams of experts – will visit one of the participating RIs and the related core stakeholders during two-day on-site visits using a **"critical friends approach"** (overall up to ten countries covered by all teams). The teams will develop specific recommendations for each participating RI. The team will consist of an expert from a comparable peer, that is, also operating a research infrastructure in the Danube Region, as well as 2-3 additional experts. Two commitments are important for the successful completion of the peer-learning activity:
-        In TASK 1, your RI provides information through a short **self-assessment questionnaire** to help the team familiarise itself with the situation at hand. The HOST RI will

be visited and core stakeholders will be interviewed. After the **visits**, the mutual learning teams will produce specific **recommendations** for the HOST RI and organise a feedback visit. Selected transferable recommendations will be shared with other involved RIs across all thematic fields (subject to your consent).

- In TASK 2, **one expert from the HOST RI** (that is, your RI) will visit a thematically related RI in another country (PAIR RI) where the same process will be started. The teams will count on your expert input as your field-specific experience and recommendations are highly valuable. In order to ensure a field-specific content of recommendations, the expert plays a central role for formulating the recommendations. The other team members involved contribute to this task.

Peer learning teams preparing recommendations for the HOST RI include the following roles:

(A) a team co-ordinator (from a ResInfra@DR project partner from the country of the PAIR RI) who facilitates the process;

(B) a core thematic expert focusing on specific recommendations coming from the PAIR RI;

(C) a support member (from a ResInfra@DR project partner) in charge of the practical arrangements on site in the host country; and

(D) optional team member(s) supporting the processes (from a ResInfra@DR project partner), other involved experts.

TEAM ROLE	CORE FUNCTIONS
Team co-ordinator **ResInfra@DR partner**	• Co-ordination of the team work • Interaction with RI on organisational issues of the process • Contribution to recommendations
Thematic expert from the PAIR RI	• **Maintaining thematic focus** • **Specific content of recommendations** • **Core drafting of recommendations**
Team member **in the country of the HOST RI** **ResInfra@DR partner**	• Access to stakeholders and support with communication to RI • Practical support for visits incl. cost arrangements • Contribution to recommendations
(Optional) Team member(s) **potentially also ResInfra@DR partner**	• Supporting the team co-ordinator • Contribution to recommendations

The ResInfra@DR project already produced guidelines for the implementation of the action which should be used by the peer learning teams. This includes specific support material, like interview guidelines for the team visit; a methodological guide for the identification of stakeholders etc. The guidelines need to be adapted for the specific situations of the RIs involved.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Outputs: HOST RIs will receive (a) a **detailed report** specific to their RI. The (b) **synthesis report,** which all participating RIs will receive, will not include any confidential information and its content will be also disseminated across the Danube macro region.

Confidentiality: The mutual learning actions include strict **agreements on confidentiality,** and the working mode is a "critical friends approach". There is no intention to distribute critical information beyond the participating RIs. Information will be processed following clear agreements. The expert team will agree with you on which non-confidential information to include in the synthesis report and which not to include.

Limits: Following the "critical friends approach", the pilot action does not involve scientific peer assessments or a review of "performance", nor does it have any decisive power. Being an **experimental and short-term action**, it might not answer all pressing issues.

RESPONSILBE PARTNERS AND PERSONS

The following list provides information about the partners who will be the main parties interacting with the successful and selected applicants as regards TASK 1. The identification of stakeholders and technical arrangements to organise the visits will be made with the ResInfra@DR project partners in the same country of a HOST RI. The listed ResInfra@DR project partners will cover travel, accommodation and subsistence costs of the incoming thematic expert from the PAIR RI.[1]

The list below indicates the future contracting partners for the accomplishment of TASK 2. Contracting agreements for TASK 2 will be made with the partner situated in the country where TASK 2 is performed (identically with the country of the PAIR RI).

Contracting partner in Austria:
Name of organisation: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
Institute of Water Management, Hydrology and Hydraulic engineering (at the Department for Water-Atmosphere-Environment)
Address: Muthgasse 107, A-1190 Vienna, Austria
Person in charge of the project: Doris Gangl

Contracting partner in Bosnia and Herzegovina:
Name of organisation: Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Srpska
Address: Trg Republike Srpske 1, 78000 Banja Luka
Person in charge of the project: Sinisa Marcic

Contracting partner in Bulgaria:
Name of organisation: Applied Research and Communication Fund
Address: 5, Alexander Zhendov St., Sofia 1113, Sofia
Person in charge of the project: Marko Hajdinjak

Contracting partner in Bulgaria:
Name of organisation: Ministry of Education and Science
Address: 2A, Kniaz Dondukov Blvd., 1000 Sofia
Person in charge of the project: Kalin Mutavchiev

Contracting partner in Croatia:
Name of organisation: Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
Address: Dnaje Svetice 38, 10000 HR Zagreb
Person in charge of the project: Mirela Čokešić

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[1] Example: In case a HOST RI is situated in country "A", the costs of an incoming expert (coming from the PAIR RI) from country "B" which accomplishes TASK 2 are covered by the ResInfra@DR partner situated in country "A".
Exceptionally and when necessary to accomplish the process, other ResInfra@DR partners can take over costs of actions run in other countries to ensure the completion of the process.

Country contracting partner in Czech Republic:
Name of organisation: Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences, (The Centre for Science, Technology, and Society Studies)
Address: Filosofický ústav AV ČR Kabinet pro stadium vědy, techniky a společnosti Jilská 1 110 00 Praha 1
Person in charge of the project: Jan Balon

Country contracting partner in Hungary:
Name of organisation: Institute of Economics,
Centre for Economic and Regional Studies,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Address:
1097 Budapest, Toth Kalman u. 4.
Person in charge of the project: Attila Havas

Country contracting partner in Romania:
Name of organisation: Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding
Address: No. 21-25 Mendeleev street, Sector 1, postal code 010362, Bucharest
Person in charge of the project: Raluca Ciobotaru

Country contracting partner in Serbia:
Name of organisation: Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
Address: Njegoseva 12, 11000 Beograd/Belgrade, Republic of Serbia
Person in charge of the project: Tijana Knezevic

Country contracting partner in Slovakia:
Name of organisation: Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information
Address: Lamačská cesta 8/A, 811 04 Bratislava
Person in charge of the project: Anna Krivjanska

The following organisation will organise the documentation of the call procedure:
ZSI-Zentrum für Soziale Innovation GmbH (Centre for Social Innovation)
Linke Wienzeile 246, 1150 Vienna, Austria
DI Martin Felix Gajdusek, Phone: +43-1-4950442-67 e-mail: gajdusek@zsi.at

The documents for the response to this ToR call (not exceeding 10 MByte) address the above listed partners and must be sent by e-mail to: <u>resinfra.pilot@zsi.at</u>

Further Information on TASK 1
Participation and commitment of your own Research Infrastructure (HOST RI)

A dedicated Annex to this ToR (Annex 1) serves for interested RIs to express their commitment to participate. **Annex 1 needs to be completed** and sent with the application.

The general characteristics of participation and the direct benefits for the participating RIs are described above. Here the applicants can find more specific information including: the limits and expectations, the work steps and work tasks associated with the role of acting as a HOST RI.

Participation in this mutual learning exercise produces a specific type of output including a specific and informed feedback in the format of recommendations for the HOST RI. The practical relevance of the recommendations is considered as a critical factor for the success of the whole action. In order to achieve this, several steps have been identified:

• Clarification of important questions to which currently answers are searched from the HOST RI with the team. This step is supported by the team co-ordinator and the expert involved from the PAIR RI;

• Informing about the personnel/staff that can be involved and will receive the specific information throughout the process (contact persons);

• Receiving the declarations on confidentiality from the team members; this step serves to build trust in a formalised way among the involved team and the HOST RI. This step is supported by the team co-ordinator;

• Providing data in a questionnaire which provides important information about the operations of the HOST RI. This step is supported by a ResInfra@DR partner from the same country where the HOST RI is located;

• Agreement on a feasible schedule with the visiting team. This task is supported by the team co-ordinator;

• Identification of important stakeholders who can be approached during the peer learning visit. This step is jointly accomplished with the team and especially with the ResInfra@DR partner from the same country.

• Hosting a team visit, including interviews with important internal stakeholders of the HOST RI, and supporting the arrangement of interviews with other important stakeholders who are not part of the HOST RI. This step is supported by a ResInfra@DR partner from the same country which also covers associated costs;

• Providing feedback to the received recommendations and also hosting a reflection visit where the wider HOST RI team will be informed about the recommendations developed by the team, the draft recommendations are provided by the team co-ordinator and the thematic expert participating;

• Agreement on publishable parts: Agreeing between the peer learning team and the HOST RI as to which parts of the report are confidential and which specific information needs to be removed to make the recommendations publishable;

• Supporting the identification of **recommendations which are potentially transferable to other research infrastructures** in the Danube macro region is mainly in the hands of the team and the ResInfra@DR partners involved;

- Participation of involved staff member/s in a joint learning event planned at the end of completion of the parallel running activities (Venue: Bratislava). Eligible costs are to be covered by ResInfra@DR partners.

The results and recommendations do not include a peer review or systematic assessment which would be normally necessary to contribute to funding decisions or other internal key decisions. Instead, the recommendations can serve to feed internal discussions and thus aid the future operation and development of the HOST RI.

The action will be completed ideally within 2 months (should not exceed a time span of 4 months) to allow the cost coverage from the ResInfra@DR project.

Note that Annex 1 (CONFIRMATION on the participation in the Peer-Learning Activity within the ResInfra@DR Project) needs to be signed and provided with the call response (response to ToR). No further information needs to be provided on TASK 1.

Further Information on TASK 2
Expert contribution to team work

The reciprocal approach of pairs/trios will allow maintaining the thematic focus of the work of the experts in TASK 2. Expert contribution in TASK2 includes the following working steps:

- Participation in the online/virtual co-ordination meetings organised by the team co-ordinator when necessary. This step will also inform about the next working steps of the team and necessary agreements on how to structure the process;

- Contribution to developing specific and realistic questions according to the research field(s) addressed during the preparation of the whole activity, focusing on the most important questions which can be answered to a satisfactory extent;

- Assessing the quality and relevance of the self-assessment questionnaire; when needed, revising it and/or adding missing questions when important thematic issues remain uncovered in the draft questionnaire;

- Supporting the stakeholder mapping as a preparatory step for the site visit with a focus on the thematic field covered by the PAIR RI;

- Assessing the usefulness of the guiding interview questions addressing the core internal and external stakeholder groups for interviews during the visit;

- Informing him/herself about the situation based on the available sources (conducting a small-scale desk research, studying materials prepared by the team members and the PAIR RI);

- **Travel 1:** Participation in the full team visit on site;

- Leading role for drafting the core parts of recommendations, especially contributing with field-specific recommendations developed for the PAIR RI. Specific contributions of team members shall be integrated accordingly, which is a shared task with the team co-ordinator;

- **Travel 2:** Participation in the feedback visit when recommendations are presented to the PAIR RI;

- Participation in the finalisation of the recommendations under the leadership of the team co-ordinator;

- Supporting the identification of "synthesis" findings which are potentially transferable to similar RIs in the Danube macro region;

- Preparing recommendations that can be relevant to various countries in the Danube macro region;

- **Travel 3:** Together with the team co-ordinator, presenting the above recommendations at the final meeting (in Bratislava).

Time resources needed to accomplish TASK 1 and TASK 2 and funding of the tasks

Approximately two months will be necessary to organise the teams as well as the on-site and feedback visits. TASK 1, acting as HOST RI, and TASK 2, working as expert to support the PAIR RI are prepared in parallel, but the timing of visits needs to be agreed with in the working teams in advance and according to the availability of all experts.

The amount available to cover the above working steps of an expert in TASK 2 shall not exceed 3,000.00 EURO (three thousand Euros). The expert will be contracted by the Res-Infra@DR project partner(s) situated in the country of the PAIR RI. For the proper implementation of TASK 2, a minimum of 10 working days will be necessary.

Travel costs (tickets, accommodation) will be covered by the responsible ResInfra@DR project partner and in addition to the expert fee indicated above. Therefore, travel costs do not need to be included in the application.

Tentative implementation period

ResInfra@DR project partners are committed to start the MLA as soon as thematic pairs or trios of research infrastructures are established. The start is scheduled for June 2018.

Tentative timeline

06 June 2018: Publication of the Open call
25 June 2018: Deadline for applications 14:00 CET (date and time of entry of the e-mail).
27 June 2018: Online selection committee meeting of ResInfra@DR project partners
The selection of research infrastructures and experts will be made by 27th of June at the latest and the applicants will be informed by 29th of June latest.

Application procedure for TASK 1 and TASK 2

Note that these tasks are inseparable parts of this call. Applications not including the relevant parts described below will be rejected.

TASK 1:
Note that the Annex (CONFIRMATION on the participation in the Peer-Learning Activity within the ResInfra@DR Project) needs to be signed and provided with the call response (response to ToR). No further information needs to be provided on TASK 1.

TASK 2:
The qualifications of the experts who will contribute to TASK 2 shall be demonstrated through:

- a **cover letter/e-mail** with short description of the motivation (not exceeding half a page);
- a **CV,** highlighting relevant experience and reference projects or activities (not limited to scientific tasks);
- a **short information** about *important processes relevant for the function of research infrastructures in the thematic field* addressed and based on own experience on up to 2 A4 pages;
- a **short implementation plan** on not more than 2 A4 pages which shall comprise (a) an assessment of the risks of the exercise; (c) a cost plan including the consultancy days foreseen for the implementation of the requested subtasks of TASK 2;
- In case the applicant will not be available for more than 4 weeks in the upcoming 4-month period, he/she should **provide information** with the application (start and end date of the period when the expert will not be available).

The documents for the response to this ToR call (not exceeding 10 MByte) address the above listed partners and must be sent by e-mail to: resinfra.pilot@zsi.at

Selection and contracting procedure for TASK 1 and TASK 2

A selection committee is formed by the Resinfra@DR project partners in which each partner has one vote. This selection committee will meet virtually to select the successful applicants.

TASK 1: Note that the Annex 1 (CONFIRMATION on the participation in the Peer-Learning Activity within the ResInfra@DR Project) needs to be signed and provided with the call response (response to ToR).

TASK2: Selection criteria for the assignment of the contract are:

CRITERIA	POINTS maximum available:	Weighting factor	Result: *points multiplied with weighting factor*
Motivation	**10 points**	2	... x 2=...
Demonstrated experience (CV, highlighting relevant experience and reference projects or activities, not limited to scientific tasks)	**10 points**	4	... x 4=...
Information about *important processes relevant for the function of research infrastructures in the thematic field* addressed	**10 points**	2	... x 2=...
Short implementation plan on not more than 2 A4 pages which shall comprise (a) an assessment of the risks of the exercise; (b) a cost plan including the consultancy days (travel excluded)	(a) assessment of risk of the exercise: **10 points** (b) cost plan: **10 points**	1 1	... x 1=... ... x 1=... TOTAL (Maximum of 100 weighted points)

In case of equal total score for two applicants, the timely availability of an applicant will be considered as decisive.

The minimum score to be achieved is 70 weighted points.

DECLARATION OF THE HOST RI (for TASK 1)

The following declaration shall be submitted with the application to confirm the readiness to act as a HOST RI:

CONFIRMATION on the participation in the

Peer-Learning Activity within the ResInfra@DR Project

We, the

represented by   *(Director of the research infrastructure)*
Address:
Phone:
(hereinafter called "the HOST RI").

With this document we express our wish to participate in the Mutual Learning Exercise within the ResInfra@DR project. This commitment covers the following areas of action:

- Information on important issues for which our HOST RI looks for solutions and would like to receive recommendations during the action. As a HOST RI, we will support the visiting peer learning team to perform the Mutual Learning Exercise.
- The HOST RI confirms that it will collect information by using the provided template for the self-assessment of RIs involved in the peer learning exercise in co-operation with the partner of ResInfra@DR from the same country. The HOST RI confirms that it will provide the necessary information also in interviews and will give feedback to the draft recommendations according to relevant professional standards.
- The HOST RI will support the two-day visit of the peer learning team composed of the team co-ordinator and max. 3 more experts (external peer from a PAIR RI, project partners). This support includes interaction with the ResInfra@DR partner from the same country to identify the relevant stakeholder groups and enable access to interview partners.
- Together with the visiting team, a schedule will be defined and the two-day peer learning team visit, including around 4-6 interviews with the RI core stakeholders, will be supported by the RI HOST.
- The HOST RI shall reflect on the draft recommendations with the visiting team prior to the planned reflection meeting, this step also serves to exclude non-publishable content.
- The HOST RI agrees to arrange an internal reflection meeting where the visiting team shall present the findings and recommendations to the invited staff members of the HOST RI.
- The HOST RI confirms that it will support the identification of publishable recommendations also including relevant recommendations to other research infrastructures ("synthesis recommendations").
- The HOST RI agrees to participate in the final learning event organised by the ResInfra@DR project (travel and accommodation costs are covered by the ResInfra@DR project).
- The HOST RI will nominate one of its experts for the process of "thematic pairing". This means that an expert will support a similar process in another country. This contribution will be performed with reasonable skill, care and diligence in accordance with the relevant professional standards and practices existing at the date of performance. A cost coverage for

this involvement is provided by ResInfra@DR. (This point concerns solely "TASK 2" of the Terms of Reference)

- The members of the HOST RI shall take responsibility for the provided information according to professional standards.
- The HOST RI confirms that it will inform as soon as possible should there be any obstacles which would endanger its further participation in the process

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 (Place, date DD / MM / 2018)

On behalf of the RI:

(RI Director Name), stamp if applicable

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