



# MERIL

MAPPING OF THE EUROPEAN  
RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE  
LANDSCAPE

## Concepts of Research Infrastructures and the MERIL Project

EuroRis-Net+ Workshop

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# Background

- ESF/EUROHORCS Roadmap 2009 – 10-point action plan to achieve vision of ERA
  - Action #8: Develop shared funding and exploitation of medium-sized research infrastructure by (i.a.):
    - Establishing an ESF Member Organisation Forum
    - Continued updating of the inventory of national research infrastructures with European significance

## EUROHORCS and ESF Vision on a Globally Competitive ERA and their Road Map for Actions

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### Foreword

The Heads of European Research Councils (EUROHORCS) and the European Science Foundation (ESF) wish to play an active and concrete role in shaping a European Research Area of Excellence. Following the publication of the EUROHORCS and ESF's comments on the European Commission's Green Paper 'The European Research Area: New Perspectives', they therefore decided to produce a Road Map to excellence in science in Europe.

The EUROHORCS Assembly and ESF Governing Council, in their April 2008 meetings, approved a Vision Statement on the goals to be reached in the next five to ten years to build a globally competitive European Research Area (ERA). This Vision Statement was complemented by an outline for a Road Map for the actions which could be taken by EUROHORCS and ESF Member Organisations, as well as partners, to help build such an ERA ideal.

These outline actions have now been further elaborated, identifying the main goals and their timelines. Some actions are already quite concrete and committing, others require more preparation and study. This reflects that this is a document describing a process, rather than a final statement.

It is important to stress that the Road Map is an action plan where EUROHORCS and ESF Member Organisations have a primary role. It does not intend to give a full policy agenda for all actors in the ERA.

It is a pleasure to recommend the Vision Statement and the Road Map for your consideration and support for our joint efforts. Member Organisations of EUROHORCS and ESF will take the lead in the implementation of action lines of the Road Map.

This project benefitted from the continuous support from – among many others – Professor Matthias Kleiner, President of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and Chair of the EUROHORCS-ESF Task Force, Professor Pär Ömling, Director General of the Vetenskapsrådet and former President of EUROHORCS, and Dr. John Martin, former ESF Director of Science and Strategy and Deputy Chief Executive, who skilfully edited the final version of this document.

Professor Ian Halliday  
President of ESF

Professor Dieter Imboden  
President of EUROHORCS

[www.eurohorcs.org](http://www.eurohorcs.org)  
[www.esf.org](http://www.esf.org)



# ESF Member Organisation Forum on Research Infrastructures (MOFRI)

- January 2010 – November 2012
- 36 representatives of 31 ESF MOs + 7 observers
- Discussion on RI policy from perspective of national research funding and performing organisations
- Complementing ESFRI with focus on existing RIs, from regional to European relevance
- Challenges for the sector: establishment of standards for what constitutes an RI, services it should provide, assessment of quality, efficient use of resources, etc.

## 4 Working Groups:

1. Access and standards
2. Funding and evaluation
3. Mobility and networks
4. Mapping
  - Need for overview of existing RIs on national and European level as baseline for policy making and actions (emerged in context of ESFRI roadmap)
  - EC Call in 2009 to update RI portal
    - MERIL proposal submitted during preparatory phase of MO Forum and funded under FP7 from Oct 2010 - Dec 2012
    - Funded by the ESF member organisations in 2013

# Towards a common definition of Research Infrastructures

- ERIC + ESFRI definitions →
- MOFRI definition (for implementation in MERIL):
  - A European Research Infrastructure is a facility or (virtual) platform that provides the scientific community with resources and services to conduct [top-level] research in their respective fields. These research infrastructures can be single-sited or distributed or an e-infrastructure, and can be part of a national or international network of facilities, or of interconnected scientific instrument networks.

Furthermore, the infrastructure should:

- Offer [top quality] scientific and technological performance that is recognised as being of [European] 'more-than-national' relevance;
- Offer access to scientific users from Europe and beyond through a transparent selection and admission process [on the basis of excellence];
- Have a [stable and effective] management structure.

## In addition...

- Focus on shared access RIs – open to external users, national and international
- Shift from focus on ‘medium-sized’ to all RIs complying with the definition
- Inclusive approach (considering also domain specificities, esp. for SSH)

# MOFRI outcomes

- “Basic Requirements” – minimum quality standards for all RIs, with additional targeted recommendations
- “Common Features of Research Infrastructures” (in collaboration with ESFRI Working Group on Evaluation of RIs)
  - Scientific and technological excellence
  - Management (incl. access policy and quality assurance)
  - Governance
  - Education & training
  - Impact
- → Basis of MERIL threshold eligibility criteria

# MERIL eligibility criteria

- Quality
  - State funding an indication of quality
  - For a database:
    - data should easily and consistently retrievable
    - metadata allowing data to be analysed, compared and reused
    - standards in harmony with other equivalent centres
- Access
  - Clear and public rules and procedures
  - Access to limited resources should be based on an assessment of the quality of the proposed use
  - Significant time available for outside (incl. non-national) users
- Management
  - Single entry point for the RI must be clearly identifiable
  - Clear support arrangements for science users
  - Clear procedures for the management of data



## MERIL, Research Infrastructures of European relevance A comprehensive inventory

- Joint MOFRI/  
MERIL/ESFRI  
workshop April 2012 on  
'European relevance'
- → 'More than national'  
relevance
  - Evidence of international  
interest in or use of the  
RI
  - Existence of formal  
agreements



## Other implications

- Networks and projects
  - Do not qualify unless they have a unified management structure and represent a single point of access to facilities and services
- Internationally distributed RIs (e.g. ESFRI projects)
  - Normally covered by one entry (the coordinating centre)
  - National nodes can have separate entries if they also function autonomously
  - International = hosted/funded by more than one country or an international body, or with international legal status

## Some sources of uncertainty

- Sustainability of funding of networks offering transnational access
- Level of aggregation of entries (e.g. institutes vs individual facilities, observatories vs telescopes, fleets vs vessels)
- Treatment on case-by-case basis

## Other challenges

- Harmonising national approaches to the validation of entries
- Achieving good coverage of all scientific domains across countries

# Outcomes

- MERIL has started discussion at national level about what should be included
- Convergence towards common understanding of research infrastructures of 'more-than-national relevance' in Europe
- Basic Requirements, Common Features, Scientific Domains, RI Categories, have been useful for national roadmaps
- MERIL is a work in progress, but a tool with enormous potential to serve the scientific and the policy communities

## Latest additions

[Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope CFHT](#)

Last updated on: 2013-07-03 at 16:28

[States Archives in Belgium Arch](#)

Last updated on: 2013-07-03 at 16:16

[Beijing Genomics Institute BGI Europe](#)

Last updated on: 2013-07-03 at 16:08

[Le Laser Mégajoule Direction Des Applications Militaire CESTA Lasers](#)

Last updated on: 2013-07-03 at 15:12

[Centre for Applied Neuroscience CAN](#)

Last updated on: 2013-07-03 at 14:51

[See all RI's »](#)

The MERIL database is an inventory of the most excellent research infrastructures (RIs) in Europe of more-than-national relevance across all scientific domains: from archives and statistical offices to biobanks and satellites. Read more [about MERIL](#) and the criteria for inclusion.

Search below for research infrastructures in Europe that interest you and create pdf and statistical reports.

*Note: The MERIL database is currently being populated; a full version of the MERIL database will be launched in 2013.*



### General search<sup>?</sup>

Free text search in the database on all Research Infrastructure related topics

Search



### Scientific Domain

All Scientific Domains

### RI Category

All RI Categories

### Country

All Countries

Browse



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